Analysis of assertive ideological sources of China's soft power: How the China Model is presented to challenge Western values

by

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Statement of Originality

I, LI, Cheuk Ho Gabriel, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis and the material presented in this thesis is my original work except those indicated in the acknowledgement. I further declare that I have followed the University's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copyright and Plagiarism in writing the thesis and no material in this thesis has been submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

Abstract

With regard to the development of China's soft power, the existing literature primarily discusses how the Chinese state has formulated cultural and foreign policies to manage Chinese national image as a peaceful, constructive and non-threatening nation in an effort to ameliorate the threat perception from others. This study attempts to discuss how the development of China's soft power has shifted from a defensive position that conformed to the existing international system to an assertion position that challenges Western values. To achieve a deeper understanding on the assertive nature of China's soft power, this study takes a constructionist theoretical approach to examine the China Model proposed by Chinese intellectuals and pays attention to how Chinese intellectuals as the Model's proponents consider the Model as a vessel in which they can accomplish specific meaning to develop assertive China's soft power. This study found that the Model's proponents adopt a three-step discourse strategy to denounce the legitimacy of Western democracy by highlighting the limitations of American and global democratic development and the incompatibility of Western democracy and Chinese socio-political traditions. The Model's proponents also resort to Chinese socio-political traditions to promulgate the assertion of Chinese Confucian values, such as *min ben* ideology and meritocracy, in order to present a Chinese perspective on the Model's success and to challenge Western normative convictions of national development. That soft power is congruent with the Party's more recent, assertive efforts to fend off unfavorable Western ideological inroads into China and to promote China's political distinctiveness.

Keywords: China's soft power, the China Model, assertiveness, Western democracy, Chinese Confucian values

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List of Chinese terms

All land under the heaven belongs to the king	普天之下莫非王土
Be the first to worry about the troubles across the land	先天下之憂而憂
Clan-owned field	宗田
Collective economy	集體經濟
Competence	能
Concerning the Situation in the Ideological Sphere	關於當前意識形態領域情況的通報
Differentiation between officials and the people	官民之分
Educated and reasonable	知書達理
Equal peasant households	均質小農家庭
Five Nos	五不搞
Freemen	城市自由民
Gentry	鄉紳
Good governance	良政善治
Group of the legal professionals	法律人集團
Group politics	集團政治
Han Feizi	韓非子
How to Be a Good Communist	論共產黨員的修養

Hu Jintao	胡錦濤
Huang Songyou	黃松有
Human feelings	人情
Impartiality and harmony	中正和諧
Jiang Zemin	江澤民
Land to the tiller	耕者有其田
Li Keqiang	李克強
Liu Shaoqi	劉少奇
Liu Yunshan	劉雲山
Majority bully minorities	以眾凌寡
Min ben	民本
Min ben economics	民本經濟學
Min xiang	民享
Minxin	民心
Minzhi	民治
Moral politics	道德政治
National law	國法
Natural law	天理
Neutral politics	中立政治

New obscurantism	新蒙昧主義
New Three People's Principles	三個為民
Pan Wei	潘維
Patriarchal clan system	宗法
People as the cornerstone of the country	民為邦本
People's livelihood is the foremost concern	民生為大
Power politics	強權政治
Ritual law	禮法
Scholar, peasant, artisan and merchant	士農工商
Seven speak-not	七不講
Sheji	社稷
State-people economy	國民經濟
The last to enjoy universal happiness	後天下之樂而樂
Three Confidences	三個自信
Three Represents theory	三個代表
Virtue	賢
Wang Huning	王滬寧
Wu Bangguo	吳邦國
Xi Jinping	習近平

Zhang Dejiang	張德江
Zhang Gaoli	張高麗
Zhang Weiwei	張維為
Zhu Yunhan	朱雲漢

Chapter 1

Introduction

Soft power is a concept that originated in the West and has become increasing prominent in China since the 1990s, when a Fudan University professor joined policy aides to former Chinese president Wang Huning (王滬寧) to introduce soft power into the highest echelons of Chinese political authority (Wang, 1993). Since then, top Chinese political leaders have endorsed the concept and continued to publicly declare its significance in China's national development. Former Chinese president Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) stressed that soft power is important both to national cohesion and to the country's competition for national strength (Hu, 2007). In a group study session of members of the Political Bureau of the Party's Central Committee, current Chinese president Xi Jinping (習近平) emphasized the importance of cultural soft power by urging China to promote modern Chinese values to the world and by integrating the concept of cultural soft power with the objective of national rejuvenation, stemming from his signature political formulation of the "China dream" (Mu, 2015).

A major reason that top Chinese leaders endorse soft power relates to China's grand strategy. Due to its rising hard power of military and economic prowess, China is accused of being a threat that targets America and brings unprecedented challenges to the existing world order—a threat that is encapsulated in the so-called "China threat theory" (Gertz, 2000). Soft

power dovetails with the objective of countering the China threat theory and is widely regarded as being inextricable from China's rise, as is reflected in Hu Jintao's grand strategy of peaceful development to make China's ascension more palatable to the world (Ding, 2010; Zhang, 2012; Breslin, 2009; Yi, 2005; Wang, 2008). Even the architect of the soft power concept, Harvard professor and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye, has acknowledged that China—with its rising economic and military power—has deliberately developed its soft power in order to make its hard power less intimidating (Nye, 2011, p.23).

The limitations of the existing studies of China's soft power are that researchers have focused excessively on studying how has China used cultural and foreign policies to defensively conform to the Western discursive system and the existing international order. Researchers have not explored how China's political values, as another source of its soft power, can constitute the assertive power driving its deviation from the Western discursive system. In terms of the assertive potential of China's soft power, the Chinese development model (also known as the China Model) has been widely reported to be attractive to different countries. Countries with traditional ties to China, such as Vietnam, Pakistan, Venezuela and Iran, have shown great interest in emulating China's development model (Teo, 2004; Imaduddin, 2016; Kurlantzick, 2013, p.130; Khajehbour, 2002). In both Central Asia and Africa, countries have looked toward China instead of to international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to gain new insights into developing their

own economies (French, 2004; *The Economist,* 2010). Two of the BRIC countries, Brazil and Russia, are reportedly emulating China's development model (Levy, 2009; Kurlantzick, 2007, p.134). All these factors imply that the China Model is increasingly attractive and is displaying its assertive potential for challenging Western developmental values and norms.

The China Model, which represents a value system and set of developmental principles that differ from those of the West, has a broad historical background. Asian states bolstered by state-led developmental success strongly refute the Western norms of free market principles and a limited state. The debate on "Asian values" refers to the ways that the economic success of East Asian countries has emboldened some Singaporean intellectuals to assert a value system different from that embodied by Western political values (Mahbubani, 1995; Kausikan, 1993). Discourse on Asian values refers to Confucian values, such as family, order, ethics, virtue, filial piety, unity and harmony, to challenge Western political values, and primarily that of individualism (Park & Shin, 2006). Former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew even claimed that the Confucian values of collectivism are widely shared by East Asian states (Zakaria, 1994). Although the proposals surrounding Asian values have precipitated different critiques, and although the grounds of those values are being challenged (Emmerson, 1995; Kim, 1994; Thompson, 2001; Ng, 1997; Nye, 2004, p.84; Sen, 1997), the discourse around Asian values can be understood as an attempt to carve out a normative space in which Asian countries can construct their own social and political values (Chan,

1997; Subramaniam, 2000). As one proponent of Asian values argued, Asian countries must search for various configurations, degrees and proportions of the different values that are necessary for their future development (Kausikan, 1997). Informed by the discourse on Asian values, the China Model can be understood as a continuing attempt to promote a distinctive value system and to denounce Western ideological and normative convictions.

Because of the China Model's growing importance in China's soft power lexicon, a burgeoning literature has emerged that seeks to explain what the model is. Most of the literature draws upon China's successful development experience over the past three or even six decades, with a view toward providing an empirical explanation of what constitutes a Chinese development model. Most of the literature also argues whether such a Chinese model can become an alternative to the dominant neo-liberalist development model. What is seldom noticed, however, is that the discussion of the China Model has also come at a time when China needs to deepen its reform but lacks an ideological foundation to guide such a process. Viewing the situation from this vantage point, various proposals of the China Model put forward by Chinese scholars are more than merely objective or empirical descriptions of China's development experience (or of China's development model); these scholars' attempts to justify the success of China's past development experience also serve to offer competing ideological foundations (or political values) that are vital to China's reform in the future. In other words, by critically examining the various China Models proposed by Chinese scholars,

we will be able to gain insight into not only the form of China's economic development model but also the political values these Chinese scholars consider to be important in filling the current ideological void in contemporary China. The results will offer an alternative dimension of China's soft power that is neglected in existing studies of the China Model.

Research objectives

To enrich a deeper understanding of the current studies, the objective of this research is to study how Chinese political values are being embedded in various proposals of the China Model. And how these political values constitute an assertive dimension of China's soft power to challenge Western discursive system. Assertiveness has different degree and dimension. China has already been developing its assertive power since the 1990s. One case in point is how China asserted her accomplishment of developing economic and social rights and deployed skillful diplomatic tactics to participate in international human right regime in order to defend Western accusation of China's human rights (Kent, 1995; Ding, 2012). Nonetheless, the dimension of assertiveness discussed in this research is stronger than other projection of Chinese assertive power in the past. A stronger dimension of China's assertive power refers to denial and replacement of predominant and prevailing discursive and value system. This research attempts to show that how the Model's proponents, by asserting Chinese political values, constitute a stronger dimension of China's assertive soft power by

denying and replacing Western discursive system that enshrines Western electoral democracy for other countries to develop a legitimate political model.

Research questions

1. How do the Model's proponents deviate from the Western discursive system through the different proposed China Models?
2. What are the underlying political values that the Model's proponents have embedded into their proposed China Models?

Research methods

This research depends on an ontological position of constructionism (also referred to as constructivism) to study various proposals of the China Model asserted by Chinese intellectuals. Constructionism assumes that "social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors". (Bryman, 2016, p.29). Constructionism also suggests that social reality is "a specific version presented by the researcher, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive, or something external to social actors and that totally constrain them". (Bryman, 2016, p.29-30). Informed by constructionism, this research is not an engagement of the present intellectual debate about whether or not a China Model exists or about which of the China Models proposed by Chinese scholars offers the best explanation of China's experiences with national development. This research deviates from the present intellectual debate about the China Model, and study the Model by considering it to be a

social construction created by different social actors. Different Chinese intellectuals, as the Model's proponents, are considered to be significant social actors who present specific versions of the China Model by embedding them with different Chinese political values. Those values are considered to be having meanings accomplished by the Model's proponents, and those meanings are in relation with a political practice for developing China's discursive power that demonstrates assertiveness to challenge the domination of the Western discursive system.

This research is qualitative in nature, textually based, and reliant on thematic analysis as a textual analytic method for identifying the various discourse strategies and asserting political values in different proposed China Models. Inspired by the work of Boyatzis (1998) and Willig (2008), major themes in this literature will be identified through a four-stage process that consists of reducing the raw information, identifying themes within each Model's proposal, comparing these themes across the different Models' proposals, and clustering these different identified themes into groups. Raw information will be reduced by a close reading that annotate the text in an open form in order to document initial thoughts about the different concepts, ideas and arguments proposed by the Model's proponents. After that, main themes will be identified and labeled, and a comparison of the different themes will be conducted to examine their similarities and differences.

Sources of data

This research provides a hermeneutic understanding of how the China Model's proponents embed various Chinese political values into different proposed versions of it that they consider to be legitimate and appropriate. Publications by three intellectuals on the China Model are the primary sources of data. These three intellectuals are Pan Wei (潘維), Professor of International Politics at Peking University; Zhang Weiwei (張維為), Professor of International Relations at Fudan University; and Chu Yunhan (朱雲漢), Professor of Political Science at National Taiwan University.

The selection of these three professors is grounded on their prestigious academic positions, their contribution to the current study of the China Model and the social and political influence of their works on the China Model. First, these three professors are in charge of several important academic institutes and research program in China and Taiwan. Their academic positions distinguish them as academic heavyweights within Chinese intelligentsia. Pan Wei is a leading scholar in Chinese intellectual discussion of the China Model who has led the Centre for Chinese and Global Affairs (CCGA) in Peking University, a think tank closely affiliated with the Chinese government. Zhang Weiwei is the dean of China Institute at Fudan University, a new think tank which is part of the pilot work by the Development Research Centre of the State Council for building national high-end think tanks (Li, 2015). Chu Yunhan, a leading scholar in politics of Greater China and East Asian

democratization, is the distinguished research fellow of Institute of Political Science at Academia Sinica, the most eminent academic institution in Taiwan. Chu also serves as the director of Asian Barometer Survey at the National Taiwan University, a renowned research program which is pioneer in the research on East Asian democratization and Asian understanding of political values on the basis of cross-national and longitudinal survey.

Regarding their contribution to the study of the China Model and the significance of their works, under the leadership of Zhang and Pan, both the Fudan China Institute and the CCGA are centered around the research on the China Model. According to its official website, a primary objective of the Fudan China Institute is to explore the essence of the China Model by conducting theoretical and policy studies and developing Chinese discourses. The CCGA led by Pan also has made a significant contribution to the discussion of the China Model. In 2008, it organized a large-scale seminar "Sixty Years of the People's Republic of China and the China Model" in which Pan introduced his proposal of the China Model, alongside with other Chinese intellectuals' perspectives on Chinese developmental success (Pan, 2010, p.2). Pan later edited a book "*Zhongguo moshi: Jiedu renmin gongheguo de liushi nian* (*The China Model: Interpretation of People's Republic of sixty years*)" to encapsulate the discussion outcomes of that seminar. Noteworthily, that book was published by a central level Chinese publishing house, the Central Compilation and Translation Press (CCTP). The CCTP is affiliated to the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau (CCTB),

a central Party organ which is directly subordinated to the Party's Central Committee. Therefore, it shows that, to certain extent, Pan's contributions to the current study of the China Model have been endorsed by Chinese government and the Party's leaders. Besides, Zhang's work on the China Model also has certain degree of political significance because one of his bestselling book "*The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State*" was recommended by Xi Jinping to the former president of the World Bank Robert Zoellick during his visit to China (Tatlow, 2015). In addition, in 2017, Chu's book on the China Model "*Thinking High above the Cloud: China's Rise and Restructuring of World Order*" was chosen by the Publishers Association of China as one of the best 100 Chinese book, which indicates that his work on the China Model has certain degree of social influence.

Apart from the abovementioned reasons, another reason of the selection is that, as the cases of Pan and Zhang's work have shown, the Party more or less may endorse the proposals of the China Model by these professors as a means to strengthen Chinese discursive power. Although the Chinese government has not explicitly promoted the China Model through officials reports, it encourages intellectual discussion of the China Model through its system of propaganda. For instance, the People's Daily has launched a special channel called "Focus on the China Model" (聚焦中國模式, *Jujiao zhongguo moshi*) to propagate the arguments and research outcomes of the China Model by Chinese intellectuals. Since these three professors deviate from Western political and economic discourses and exhaustively justify

Chinese developmental success on the basis of Chinese concepts and theories, their Model proposals are politically significant in providing certain ideological and theoretical resources for the Party to further develop Chinese discursive power.

This research will study the publications of these three scholars including: *Gaosizaiyun-zhongguo xingqi yu quanqiuzhixu chongzu* (*Think High above the Cloud*: *China's Rise and Restructuring of the World Order*) by Chu (2015), *Dangdai zhonghua tizhi—Zhongguo moshi de jingji, zhengzhi, sheshui jiexi* (*The Contemporary Chinese System—An Economic, Political, and Social Analysis of the China Model*) by Pan (2010), *Zhongguo zhenhan: Yige wenming xing guojia de jueqi* (*The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State)* by Zhang (2011), *Zhongguo Zhaoyue: Yige wenming xing guojia de guangrong yu mengxiang (The China Horizon: Glory and Dream of a Civilizational State)* by Zhang (2014) and *Zhongguo chudong: Bai guo shiye xia de guancha yu sikao* (*The China Shock: Observations and Reflections from the Perspectives of One Hundred Countries*) by Zhang (2015).

In addition to the above-mentioned publications, this research is also supplemented by a documentary analysis of various journal articles on Chinese political development, political reports presented by Chinese leaders and international opinion polls conducted by Western institutions. That analysis can offer a deeper understanding of how the Model's proponents' discourses are associated with a broader intellectual debate on the Chinese political system.

Research significance

The significance of this research rests primarily on the assertive dimension of China's soft power, a hermeneutic understanding of the China Model, and China's recent political trajectory for strengthening its discursive power. The existing literature on China's soft power mainly discusses how the nation's cultural and foreign policies constitute the defensive dimension of its soft power in order to present China's image as a staunch Western conformist. Because China has conformed to a Western discursive system and the expectation of a status quo in which China should not challenge the Western democratic and liberal world order, researchers have argued that the Chinese state has wielded soft power defensively as a shield to undermine a perceived threat from others—particularly from the Western world. This research attempts to enrich the understanding of China's soft power by examining its assertive dimension of the promotion for Chinese political values in order to terminate China's enduring suppression under the dominating Western discursive system.

In the existing literature on the China Model, researchers mainly have assumed that the Model objectively exists beyond social actors and they debate whether the Model is distinctive or legitimate. In addition, Western political and economic discourses remain the primary theoretical concepts employed for understanding and even criticizing the Model's authoritarian nature and lack of substantial Western reform. As a result, researchers fail to identify other possible justifications of the Chinese political system—particularly

interpretation by Chinese intellectuals who are devoted to developing a Chinese school of thought and a competing discursive power with the West. A constructionist ontological approach thus can provide a hermeneutic understanding of how the China Model is considered by its proponents as a vessel of various pursuits and endeavors in which they attempt to strengthen assertive China's soft power in an ideological and normative terms.

Recent development also indicates that China is no longer content with defensively wielding its soft power to conform to Western norms. The Party is impatient with China having to endure suppression under the Western discursive system, and is becoming more assertive in promoting Chinese political distinctiveness through various policy directives and political formulations, as a means to challenge the Western discursive domination. Alongside that trajectory of growing Chinese political assertiveness, this research can inform us about some theoretical contribution by Chinese intellectuals to the recent development of Chinese discursive power—a discursive power which has stronger dimension of assertiveness in denying Western discursive and value system

Chapters' outline

Following this Introduction, the research is separated into four chapters: a literature review of China's soft power and the China Model, a denouncement of Western values, an assertion of Chinese values, and the conclusions. The objective of Chapter 2 is to review the current study on China's soft power and the China Model and highlight how the development

of China's soft power has shifted from a defensive nature of national image management through cultural and foreign policies to a growing assertive nature of challenging the legitimacy of Western politics. Chapter 2 begins with the introduction of Nye's conceptual framework and its limitations to provide a more balanced discussion of the soft power concept. The chapter moves on to the current study of China's soft power and the China Model, highlighting the Model's assertiveness in the early development of China's soft power, amid the country's enduring suppression under the Western discursive system. The chapter concludes by discussing the Party's political formulations for a growing assertiveness in challenging Western political legitimacy and by arguing for a constructionist approach from which to study recent development of China's assertive soft power through the China Model.

Chapter 3 is designed to respond to the research question of how the Model's proponents deviate from a Western discursive system. The chapter will discuss how the Model's proponents' discourse develops a three-step discourse strategy to denounce Western political legitimacy. That strategy includes: 1) pointing out the American political decay induced by neo-conservatism, plutocracy and vetocracy, and the deviation of the American democratic system from "rule by the people"; 2) highlighting a global democratic decay, the limitations of global democratic systems, and an incompatibility between Western democracy and the socio-political traditions of embryonic democratic countries; and 3) arguing for an

incompatibility between Western democracy and Chinese traditions that arises from the very different social structures in the West and China. The chapter will also discuss several limitations of the Model's proponents' discourse strategy—such as the narrowness of its discussion of Western democracy, and the strategy's ignorance of the diversity and complexity of global democratic development. The chapter concludes by arguing that the exaggerated and narrow discussion of Western democracy by the Model's proponents is justifiable to them because a political reality that Western democratic development is superficial provide a broader maneuvering space in which the Model's proponents can attempt to promulgate their assertion of Chinese values.

Chapter 4 will first discuss how the Model's proponents assert a responsibility-based ideology that distinguishes Chinese moral and neutral politics from Western electoral democracy and multi-party politics. Such ideology serves as a logical starting point that helps the Model's proponents to assert Confucian political concepts, such as *min ben* democracy, *min xiang* and meritocracy, in order to construct an ideological foundation for the China Model—foundation that they consider to be legitimate and attractive. This chapter will then examine how the Model's proponents argue that those Chinese political values are manifested in the Chinese economic model by offering a Chinese interpretation of the Model's success which differs from mainstream explanation. The chapter will conclude by discussing that an idealistic description of China's political reality may cast doubt on whether Confucian values

can become a serious competitor to Western democracy.

The concluding chapter will explain how the Model's proponents, through an exhaustive denouncement of Western democracy as shown in Chapter 3, attempt to challenge a political dichotomy of democracy and non-democracy that is central to the Western discursive system and that enshrines Western electoral democracy as being the only legitimate model of political modernization. This chapter will then revisit the ideological assertions of Chinese values by the Model's proponents and will discuss how those assertions associate with new Chinese conceptual dichotomies, such as responsibility-based ideology vs rights-based ideology, accompanied by other dichotomies like *min ben* democracy vs electoral democracy and *min ben* economy vs market economy. The Model's proponents construct those dichotomies in an attempt to provide a broader normative space from which China can operate in its challenge to the Western social, political and economic norms.

Chapter 2

Literature review of China's soft power and the China Model

Introduction

This chapter attempts to provide an understanding of the development of China's soft power, from an earlier, more defensive position of national image management, to a position of increasing challenges to Western political legitimacy, and an articulation of the importance of adopting a new theoretical position from which to study that recently developed assertive soft power through the China Model. The chapter will first discuss Joseph Nye's definition of soft power and the limitations of Nye's conceptual framework. The next section will focus on the current study of China's soft power and the China Model and will discuss how China's soft power has changed, from an early, defensive position that beautified China's national image as a country that is non-threatening in its cultural and foreign policies, to an increasingly assertive position that challenges Western values and norms through the increasingly conspicuous Chinese development model. Discussion of the China Model will also touch upon how Western political and economic discourses serve as the primary theoretical concepts from which to contemplate the Model. We will discuss how the Western approaches have caused China's enduring suppression under the Western discursive system—a system with which the Chinese Communist Party is no longer patient. The last section will discuss the Party's political formulations, which display an increasing assertiveness in

denouncing the Western political model and promoting the distinctiveness of Chinese political system. The chapter concludes with a suggestion that a constructionist theoretical approach for studying the China Model can provide a deeper understanding of the Chinese political values promoted by the Model's proponents as a new source for China's assertive soft power.

Definition and limitations of soft power

In terms of international relations theory, constructivism concerns the distribution of ideational factors, such as values and knowledge, in understanding the international structures and behaviors of different social and political actors (Wendt, 1992). Despite the existence of different strands of constructivism, a mutual understanding of constructivists holds that values and ideas are crucial in shaping state behavior (Waltz, 1998, p.41). Soft power associated with culture and values is therefore a constructivist concept for understanding the international system. Joseph Nye defines soft power as "the ability to get other countries to want what it wants", and this ability (the source of a country's soft power) rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad) and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority) (Nye, 1990, p.166; 2004, p.11). In addition, Nye argues that the international organizations that exist to promote certain countries' milieu goals are conducive to being diplomatically attractive, particularly for America. Nye states

that liberal and democratic international organizations, such as the IMF, WTO, and UN, are consistent with the American domestic system, and they advance the country's soft power because through them America can shape international rules in accordance with its own values and interests and can channel other countries' activities in ways that America prefers (Nye, 2004, p.10-11). The advancement of soft power through international organizations is attributable to milieu goals. Nye mentions that soft power is more likely to have an impact on milieu goals that are general and broad—goals that countries intend to achieve through their foreign policies (Nye, 2004, p.16-17). America's milieu goals, Nye argues, comprise the promotion of American values, such as democracy, human rights and free markets, that are crucial in sustaining the legitimacy and attractiveness of American soft power (Nye, 2011, p.16).

In terms of Chinese intellectual discussion of soft power, Chinese scholars also pay close attention to the significance of political values in developing national soft power. As the first Chinese scholar who introduced the concept of soft power to China, Wang Huning acknowledges that Chinese political values and ideologies are significant in strengthening Chinese cultural soft power. By cultural soft power, Wang's interpretation on culture deviates from Nye's definition which relates to popular culture and academic exchanges because he interprets culture in a much broader terms. Wang suggests that, to develop China's cultural soft power, the most decisive sources are not Chinese literature, traditional thought and

religion such as Taoism and Buddhism, but Chinese political system, political values and ideologies, sources that Wang argues as structural and core elements of Chinese culture (Wang, 1993, p.93,96). Furthermore, Wang also departs from Nye's boundary between soft and hard power by arguing that hard power such as economic prowess can also make political values more attractive and legitimate. Wang contends that a high level of Western economic development can remedy the limitations of Western democratic model such as ethnic hostility, abuse of power and bribery, and perpetuates the domination of Western democracy in global politics (Wang, 1993, p.95). Wang's perspective of soft power is later echoed by other Chinese intellectuals. Those intellectuals come to a general conclusion that political values are decisive in developing China's soft power and contemplate various ideological sources such as socialist values that may contribute to the attractiveness of China's soft power. (Dong et al., 2005; Fang, 2007; Guo, 2009; Huang & Ding, 2010; Huang & Liu, 2011; Jiang, 2012; Jiang & Ye, 2009; Liu, 2006; Liu & Wang, 2007; Su & Wan, 2013; Wu, 2009; Yan & Xu, 2008; Zhang, 2006). Moreover, Chinese intellectuals also depart from Nye's framework which refers to soft power in a foreign context to promote soft power overseas. Chinese intellectuals refer to soft power in the Chinese domestic context as the development of a domestic foundation of national soft power. They consider Chinese political values as being critical to consolidating the Chinese ideological foundation and its value system. A consolidation of Chinese value system probably can develop Chinese soft power to be more

attractive to domestic audiences and lay a more solid foundation to promote Chinese soft power overseas. Such departure from Nye's framework can be explained by a permeation of China by Western values since the Reform and Opening era which has brought tremendous ideological challenges to China (Edney, 2015). Chinese intellectuals therefore suggest a consolidation of Chinese domestic ideological foundation that can address the pressing concern about Chinese cultural, ideological and regime security.

Increased attention on the concept of soft power is accompanied by limitations of Nye's conceptual framework in understanding countries' soft power. Some scholars argue that Nye's boundary between hard and soft power is fuzzy because he ignores technological and scientific capacities, economic resources and humanitarian foreign aid that should also be included as sources of soft power (Lai, 2012). The inseparability between hard and soft power prompts some scholars to propose the concept of the "soft use of power", which means that all sources of power can generate attractiveness and admiration, through their prudent use and an effective conversion strategy (Li, 2009). Others criticize Nye's concept of soft power as being biased toward America because Nye assumes that American values are genuinely attractive and generate strong identification and a willing followership. That bias makes the concept misguided for China, with its different power status, sources, means and objectives for soft power (Deng, 2009). Some scholars argue for further refinement and re-conceptualization of Nye's framework, in order to develop the concept and make it more

operational and analytical for gauging the soft power of a spectrum of countries (Hall, 2010; Blanchard & Lu, 2012).

Cultural and foreign policies—Defensive China's soft power

Despite the limitations, criticisms and deviations of Nye's framework, and particularly of his definition of the sources of soft power (culture, foreign policy, political value), his work can serve as the starting point for understanding the development of Chinese soft power. Scholars have long paid attention to how the Chinese state formulates various cultural and diplomatic efforts, such as the expansion of international broadcasting, cultural exchange programs, and China's participation in international institutions, to enhance Chinese soft power (Cho & Jeong, 2008; Ding & Saunders, 2006; Ding, 2011; Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006; Hunter, 2009; Kurlantzick, 2007). In terms of cultural diplomacy, numerous research studies have been conducted on how the Chinese state enthusiastically promotes the Confucius Institute for providing Chinese language teaching and cultural learning in an attempt to shape a favorable image of China as a benign, gentle, friendly, and cosmopolitan nation (Paradise, 2009; Hartig, 2012; Hartig, 2015; Starr, 2009). Other scholars associate China's soft power with mega events, such as the 2010 Shanghai Expo and 2008 Beijing Olympics, and discuss whether those events succeeded in shaping a more attractive national image of China (Barr, 2012; Nordin, 2012; Manzenreiter, 2010; Giulianotti, 2015; Bridges, 2011). With regard to Chinese foreign policies, scholars have examined how China wields

soft power that helps it to develop a constructive and responsible national image in Latin America, East Asia, the Cross-Strait region, the South Pacific and Africa, through its cultural diplomacy, provision of development aid, economic cooperation, foreign investment and engagement in multilateral frameworks (Ding, 2008; deLisle, 2010; Yang, 2009; Liang, 2012). Scholars also have discussed how China, through public diplomacy measures and participation in international regimes, displays itself as a staunch conformist to the existing world order (d'Hooghe, 2008; Suzuki, 2009; Ding, 2012). One case in point is China's justification of its maritime presence in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean by officially invoking the maritime history of the seven voyages commanded by the "eunuch admiral", Zheng He, during the Ming Dynasty, in order to reassuring others that its growing naval power is nonthreatening (Yoshihara & Holmes, 2007).

Although some may argue that through its cultural and foreign strategies China is rapidly promoting its culture and foreign policies for the purpose of developing a soft power that is assertive rather than defensive in nature, Chinese cultural and foreign policies do not strongly and assertively challenge existing Western norms and values. Chinese cultural and foreign policies are not oriented to denouncing any Western political values or promoting any Chinese values that challenge the West's political legitimacy. What China attempts to promote, through its cultural and foreign policies, is an image of a nation that staunchly conforms to the existing international system, and to use these policies as a shield to reassure

others, and particularly the West, that China's rise is peaceful and nonthreatening. All of these strategies are primarily a response to the China threat theory, which assumes that the rise of China will bring an unprecedented challenge to the Western democratic and liberal world order (Gertz, 2000). Chinese cultural and foreign policies therefore involve no assertive challenges to Western discourses and normative convictions, and thus they fail to alter Chinese suppression under the Western discursive system that is centered around Western discourses of democracy and liberty.

Beijing Consensus—Potential source of assertive China's soft power

In terms of China's assertive power, China has already been developing its assertive dimension of power projection in the 1990s when the West accused China of lacking a sufficient development of human rights, particularly in terms of civil and political rights. At that time, a major China's response to Western accusation was that, China did not employ Western practices for prioritizing the development of political and civil rights and has demonstrated significant achievements in developing Chinese social and economic rights (Kent, 1995). Such assertion can be understood as one dimension of China's assertive power––a dimension which is less assertive in challenging Western normative convictions. While highlighting Chinese accomplishment of developing social and economic rights, China did not attempt to deny or replace the Western human right regime that is grounded on civil and political rights. China attempts to show that, under China's national circumstances, the

priority of developing social and economic rights should be higher than civil and political rights for the purpose of satisfying the basic livelihoods of Chinese people. In addition, China also deploys skillful and cautious diplomatic tactics to participate in international human right regime—tactics which are less assertive in challenging neither international human right regime nor Western practices of human rights. For instance, China has shifted international discussion on Chinese human rights from multilateral to bilateral dialogue that can prevent any international resolutions for condemning China, signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (even without ratification) and admitted that China's development of political and civil rights requires continuous improvement (Ding, 2012, p.654-657). Thus, even though China, through its assertion of social and economic rights, has been developing its assertive dimension of power projection since the 1990s, such dimension is less assertive in challenging Western normative system, but more defensive in heading off relentless Western accusation.

As mentioned, a stronger dimension of assertiveness should entail the assertion of one's own standards and values to deny and replace predominant and prevailing standards and values. In that sense, China's soft power has already displayed a stronger potential assertiveness in denying Western discursive and value system in terms of the Chinese development model. The term "Beijing Consensus" was coined by former senior editor at *Time* magazine Joshua Cooper Ramo and refers to an intellectual endeavor to understand

China's developmental success. Ramo argues that the Beijing Consensus encapsulates a distinctive Chinese development model that comprises three theorems: valuing innovation, placing sustainability and equality first, and using self-determination to counter hegemonic power (Ramo, 2004, p.11-12). Ramo argues that flexibility and pragmatism are two key features of the Beijing Consensus, because China adopts different solutions for different situations, on the basis of the country's internal dynamics (Ramo, 2004, p.4-5). Although some regard Ramo's concept as just a reiteration and propagation of Hu Jintao's formulation of scientific development (Cho & Cheong, 2008, p.462-463), Dirlik (2006) explains that the Beijing Consensus holds so much currency because of the third theorem defined by Ramo—that of self-determination. Self-determination implies that through its distinctive development model, China has the potential to create an alternative normative space in which developing countries might enjoy greater maneuvering power to pursue their own development goals. Dirlik's notion resonates with Breslin's concept of "imagined" power, which embodies the idea that others will assume and anticipate that the Chinese development model might have some sort of power, might do something important, might play a significant role, and might have an influence in the future (Breslin, 2009, p.835, 818).

The Beijing Consensus can be understood as one potential source of China's assertive soft power, because it is considered to be a challenge to the dominant Western development model embodied in the so-called "Washington Consensus". The expression Washington

Consensus was coined by John Williamson, an economist at the Institute for International Economics (1990). The Washington Consensus was originally a stringent policy suggestion that Williamson considered to be the lowest common denominator by which politicians and technocrats in Washington could reach a certain degree of consensus to ameliorate the Latin American debt crisis. Despite relentless refinements and clarifications on the essence of the Washington Consensus (Williamson, 1993; 2000; 2004a; 2004b), the subject was later interpreted merely as a set of neo-liberal values disseminated by America through international organizations. Joseph Stiglitz (2002) argued that with the help of the IMF's bureaucrats, economists and structural adjustment programs, the Washington Consensus has occupied a commanding height of national development in different countries and embodies the predominant values of privatization, marketization and liberalization are being promoted by the IMF to different countries in which local conditions vary greatly. Regardless of those diverse national conditions, however, the Washington Consensus is dogmatic and contrasts sharply with the pragmatic and flexible Beijing Consensus, which stresses self-determination as a counter to Western hegemonic influence and normative convictions.

The China Model—Debate of its distinctiveness and attractiveness

Ramo's Beijing Consensus has taken on a life of its own because scholars usually discard the theorems he defined and refer to the subject as the distinctive Chinese development model, or simply as the China Model. Existing literature on the China Model

has mainly studied whether the Model is distinctive and legitimate, and their answers to those questions either strengthen or undermine its attractiveness. Scholars who argue that the Model is attractive mainly focus on the Model's nature of pragmatism and flexibility that create greater maneuverability for developing countries to explore their own developmental path. Scholars who criticize that the Model is unattractive primarily adopt Western discourses and theoretical concepts to argue that the Model, because of its authoritarian nature, is lacking moral appeal or attractive political values.

Some scholars argue that the China Model is not unique because state developmentalism as one of the Model's essence can be traced to 1960s Brazil under military reign, to East Asian developmental states like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, and to Europe and the United States in their preliminary stages of development (Huang, 2014; Zhao, 2010; Dirlik, 2012; Breslin, 2011). Some have suggested that China has achieved economic success largely because the global economic system and trade regime established by the United States after the Second World War has given the country opportunities to integrate itself into the international economy (Chen, 2010). Some even have argued that China has also drawn upon aspects of the Washington Consensus, such as privatization, the opening up of the trade regime and the maintenance of a competitive exchange rate, to open its domestic economy and attract foreign investment (Kennedy, 2010; Huang, 2010).

Some scholars have shared Ramo's argument of the Model's distinctiveness and attractiveness in the eyes of developing countries because of its pragmatism and flexibility. If Soviet-style communist ideology was dogmatic, paralyzing the Soviet economy and bringing about the collapse of the Soviet Union, then pragmatism that is not bound to any ideology is a manifestation of the Model's vitality and makes it highly competitive and attractive (Barma & Ratner, 2006). Chinese no-strings-attached aid to other countries also magnifies the attractiveness of the pragmatic China Model. In contrast to the stringent conditional loans offered by the IMF, China generously offers no-strings-attached aid to developing countries and carves out space for those countries to explore their own paths of development (d'Hooghe, 2008, p.47; Li & Worm, 2011, p. 81). After the 1997 financial crisis, Asian countries were inspired by China's pragmatic development approach and began to embrace the China Model (Wibowo, 2009). In that light, China's pragmatism and flexibility stand in stark contrast to the dogmatic neo-liberal ideology and contribute to the Model's attractiveness. China has seized upon the disenchantment surrounding the Washington Consensus and has subtly provided substantial benefits to other countries that are learning from the China Model. For these reasons, the pragmatic China Model is attractive to developing nations and contributes significantly to China's soft power (Zhang, 2012, p.625; Liang, 2012, p.686).

Whereas some scholars have argued that the Model is attractive, others have adopted Western discourse to criticize that a lack of Western democratization is detrimental to the Model's legitimacy and attractiveness. Zhao (2009) has pointed out that the Model's major impediment is its lack of moral appeal and attractive political values, because as a pragmatic economic model it fails to nurture any attractive political values—such as democracy—that are upheld by the Western development model. Lack of moral appeal badly undermines the desirability and potential for transplanting the Model to different countries (deLisle, 2010, p.503; Breslin, 2009, p.827). Unlike other East Asian developmental states that have undergone democratization after their economic launches, China's political system remains authoritarian and the Chinese Communist Party holds a tight grip on political power. This authoritarian nature indicates that only authoritarian countries find the Model to be attractive and are willing to realign themselves with China, thus establishing a constellation of authoritarian states surrounding China that is against the Western democratic world (Halper, 2010). China's authoritarian system has precipitated government-business collusion, and the question of how to overcome that structural collusion has become the most significant issue for transforming the Model's developmental structure and enhancing its sustainability (Ding, 2011). In addition, the authoritarian nature of the China Model has been severely criticized as being the cause of various developmental problems. Some scholars have argued that the Chinese authoritarian system is an impediment to achievement of substantial gains in human

development and is marked by rampant corruption and a lack of the democratization necessary to protect human rights (Gill & Huang 2006, p.27-28; Holyk, 2011, p.236, 247; Ding, 2011, p.302; Nye, 2004, p.182). The overwhelming income inequality between rich and poor and the hegemonic treatment of ethnic minorities indicate that the Model still struggles to be a serious alternative to Western democratic capitalism (Huang, 2014; Hsu, 2015; Ambrosio, 2012).

The criticism that the authoritarian China Model is unattractive and detrimental to Chinese political legitimacy, is encapsulated in the argument of "authoritarian decay". This argument is evident in several books, including "*The Coming Collapse of China*" by American columnist Gordon Chang (2002), "*China's Democratic Future: How It Will Happen and Where It Will Lead*" by political scientist Bruce Gilley at Portland State University (2004), "*China's Trapped Transition*" by Professor Pei Minxin at Claremont McKenna College (2006), and "*China: Fragile Superpower*" by the former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Susan Shirk (2007). The argument of authoritarian decay is exhaustive and acute criticism that the China Model is not only unattractive, but is decaying, because of the incompatibility between an authoritarian political system and a market economic system. That incompatibility precipitates widespread "symptoms of decay", such as economic inefficiency and social instability that would not be successfully tackled without convergence with a Western political and economic model.

Chang argues that the Chinese political system has changed incredibly little and remarkably slowly and lacks channels for political participation because open and competitive elections are still not allowed by the Party (Chang, 2002, p.214-215). Chang also considers the undemocratic Chinese political system to be the fundamental source for major Chinese economic problems, such as unsustainable deficit spending and low-quality growth, because the Party retains control over the management and selection of state-owned enterprises' (SOEs') personnel and obstructs SOE managers from complying with the laws and demands of the marketplace (Chang, 2002, p.49-50). Chang has argued that complete marketization and privatization would be the only solution to reform SOEs and make them profit-oriented (Chang, 2002, p.58, 64).

Gilley defines the Chinese regime as a "corrupt and repressive dictatorship" that suffers from a "democracy deficit" —an absence of outside pressures to urge the Party to relinquish its political monopoly (Gilley, 2004, p.29). That democracy deficit then engenders social instability caused by dissatisfied Chinese who find no channels for expressing public opinions, and who then resort to protests and violence and feel utter contempt for the China's one-party system (Gilley, 2004, p.34). Gilley also regards China's one-party system as an obstacle that prevents the country from upgrading its economy because, he argues, only a democracy can deliver the necessary requirements for technological breakthroughs, such as freedom of speech, information openness and a rule-based business environment (Gilley,

2004, p.40). Unconstrained political power means that a genuine market economy in accordance with the rule of law and regulations is still distant and is obstructed by the closed Chinese political system (Gilley, 2004, p.41).

Pei argues that China's political reform has significantly lagged behind its economic reform and the nation is trapped in a condition of "partial reform equilibrium" under which the Party's ruling elites become increasingly self-serving and predatory in their desire to defend their privileges (Pei, 2006, p.8-9). Self-perpetuation of the Party's elites, Pei argues, is caused by the China's "one-party autocracy", which is deficient in political accountability, and is allowing ruling elites to amass wealth illegitimately and to defy central government directives (Pei, 2006, p.12-15). Pei regards the one-party autocracy to be irreconcilable with the development of a market economy, because a market economy requires the rule of law for curbing the government's political power (Pei, 2006, p.8-10).

Shirk argues that an apparently strong and prosperous China is a "brittle and authoritarian regime" that feels deeply insecure and lacks both a political ideology and channels through which public opinion could strengthen the legitimacy of its foundation. China's deficiency in political ideology is reflected in how the Party rapidly promotes nationalism and relies on economic growth to bolster its ideology—ideology that is weak and politically risky, particularly during any international crisis or economic crash (Shirk, 2008, p.11, 54-55, 62, 69). Due to its weak ideological foundation, Shirk argues, the introduction of

an electoral democracy and a democratically elected Chinese government would be highly conducive to Chinese social stability by providing more secured channels for political participation (Shirk, 2008, p.59).

In short, criticisms of China's authoritarian system indicate that Western discourses and theoretical concepts have suppressed China into a detrimental position in which the legitimacy of China's one-party system is acutely challenged. Intellectuals criticize that the Chinese political model is deficient in substantial reform for terminating the political monopoly of the Communist Party. Such deficiency precipitates widespread problems of fragile political legitimacy, social instability and economic efficiency that the Party would not tackle successfully without further convergence with the Western political and economic model.

The Party's political formulations—Denouncement of Western political legitimacy

Recent development indicates that the Party is no longer patient with the enduring suppression under the Western discursive system, because the Party has begun to display its assertiveness toward delegitimizing Western political values and justifying the distinctiveness of the Chinese political system. The former chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC), Wu Bangguo (吳邦國), firmly declared that China will not emulate the Western political model, including the multi-party system, bicameralism, separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and free elections (*NBC*, 2009). Wu in 2011 again firmly refuted

incorporation of the Western mode of separation of powers and the federal system into China's political development and associated emulation of the Western political model with social instability (Bristow, 2011). Wu's denouncement of the Western political model was later encapsulated in the "Five Nos" (五不搞, *wu bu gao*), which implied that China would not introduce multi-party politics, diversification of guiding ideologies, separation of powers, bicameralism, or federalization coupled with privatization (Henochowicz, 2015). In the meantime, Wu also asserted that the distinctiveness of the Chinese political system lies in the cooperation and consultation among different political parties under the Party's leadership, and in a hierarchical relationship among different government branches, unlike the rotation of ruling parties in the Western parliamentary system and the separation of powers among three branches (*Xinhua*, 2009).

Wu's denouncement of Western political legitimacy is continuing and escalating in Xi Jinping's era because the Party has issued directives to fend off Western influence from the Chinese ideological sphere. The Party has instructed university professors to ban seven subjects from university education. Those seven subjects, later coined the "Seven speak-not" subjects (七不講, *qi bu jiang*), are universal values, freedom of the press, a civil society, citizens' rights, past errors of the Chinese Communist Party, a privileged capitalist class (or crony capitalism) and an independent judiciary, which the Party considers taboo and a threat to its political control and legitimacy (*BBC Chinese*, 2013; Carlson, 2013). The origin of the

Seven speak-not subjects was a document directed by the Party's General Office of the Central Committee. Document no. 9, titled "Concerning the Situation in the Ideological Sphere" (關於當前意識形態領域情況的通報, *guanyu dangqian yishi xingtai lingyu qingkuang de tongbao*), indicated the Party's firm stance against the infiltration of Western political values and its determination to combat the perceived threats in China's ideological sphere (Buckley, 2013). Central to Document no. 9 was the Party's identification of seven ideological threats that were identical to the Seven speak-not subjects, and its denunciation of the legitimacy of Western values, such as constitutional democracy, a civil society and freedom of the press, in guiding Chinese development (*ChinaFile*, 2013).

One countermeasure of defending against Western ideological infiltration suggested by Document no.9, was to "maintain a high-level unity with the Party Central Committee under the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping in thought, political stance, and action" (*ChinaFile*, 2013). Xi's signature political theory, the "Three Confidences" (三個自信, *san ge zixin*) , or "Confidence Doctrine", is central to his political thought and stance. The Three Confidences specify a confidence in the path, theory and system, and were first formulated by Hu Jintao in the 18th Party Congress to justify the Party's adherence to its socialist path with Chinese characteristics and also to strengthen public confidence in the Chinese political system (*Xinhua*, 2012). Xi inherited and enriched the Three Confidences by adding a fourth confidence—"confidence in culture" —to his Confidence Doctrine and reiterating the

importance of adhering to the socialist path with Chinese characteristics in order to reinvigorate Chinese civilization (Xi, 2013; *Xinhua*, 2014; 2016). Xi's Confidence Doctrine is thus an indication of the Party's increasingly assertive approach in not just fending off unfavorable Western inroads or defending against Western ideological infiltration but also in promoting the distinctiveness of China's developmental path and political model—all in an effort to challenge Western capitalist democracy.

A constructionist approach for studying China's assertive soft power

The above discussion indicates that no common ground has been reached among the international intelligentsia as to whether the China Model is attractive, legitimate, or has merits worthy of emulation. Whereas some scholars share Ramo's perspective that the pragmatic and flexible China Model is more attractive than the Western neo-liberal development model, others criticize that the Chinese authoritarian political system is plagued by a lack of moral appeal and by an absence of inevitable convergence with the Western political and economic that undermines its attractiveness. China's one-party system is therefore acutely denounced by Western discourses that engender more serious challenges to any Chinese political and economic legitimacy. Those criticisms indicate that the Western discursive system has suppressed China into a detrimental position of soft power development from which the defensive soft power of China's foreign and diplomatic policies fails to alter. In the meantime, the Party has become more assertive in denouncing Western

political discourses and in promoting Chinese political distinctiveness through various political formulations. Those development inform us that the research focus should shift away from a defensive source for cultural and foreign policies that mainly targets national image management and toward a more assertive source for political values that challenges Western norms. That research focus will require a new theoretical approach for studying China's assertive soft power through the China Model.

To achieve a deeper sense of recent development of China's assertive soft power, this paper takes a constructionist approach for studying how Chinese scholars construct and interpret the China Model on the basis of Chinese perspectives and concepts. The constructionist approach contrasts with the mainstream intellectual debate of the Model's existence, distinctiveness and legitimacy because it considers various proposals of the China Model put forward by Chinese scholars to be more than merely objective or empirical descriptions of China's development experience. Those scholars attempt to accomplish specific meaning to the China Model in an effort to offer competing ideological foundations (or political values) that could break away from Western discursive and ideological domination. A constructionist approach means that the research focus will be how proponents of the China Model, as social actors, regard the Model as a vessel for developing ideological sources of China's soft power through a denouncement of Western values and an assertion of Chinese values. This approach therefore enriches the understanding of China's soft power

development, from its early, defensive nature of national image management to its recent, more assertive nature of challenging Western ideological domination that is neglected in existing studies of China's soft power.

Conclusions

Despite its limitations, Nye's definition of soft power is still relevant to an understanding of the development of China's soft power, particularly with regard to the three major sources of soft power that he laid out. The existing literature on China's soft power indicates that through its cultural and foreign policies, China has rapidly managed its national image as a country that is peaceful and nonthreatening to the existing international system. Those soft power strategies are defensive in nature, because they are not designed to challenge any Western normative convictions. With regard to potential assertiveness of China's soft power, whereas some scholars argue that pragmatism and flexibility convey the China Model's attractiveness in its challenges to the Western development model—a challenge that is encapsulated in the debate between the Beijing Consensus and the Washington Consensus, other scholars primarily adopt the Western political and economic discourses to criticize the Model's authoritarian nature and lack of convergence with the Western political and economic model. Such criticism, however, reflects China's enduring suppression under the Western discursive system. The Party has decided to cease tolerating that suppression, by displaying a greater assertiveness in fending off unfavorable Western

political inroads from China's ideological sphere, denouncing the legitimacy of the Western political model and promoting the distinctiveness of the Chinese political system. The development of China's assertive soft power therefore has gathered momentum and deserves greater attention and further exploration. A constructionist theoretical approach for studying the China Model can better inform us about how the Model's proponents accomplish specific meaning to their Model's proposals in order to challenge Western ideological and discursive domination, and thus it can broaden our understanding of China's recent development of an assertive soft power.

Chapter 3

Denouncement of Western political values

Introduction

This chapter will examine various strategies proposed by the Model's proponents to denounce Western values and to challenge Western political legitimacy and carve out a greater maneuvering space for a later assertion of Chinese values. The Model's proponents will present a three-step discourse strategy to delegitimize Western democracy by 1) pointing out the American political decay induced by neo-conservatism, plutocracy and vetocracy and the deviation of the American democratic system from its political ideal of "rule by the people"; 2) highlighting a global democratic decay and the limitations of global democratic systems and attributing those limitations to an incompatibility between the traditions of Western democracy and the socio-political traditions of embryonic democratic countries ; and 3) arguing that an incompatibility exists between Western democracy and Chinese socio-political traditions that results from the different developmental paths for social structure that the West and China have followed. The limitations of these discourse strategies will also be discussed, such as their narrow representation of Western electoral democracy, and particularly, their focus on American political decay and their ignorance of the diversity, complexity and other critical essences of Western democracy that is characteristic of global democratic development. This chapter concludes by arguing that the exaggerated and narrow

discourse strategies of the Model's proponents are justifiable to them, because they are taking advantage of the political reality that superficial form of electoral democracy is tolerated in an effort to create more maneuverable and normative spaces for themselves in which to promulgate their assertion of Chinese values.

3.1: Neo-conservatism and the decay of American democracy

Chu's discourse strategy of denouncing Western political values is centered around criticism of the major limitation of American democracy, which is that the ideal of the "rule by the people" is not met in the American political system. Chu argues that the American democratic system is gradually decaying and not only fails to exemplify emerging democratic countries but actually "becomes the largest source of infection spreading poor democracy" (Chu, 2015, p.4). He maintains that the failure of the American democratic system in facilitating a conducive environment for global democratic advancement is attributable to neo-conservatism, which "makes American soft power acutely vanishing" (Chu, 2015, p.8). Neo-conservatism, Chu argues, has eroded the Western democratic foundation because it precipitates an "extreme imbalance of the power structure of all Western capitalist society and severely distorts the functioning of the democratic system" (Chu, 2015, p.17-18). This distortion of the democratic system, as Chu highlights it, is acute in the American political system because neo-conservatism has caused plutocracy, vetocracy and a regression of human rights and freedoms. Those events all accelerate the decay of American democracy

and deflect the American political system from its ideal of rule "by the people".

Plutocracy, vetocracy and American democratic decay

Neo-conservatism, which has dominated American political ideology since the Reagan era, engenders a plutocracy in which plutocrats manipulate their American political agenda and obstruct mass political participation. The relationship between neo-conservatism and plutocracy, Chu argues, is indicated by the appointment of conservative judges by the Republican governments since the late 1980s. Those appointments consolidate the political influence of plutocrats in the American political system. Chu (2015, p.23) refers to two remarkable adjudications of the U.S. Supreme Court, in 2010 and 2014, and highlights the fact that corporations, unions, and individual donors can spend unlimited money on advertisement and other political tools to support or denounce any individual candidates in an election. Plutocrats thus benefit greatly from conservative adjudications in American courts and have begun to possess overwhelming control over the American political system. With the help of interest groups and lobbyists, plutocrats are disproportionately represented in the American political system, and the laws passed by the Congress are more favourable to their own interests.

To justify the argument that the American political system is acutely eroded by plutocracy, Chu (2015, p.22) refers to the perspective of "*Winner Take All Politics*" (2011) by University of California professor Paul Pierson and Yale professor Jacob Hacker to argue that

American plutocrats fully utilize their economic prowess to influence the political decision-making process, and that prowess helps them to "possess more economic interests and strengthen their political influence". Chu also refers to a study of "*Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens*" (2014) by Princeton professor Martin Gilens and Northwestern University professor Benjamin Page, and to "*The Price of Inequality*" (2012) by Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, to support the argument that American policy issues are primarily driven by lobbyists who represent the interests of enterprises. The influence of plutocracy has destroyed the American political ideal of "rule by the people", and the American democratic system becomes a distorted political system ruled by a few privileged individuals. Chu (2014, p.25-26) writes that,

> Regarding 1779 policy issues between 1981 and 2002, Gilens and Page find that interest groups and lobbyists hired by enterprises are the most critical force of finalizing these policy issues. The impact of the average citizen on policy issues is mild and the legislation of most policy issues runs counter to public will reflected by opinion polls. Their findings imply that the American political system has lost its democratic essence and has become an oligarchy manipulated by plutocrats. Joseph Stiglitz, in his book "*The Price of Inequality*" laments that American plutocrats over the past 30 years have succeeded in subduing administrative branches and the Congress to formulate unfair

rules of the game through manipulation of the political system and control of the media; Stiglitz also bemoans that America has deviated from Lincoln's ideal of 'of the people, by the people and for the people' and deformed it as 'of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%'.

Chu argues that vetocracy is caused by the domination of ultra-rightists in the Republican Party who embrace neo-conservatism and advocate market fundamentalism and who disregard the role of the state. These Republican neo-conservatists possess veto power within the American political system and hold a tight gridlock on bicameralism and the separation of powers, and that power "makes political stalemate more frequent" (Chu, 2015, p.23). Political stalemate is indicated by how Republican conservatists can always find a point of entry in the American decision-making process from which to obstruct the implementation of new policy issues. New policy issues connected to construction of American infrastructures, such as the improvement of the transportation system between New York and New Jersey, Chu argues, remain stagnant because "Republican conservatists take the irrational attitude to counter any transportation construction plan, even under the condition of partial subsidies provided by the federal government" (Chu, 2015, p.31). Chu refers to the argument of American liberal scholar Francis Fukuyama to highlight how vetocracy has acutely contributed to American political decay, because Fukuyama worries that the "traditional design of checks and balances becomes more rigid and a highly

decentralized system cannot represent the interest of the majority under political polarization" (Chu, 2015, p.29).

Deterioration of freedom of the press and human rights

Plutocracy prompted by neo-conservatism also suppresses other social forces to counter the influence of interest groups in dominating the American political system, because freedom of the press and human rights are sabotaged by Republican control over the American media. Chu attributes the deterioration of freedom of the American press to the Republican Party because it has promulgated regulations that benefit its control over American local media and that blunt the critical attitude of the American media toward American political situations. Chu (2015, p.24) writes that,

> The expenditure for advertisement by enterprises has harnessed American media and coerced them to get rid of sensitive and controversial issues. Their major function has retreated to entertainment. Republicans since the late 1980's have loosened shareholding regulation of American media business and pro-Republican shareholding companies have begun to control major local radio and newspapers through mergers and acquisition. Only a few liberal newspapers in the East Coast remain critical of the current political situation.

Capitalist control over American freedom of the press, Chu argues, has suppressed the media atmosphere in America into one of "completely entertainization", which makes media companies reluctant to expose sensitive and critical social issues. Chu argues that since the survival of the American media relies on commercial advertising, if the American media report information that is detrimental to the interest or reputation of their advertising customers, that information will be censored, and that censorship makes freedom of the press a myth. In addition, American audiences, Chu says, display no interest in programmes reporting on heavy social topics and they blunt the critical attitude of the American media that would strengthen the freedom of the American press. Chu (2015, p.57-58) writes that,

> A Canadian social organization which advocates rational consumption and sustainable development and educates the public to counter commercial advertisement of unlimited consumption desires, initiated a campaign called "Buy Nothing Day". In 2000, the organization had gathered sufficient funds and decided to advertise the campaign through mainstream American media. NBC refused to broadcast because it would offend its advertising customers. ABC and CBS also refused to broadcast it and the organization at last resorted to internet broadcasting. This shows that the American media under capitalist logic has no genuine independence and freedom. Complete entertainization is the inevitable outcome of this structural constraint. American

televisions are reluctant to report social dark-side and injustice because they worry about the impact on TV ratings and advertising revenue. Owners of mainstream media know that their most important audiences are upper middle class living in suburban areas who expect relaxed programmes and refuse heavy social topics.

Deterioration of the freedom of the American press and of human rights, Chu stresses, culminated in the 9/11 incident, after which the American government launched an anti-terrorist war through tighter control over American freedoms and human rights. Chu argues that the American judiciary, which has long been regarded as the guardian of American freedoms and human rights, drastically changed toward a more ideological conservatism after the 9/11 incident. Ideologically conservative judges, in the name of protecting national security, coerced American newspapers into publicizing their sources of information and adjudicating that government surveillance and intrusion of privacy are legal in order to protect national security. Indulgence of such state intrusions and surveillance have led Chu to criticize that America has changed from a democratic country to a notorious "police state" that resorts to surveillance and terror to govern the country. Chu (2015, p.34-35) writes that,

"Human rights" and "freedom" since the 9/11 incident have severely regressed. American courts in the past were always the bulwark of protecting human rights and

social minorities. However, Republicans in recent years have appointed many ideologically conservative legal professionals as federal judges. These conservative judges dominate the federal court system, suppress the scope of press freedom and indulge in state surveillance on personal privacy. In recent years, journalists of major American newspapers who disclose government secret files are required by American courts to expose the source of information in the name of protecting national security, otherwise they will be in jail. Since the era of George W. Bush, the American government, in the name of "anti-terrorist war", has developed an American style police state. The Department of Homeland Security launches full monitoring on phones and email and arbitrarily promulgates alerts, which creates mass terror.

Chu suggests that plutocracy, vetocracy and the deterioration of freedoms and human rights caused by neo-conservatism therefore prevents America from exemplifying to other countries that it is to their advantage to consolidate a positive global environment for democratic advancement. The decay of American democracy has induced a detrimental external environment of global democratic recession instead. Chu highlights the problem of global democratic recession by referring to the perspective of Stanford professor Larry Diamond, who argues that democratic development in emerging democratic countries is stagnating. Stagnation of democratic development means that average citizens must endure

poor governance because their countries' political systems, despite the introduction of electoral democracy, are plagued by a political monopoly of oligarchs who manipulate political agendas, in situations similar to the American plutocracy. Accompanied by judicial corruption and the prominent role of the military in politics, the foundation of emerging democratic countries is extremely fragile, and that fragility makes the collapse of democracy possible. Chu (2015, p.39-40) writes that,

> Democratic recession has become a common phenomenon. People are suffering from various kinds of poor governance. Abuse of power from the judiciary and armed forces are happening in many countries. Powers are manipulated by those selected through democratic elitism. These phenomena, in which typical democratic governance is not applied, are common nowadays. While many emerging democratic countries can still maintain a fragile democratic regime, democracy might erode to some extent. Diamond also points out that the third wave democracy has a weak fertile ground to support democratization, so a retreat and break down of the democratic system become possible at any time.

Global democratic recession, Chu contends, is indicated in the collapse of democratic regime in Egypt, the Ukraine and Thailand. The collapse of these democratic regimes challenges the

common understanding that only authoritarian regimes will be toppled and that a democratic system is everlasting (Chu, 2015, p.40). Zhu particularly highlights the Philippines as an example of how Western democracy fails to become ingrained in new, emerging democratic countries. Chu argues that even though the Philippines is widely considered by the West to be a democratic country, Philippine democratic development suffers from opaque manipulation of the electoral process, bribery, intimidation, arrest of social leaders, suppression of press freedom and violation of human rights, in which the essence of democratic politics is not embedded (Chu, 2015, p.42). Democracy has failed to bring substantial benefits to the Philippines, in terms of basic protections for social welfare and the beneficial conditions of good governance, because democracy cannot fundamentally change the structure of Philippine political power and improve the enduring malfeasance. Chu (2015, p.43) writes that,

> In terms of the structure of political power, Philippine politics (including the president, the Congress and provincial governor) still does not deviate from oligarchy in which ruling groups constituted by local despots and landlords have tight control over Philippine politics. Presidential election is nothing but a game of thrones of political elites. Enduring problems, including monopolization of land by oligarchs, acute income inequality, large scale unemployment, corruption, and abuse of power have become

structural and are not improved by democratization.

In short, Chu denounces the legitimacy of Western values by highlighting how American neo-conservatism has caused the problems of plutocracy, vetocracy and deterioration of press freedom and human rights, which in turn sabotage the foundation of the American political system. In addition, Chu highlights how American democratic decay fails to exemplify to emerging democratic countries how to consolidate democratic development. Indigenous traditions of developing countries also make it difficult for Western democracy to become ingrained and deliver good governance.

3.2: A global democratic decay and the limitations of global democratic systems

Whereas Chu mainly focuses on the limitations that American democratic system is facing, Zhang pays great attention to the shortcomings that other global democratic systems are enduring. Zhang argues that global democratic systems are facing severe challenges that fail to deliver satisfactory public governance and even cause national disaggregation under distinctive and complex national conditions. An underlying reason of such a global democratic decay, Zhang contends, is an incompatibility between Western democracy and indigenous traditions of non-Western countries.

A major limitation of global democratic systems that precipitates a global democratic decay, is how the systems only spawn politicians who are shortsighted and mediocre and who

fail to win public trust by building national development. Zhang states that despite the significant amount of funding and professional guidance provided by the EU to Eastern European countries for them to establish a Western democratic system of elections and constitutional framework, few genuine political leaders who truly embrace democratic values are groomed. Instead, only selfish politicians who are devoted to a power struggle are spawned, and they disappoint Eastern Europeans about the future of the Western political model in tackling enduring development problems. Zhang (2015, p.37) writes that,

> Although the EU provided significant funding, professional guidance and constitutional framework to Eastern Europe throughout the past 20 years, few genuine democrats have been groomed. Many selfish politicians fight with each other for power and money and disappoint Eastern Europeans about their government. Even the EU is disappointed by Eastern European democratic development. Both Eastern Europeans and the EU assume that everything would be better once the political system is changed. After a romantic and passionate democratic revolution, people figure out that past custom and behavior are still ingrained, and structural social change remains extremely slow.

Selfishness of politicians, Zhang argues, is criticized by the EU as a major obstructor of Eastern European democratic development. Zhang refers to the EU's comment about the

selfishness of Eastern European politicians, since they strive to integrate with the EU "not because of any lofty ideals but because of subsidies by the EU" (Zhang, 2015, p.43). The opinion of the EU about selfish and mediocre politicians is indicated by several politicians in certain Eastern European countries. Zhang argues that those politicians are incapable of securing the public trust because they promulgate chaotic and nationalistic policies that are detrimental to public governance and fail to deliver satisfactory performance for the public well-being. Zhang highlights Polish presidents Lech and Jaroslaw Kaczynski as examples of how mediocre politicians formulate policies that the EU considers to be troublesome, including "incitement of nationalism to hold Germany to account for the crimes in the Second World War, prohibition of homosexuality, resumption of the death penalty and expansion of Catholic influence" (Zhang, 2015, p.39). Member of Slovak parliament Jan Slota is also highlighted by Zhang as having been repulsed by the EU because he was an extremist nationalist who "explicitly displays hostility towards two major ethnic minority groups of Slovakia, Hungarian and Gypsy" (Zhang, 2015, p.40). Hungary, which is widely considered as a relatively successful transitional country, Zhang argues, is also plagued by mediocre politicians who stagnate national development. Zhang refers to the confession, in an inner party meeting, by Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany, who admitted that his ruling party "fails to deliver any performance it can take pride in and has taken every measure to keep this in secret before the election" (Zhang, 2015, p.40). Zhang also argues that

Romanians are disappointed by the political struggle reflected in the rise and fall of Romanian President Traian Basescu, who "was opposed and removed from office by a majority of congressman in 2006 but soon saved his seat through universal suffrage" (Zhang, 2015, p.41). Latvians are also weary of politicians because "all Latvians grumble about politicians, since they are talkers rather than doers" (Zhang, 2015, p.42).

The disappointment of Eastern Europeans about their public governance and the poor quality of democratic development, Zhang argues, is indicated by the low degree of public trust, as is shown in public opinion polls such as Eurobarometer and the index of democracy by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). Zhang (2015, p.37) refers to the 2008 opinion poll by Eurobarometer and argues that the "degree of trust by most Eastern Europeans towards their governments is very low" (e.g., Bulgaria 16%, Poland 17%, Latvia 19%, Romania, Hungary, and Czech Republic 21%). Zhang also refers to the 2006 index of democracy by the Economist Intelligence Unit and enumerates the ranking of several Eastern European countries, such as Hungary and Poland, to explain that democratic development in these countries has an even poorer performance than in Taiwan, which is ruled by the populist Chen Shui-bian, who was engulfed in a corruption scandal. Zhang (2015, p.38) writes that,

> The EIU index considers the quality of democracy in Eastern Europe as lower than that of Taiwan under the presidency of Chen Shui-bian. This index ranks Taiwan at 32nd,

and only the Czech Republic among the above Eastern European countries exceeded Taiwan, because it ranks 18th. Other Eastern countries are ranked below Taiwan: Estonia as 33rd, Hungary as 38th, Slovakia as 41st, Latvia as 43rd, Poland as 46th, Bulgaria as 49th, Romania as 50th. If this index is impartial, people can imagine the quality of democracy in transitional countries in Eastern Europe.

In short, Zhang maintains that Eastern European countries that have emulated the Western political model of multi-party politics and electoral democracy only spawn politicians who indulge in empty talk. Those politicians disappoint the average Eastern European in terms of effective delivery of good governance that could substantively improve their well-being. Furthermore, Zhang suggests that global democratic systems are limited in their ability to effectively eradicate corruption and to foster national cohesion.

Limitations of global democratic systems in curbing corruption and fostering national cohesion

In addition to the failure of politicians in fostering national development, Zhang argues that global democratic systems fail to effectively eradicate corruption that has become ingrained, particularly in Asian countries, such as Taiwan, South Korea and Indonesia. Zhang (2011, p.226) argues that even though the Taiwanese government pledges to strike corruption, their efforts are in vain because the "traditional social structure of clan and human relations

breeds fertile ground for bribery in elections". The influence of chaebols in South Korean political circles, Zhang argues, has expanded since the country's democratization because of "government-business collusion and tremendous funding provided by chaebols to the government" (Zhang, 2011, p.226). The Indonesian democratic system is also plagued by serious corruption because Indonesian politics, Zhang states, is "basically network-based in which the military and political families are influential" (Zhang, 2011, p.228). Zhang refers to a Thai political leader Sondhi Limthongkul's argument that the Thai political system is being eroded by pervasive corruption caused by Western electoral democracy. Limthongkul had been a fervent proponent of Thai democratization but later advocated the abandonment of Congressional elections because he observed that "Thai elections become meaningless due to corrupt politics, pervasive voting buying and benighted rural voters" (Zhang, 2011, p.227). Pervasive corruption in Asian democratic countries therefore challenges the assumption that the Western electoral democratic system is advantageous in eradicating corruption through greater political openness.

Thai political system, Zhang says, is not only plagued by rampant corruption but also by social division since the introduction of the Western political model. Zhang argues that confrontation between the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (the UDD, or red-shirts, a political organization that supports former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra) and the People's Alliance for Democracy (the PAD, or yellow-shirts, an anti-

Thaksin political bloc) explains the perpetuation and aggravation of regional disparities in Thailand. This political confrontation even caused Thaksin's resignation and the overthrow of his government by the military. Thaksin's resignation, Zhang argues, indicates the perpetuation of Thai social divisions because his decision only satisfied the demands of the urban middleclass and was strongly opposed by Thai farmers, who constitute approximately 70% of the total Thai population. Thus, according to Zhang, any democratically elected Thai Prime Minister would face serious opposition under Thailand's national conditions (Zhang, 2011, p.224).

Zhang refers to Taiwan as another example of how social division is acutely aggravated by a Western democratic system in which mediocre politicians are keen on manipulating and inciting nationalistic sentiment for electoral support. Zhang (2014, p.182-183) argues that Taiwan's democratic system is still immature because the country until now has remained "incapable of solving the question of national identity and elections always become highly ideological confrontations". According to Zhang, a national identity is necessary for a democratic system to mature because an underdeveloped national identity makes it easier for politicians to "play the populist card to incite social confrontation to win votes" (Zhang, 2014, p.185). The fact that Taiwanese politicians are playing the populist card, Zhang argues, is reflected in how the former Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian intentionally instigated social confrontation between "Taiwanese" and "Chinese" and politically divided Taiwan into

the “patriotic South” and the “treasonable North”, which “acutely aggravates social division and undermines governmental capability of social integration” (Zhang, 2011, p.225).

Zhang argues that former socialist countries such as Ukraine also suffer from social division, since the 2004 “orange revolution” when the Western political model was introduced. The co-leaders of the “orange revolution”, Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, were soon in conflict after they became Ukraine’s respective president and Prime Minister. The power struggle between these two former allies, in tandem with corruption and economic stagnation, disappointed the public’s hopes about the future of Ukrainian democratic development, as shown in a 2009 Pew opinion poll (when merely 30% Ukrainians supported democracy, compared with 72% in 1991) (Zhang, 2014, p.177). Declining public support for democracy has been accompanied by social division among Ukrainians, because Ukrainian society is divided into two irreconcilable groups: those representing pro-Western forces and those representing pro-Russian forces. Since the introduction of a Western electoral democratic system, the two factions have continued to “conduct different struggles to assure that candidates representing their interest can assume office” (Zhang, 2014, p.178).

Failure of Western electoral democracy in consolidating national cohesion is argued by Zhang to be prevalent in Africa, as well, particularly in countries that are divided into different tribes and have a weak national identity. Kenya, whose 2007 general election

resulted in controversy, conflict and violence, is a case of how the Western democratic system fails to integrate different tribal identities. Zhang observes that one distinction of African elections, such as those in Kenya, is that "people will only vote for a candidate from the same tribe and the consequence is probably social division and instability" (Zhang, 2015, p,93). Tribal affiliation in Kenya, Zhang argues, is deeply ingrained, which makes it difficult to unite the different tribes and develop a strong Kenyan national identity. Zhang states that without the formation of a nation state with a cohesive national identity shared by different social groups, such as European countries have, it remains doubtful whether African countries like Kenya that emulate the Western political model can preserve social stability, let alone improve people's livelihood. Zhang (2015, p.93) writes that,

> Kenya with 30 million population is divided into over 40 tribes. Kikuyu and Luo are two tribes which are more populous. Two political parties competing in elections represent these two tribes respectively and tribal members are more identified with their tribes than with a Kenyan national identity. I ask a hotel manager who will he vote for and he answers he will vote for the candidate from his tribe. The majority of African countries are still far from nation states like European countries. This hotel manager is from the Kikuyu people. He tells me that he is first a Kikuyu and second a Kenyan.

In short, Zhang suggests that the failure in fostering national cohesion is a major limitation of global democratic systems. Such failure is aggravated by politicians who manipulate nationalistic sentiments in order to win an election, regardless of how those sentiments may be detrimental to the development of national identity and the consolidation of national unity. Moreover, the failure in fostering national cohesion, as Zhang points out, could be devastating in a sense that causes national disaggregation.

National disaggregation as a devastation of Western democracy

The limitations of Western democratic system, Zhang contends, sometimes disaggregate a country because of an escalation of ethno-nationalism accompanied by a blind pursuit of emulating the Western political model. One case in point is multi-ethic countries such as Yugoslavia. In the late 1980s Yugoslav intelligentsia and local party branches, Zhang says, were enchanted with the Western political model of universal suffrage and multi-party politics because they assumed that all domestic problems caused by a one-party system would be tackled once Yugoslavia adopted the Western democratic model of political pluralism. The blind pursuit of Western political convergence ultimately disaggregated Yugoslavia because the introduction of multi-party politics prompted Yugoslav political parties to ignite radical nationalism, which then destroyed a united Yugoslav national identity. In this sense, Western democratization is viewed by Zhang as the most destructive force of Yugoslav disaggregation, because it ignored the distinctive Yugoslav national condition of

multi-ethnicity and accelerated the Yugoslav federal division. Zhang (2015, p.24-25) writes that,

> The tide of Western "democratization" caused the whole Yugoslav intelligentsia to fully accept Western political discourse. The core of this discourse is a naïve dream: All problems faced by Yugoslavia will be tackled once the Western political system is adopted. This resulted in the formation of a radical revolutionary atmosphere. Local party branches of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia subsequently embraced Western political discourse and promoted political reforms each more radical than the last. The League of Communists of Slovenia in March 1989 first announced, 'the end of the one-party system and implementation of the multi-party system'. After that, Yugoslavia's political situation became uncontrollable and the federal government and central agency of the Yugoslav Communist Party turned into a figurehead. All these are not about whether a one-party system or multi-party system is more advantageous. It is about the inevitability of disaggregation and civil war caused by Western political reform under the distinctive Yugoslav national condition. Yet, average citizens and even the majority of Yugoslav intellectuals at that time did not see this point.

In addition, Zhang also refers to his first-hand experience of interacting with former

Yugoslavs, to highlight the significant and irreplaceable role of a strong leader and genuine statesman like former Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito, in preserving the unity of Yugoslavia. In Zhang's opinion, that scenario is in sharp contrast with the country's ethnic separatism since Western democratization. Zhang (2015, p.27) refers to the comment of one Serbian businessman on the difference between Tito and politicians elected by one person, one vote, as

> Tito is the most memorable person among Serbians. After his death, our country began to deteriorate. Serbia was at its best from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Tito was a statesman. Tito could not be elected by one person and one vote. Instead, Milosevic was elected, and Yugoslavia was finally destroyed by this kind of politicians.

The high prestige of Tito in uniting Yugoslavia, Zhang argues, is explicit among people from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia. Zhang (2015, p.28) refers to the perspective of a Bosnian-Herzegovinian scholar who highlights that "Yugoslavia coexisted peacefully during Tito's era but became irrational and hostile by politicians who incited nationalistic and religious sentiments". Zhang (2015, p.29) also cites the comment of his Croatian friend who praised Tito as "still the most prestigious statesman from the former Yugoslav republics, including the firstly independent Slovenia" because of Tito's high

prestige associated with “free health care, free education, paid leave and his incomparable charisma, with high self-esteem and strong personality”. In addition, Zhang (2015, p.31) points out the appreciation of a Macedonian writer who said that “Tito tried to make his people wealthy and had political integrity, which today’s politicians mostly lack”.

In short, Zhang contends that Yugoslavia is an example of how a Western democratic system can escalate ethno-nationalism and ethnic hostilities and disaggregate a country. Ethnic hostility incited by politicians after the introduction of Western electoral democracy, Zhang says, is in sharp contrast to Yugoslavia’s social unity and better social welfare during Tito’s era when the country was governed by a strong leader.

Incompatibility between Western values and indigenous traditions of non-Western democratic countries

Zhang suggests that an incompatibility between Western democracy and indigenous traditions of non-Western democratic countries is an underlying reason that global democratic systems are facing serious challenges of building national development and fostering national cohesion. Such incompatibility, Zhang says, is prevalent in South Asia where Western democracy is incompatible with, and fails to alter, ingrained social and religious traditions. Zhang argues that “the quality of Indian democracy is not high” because Western democracy is incompatible with the Indian caste system and makes it difficult for the Indian political system to “develop the basic conditions of modernization like social equality, land reform and

emancipation of women" (Zhang, 2015, p.16). Zhang criticizes the fact that although the caste system has been legally abandoned, it is still ingrained in the Indian mindset and social life and perpetuates the educational inequality of young Indians. Even though numerous Indian social organizations are devoted to providing education for children from different castes, Zhang argues that the perpetuation of the caste system is difficult to terminate because of Indian religious traditions and the Indian democratic system, in which caste still plays a critical role in local politics. Zhang (2015, p.17) writes that,

> There are plenty of non-governmental organizations in India which are dedicated to the abandonment of the caste system. These organizations run schools and equally treat different children from different castes, which is encouraging. However, these works may only be a drop in the bucket and useless because the caste system is part of Hinduism. Hinduism has not experienced religious reform and the Indian "democratic" system is unable to promote social revolution. The consequence is the enduring plague of the caste system on Indian society; the Indian democratic electoral system, to a certain extent, also sustains this system. At the federal level, political parties are national, which transcends castes. Yet there is no such regulation at a local level and many local parties are completely based on caste and sustain de facto perpetuation of the caste system.

India is not an exception of how an incompatibility exists between Western democracy and indigenous socio-political traditions in South Asia. That incompatibility, Zhang argues, also engulfs Pakistani democratic development in a vicious cycle of "universal suffrage, chaos, coups, assassination, and repetitive universal suffrage", which makes the Pakistani democratic system look like a "castle on the beach without a solid foundation" (Zhang, 2015, p.91). Zhang states that this vicious cycle is reflected in the political career of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was assassinated in Rawalpindi in 2007. Zhang stresses that even though Bhutto was elected through universal suffrage and was largely supported by the Pakistani poor, her political career was not a success of Pakistani democratic development because she failed to unite the different social and political groups in an effort to consolidate her ruling foundation. Referring to the comment of a retired Pakistani official, Zhang highlights the challenges faced by Bhutto in strengthening a Pakistani national cohesion and enhancing the quality of Pakistani democratic development under the complex Pakistani national condition. These challenges of social integration and political succession are considered to have been insurmountable for Bhutto, even if she had survived the assassination. Zhang (2015, p.91-92) writes that,

I (retired official) really sympathize with Bhutto. However even if she were not

assassinated and smoothly elected as the Prime Minister, she would face tremendous difficulty. How could she assure that the Pakistani military, the Pakistani Intelligence Service and Islamic sheikhs would cooperate with her? What could she rely on to integrate the society and govern the country without this cooperation? Her supporters were mainly poor and pro-Western liberal intellectuals and she failed to integrate Pakistani society. She did not perform well throughout her previous Prime Ministership. Her son is now elected as the leader of the Pakistan People's Party after her death, according to her testament. This explains the questionable quality of Pakistani democracy.

The incompatibility between Western democracy and indigenous traditions is also prevalent in other Islamic countries, Zhang argues—such as in Egypt, where the struggle among different religious and political groups is severe. The "Arab Spring" that toppled former dictator Mubarak and introduced universal suffrage to Egypt, according to Zhang, also brought another challenge to Egyptian national cohesion and stability. That challenge is the internal struggle between different Egyptian political powers, which has been aggravated by Western electoral democracy. Zhang (2014, p.174) refers to the Muslim Brotherhood's presidential candidate, Mohamed Morsi, being overthrown by the military as an indication of how Western democracy has engulfed Egypt in an "intense struggle between Islamists and

secularists and massive violence which eclipse future Egyptian development". Zhang argues that the Egyptian electoral democratic system perpetuates the country's enduring political struggle and vicious cycle of universal suffrage and coups, which in turn hinders the improvement of people's livelihood. Zhang (2014, p.176) writes that,

> Egypt seems to be entangled in the typical vicious cycle of developing countries which adopt the Western model. A populist leader is elected by universal suffrage, but they fail to tackle economic problems. Then the military stages a coup but also fails to improve people's livelihood. People once again demand democratization. After the newly elected government assumes office, this vicious cycle begins. This is the misfortune of Egypt.

In short, Zhang maintains that an incompatibility between Western democracy and deeply ingrained cultural and religious traditions is an underlying reason that global democratic systems fail to build national development and tackle various socio-political problems. That incompatibility, even has not caused any devastating national disaggregation, can still perpetuate social inequality and engulfs countries in a vicious cycle of elections, coups and re-elections that obstructs the countries' basic administrative functioning and degrades the improvement of people's well-being. Because of a distinctive relation-based Asian value system of collectivism, Zhang stresses that the introduction of a Western political

model also fails to fundamentally transform East Asian countries' social and political structures to create a more fertile ground in which Western democracy can flourish. The strong contrast between Asian collectivism and Western individualism, Zhang argues, implies that Western political values also fail to alter Chinese cultural and political traditions within the Asian value system.

Distinctive value system in East Asia

The incompatibility of Western democracy and East Asian traditions, Zhang argues, is reflected by a study by East Asian Barometer and by opinion polls conducted by American intellectual David Hitchcock on Asian values. The study and polls indicate that East Asians prioritize family interests, social order, harmony and respect for authority, which are in sharp contrast to Western individualism (Zhang, 2011, p.234). Zhang suggests that the ideological differences between East Asian family values and Western individualism indicate that the alternative and appropriate way for a developing democracy to succeed is to integrate with indigenous cultural traditions. Such integration can help developing countries to explore distinctive democratic models that suit the specific national conditions, instead of structurally altering a country's cultural foundation to adapt to Western culture. Zhang (2011, p.233) writes that,

If Western society is best characterized by customs and institutions developed by

individualism, then East Asian society is best characterized by customs and institutions developed by family and human relations. In light of this cultural difference, the appropriate way of democratic development is to integrate with indigenous cultural tradition and conduct institutional innovation which can foster strengths and circumvent weaknesses, instead of transforming the indigenous culture to adapt to Western culture and political institutions.

Given the ideological differences between East Asia and the West, Zhang argues that the Western judicial tradition based on individual rights is "difficult to be replicated by non-Western society" because the cultural peculiarities of East Asia, particularly China, are "sensible (合情, *he qing*) and reasonable (合理, *heli*)" and differ from Western culture, which only stresses reasonability. Thus, an attempt to transform "Chinese flexible and intimate family relationships" to "American rigid contractual relationships" would be in vain, as well (Zhang, 2011, p.235). The incompatibility between the "Western culture of confrontation, with individual rights", and the Asian "harmonious culture, with a balance of rights and obligation", Zhang argues, would induce social confrontation and division (Zhang, 2011, p.236).

In short, Zhang's perspective on the incompatibility between Western values and Chinese traditions is Pan's central argument in denouncing Western political legitimacy. The

following section will discuss that Pan pays specific attention to how a family-based social structure makes it impossible and inconceivable for contemporary China to be compatible with Western social and political values, such as civil society, majoritarianism and a separation of powers.

3.3: Incompatibility between Western values and Chinese traditions—A class-based vs a family-based society

Whereas Zhu and Zhang are more outward-looking in discussing the limitations of Western values in the American political system and non-Western societies and in their opinion that Western democracy is incompatible with indigenous cultural traditions, Pan's discourse is more Chinese-centered in discussing the distinctive cultural differences and different historical paths of the West and China that make it inconceivable for contemporary China to embrace Western values. Western values and concepts, Pan argues, were developed by the distinctive Western historical path in which society is stratified into rigid social classes. Western class-based society, Pan contends, is the foundation of the Western social model of a civil society and of the Western political model that supports majoritarianism and a separation of powers.

Pan asserts that stratified social classes have been perpetuated throughout Western history. Examples are the aristocratic class in ancient Greece and Rome, which stratified Western society into different strata, and that distinct social hierarchy provides Western

society with a "protection of social order" (Pan, 2010, p.126-127). Class-based society, with social stratification, has gradually nurtured Western civil society, which separates society from state intervention. According to Pan, Western civil society originated with the confrontation between the aristocracy and freemen (城市自由民, *chengshi ziyou min*) who "targeted the aristocratic class which possessed land ownership and political power and united together to protect their own interests" (Pan, 2010, p.134). Western civil society became more prosperous following the first Industrial Revolution when more social groups, such as labor unions and the church, emerged, and their power in constraining the state apparatus became more apparent (Pan, 2010, p.134). After Western democratization, Pan states that "the Western state is opened for free competition between different social groups", which means that Western society is not only autonomous in protecting the social groups' interests from state intervention but also that the different social groups cooperate with or confront each other in pursuit of political authority (Pan, 2010, p.135).

By contrast, Pan argues that ancient China developed a distinctive Chinese social structure based on equal peasant households (均質小農家庭, *jun zhi xiaonong jiating*) that were traditionally in unity with a fair and honorable government. Chinese civilization, Pan says, "did not support a slave and feudal society" because self-sufficient peasant households had already become the Chinese basic social unit by the late Spring and Autumn Period (Pan, 2010, p.121). A family-based Chinese society therefore emerged and perpetuated throughout

China's history, with a collective economy (集體經濟, *jiti jingji*) founded on clan-owned fields (宗田, *zongtian*) and a patriarchal clan system (宗法, *zongfa*) that developed in the Song dynasty (Pan, 2010, p.122). That family-based society was also supported and consolidated by the birth of Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties, with a greater emphasis on family ethics, and by the evaluation of officials' performance that emphasizes more the family ethical standards of filial piety and honesty in the Ming and Qing dynasties (Pan, 2010, p.122-123). Pan suggests that China's family-based social structure remains unchanged in contemporary China because traditional peasant households also have "successfully transitioned as non-agricultural family enterprises" since the Reform and Opening era, when a strong Chinese collective economy was also inherited and developed by rural communities who shared the same kinship (Pan, 2010, p.123-124).

To justify the reason that Western social class has not emerged in China, Pan asserts that historical Chinese political status is captured by a differentiation between officials and the people (官民之分, *guanmin zhi fen*) instead of by stratification of social classes and competition among social groups. That differentiation means that official positions under the emperor were opened to the whole society and that no social classes existed apart from peasants (Pan, 2010, p.74). Frequent revolutions launched by peasants and commoners throughout Chinese history, Pan contends, were not like Western class conflicts that attempted to replace one social class with another, but instead were intended to overthrow "a

corrupt government which was not people-based and became self-serving" (Pan, 2010, p.74). In addition, Pan maintains that the traditional Chinese social differentiation of "scholar, peasant, artisan and merchant" (士農工商, *shinonggongshang*) differs from Western class stratification or class conflict because it is simply a division of labor or a difference in careers in harmony with each other (Pan, 2010, p.75). Pan also states that class conflict in Maoist China should not be understood in the Western sense, in part because it was ideologically oriented to target "not a particular and substantial social class, but a particular ideology and social minority which represented this ideology", and the objective of that class conflict was distinctively Chinese in the sense that it "united ideology, consolidated the regime and developed socialism" (Pan, 2010, p.87-88).

In short, Western social tradition developed a class-based society and has gradually nurtured a civil society that is separate from the state. Ancient China developed a social structure that was based on equal peasant households, and ancient Chinese dynasties consolidated a family-based society that perpetuates in contemporary China. Differences in the traditional social structures of the West and China, Pan suggests, also imply that Western political value of majoritarianism has no fertile ground in China, where a family-based society supports the value of virtue and rites for decision-making.

Western majoritarianism vs Chinese virtue

Pan maintains that differences between the Chinese and Western social structures imply

that China has no fertile ground on which to develop a Western political model that depends on majoritarianism for decision-making. Majoritarianism, according to Pan, is the foundation of Western political model, which Pan coins as "power politics" (強權政治, *qiangquan zhengzhi*) and "group politics" (集團政治, *jituan zhengzhi*). Power politics means that the particular social group that wins the majority of votes in elections overpowers the other groups that receive fewer votes. Group politics refers to competition and confrontation between different social groups to preserve particular group interests. Because of the traditional family-based social structure and the contemporary economic structure founded on collectivism, Pan argues that China is incompatible with Western consciousness of social groups' competition as a precondition of developing a Western political model. Pan (2010, p.107) writes that,

> Traditional Chinese society was constituted by independent, free, self-sufficient and equal peasant families. Western social classes and interest groups did not exist, and the consciousness of group politics or consciousness of power politics was not bred. The Chinese traditional ideology did not support group interest and group politics based on group interests. In modern China, Chinese industry is mainly conducted by family enterprises, state-owned enterprises and communal collective enterprises. Western interest groups and a consciousness of group politics are not bred. Competition of

political parties is therefore not legitimate in China.

Majoritarianism has not become a traditional Chinese political concept, because the essence of majoritarianism as the "majority bully minorities" (以眾凌寡, *yi zhong ling gua*), according to Pan, has been incompatible with the traditional Chinese political ideology of "impartiality and harmony" (中正和諧, *zhongzheng hexie*) and "educated and reasonable" (知書達理, *zhishudali*) sentiments that rely on righteous people as communal leaders instead of relying on voting or majority rule for problem-solving and decision-making within different kinship villages (Pan, 2010, p.75). In addition, Pan points out that another Chinese political tradition is ritual law (禮法, *lifa*) in which the essence of dispute settlement is not statutory law but is "ethics and morality and the flexible combination of 'natural law (天理, *tianli*), human feelings (人情, *renqing*) and national law (國法, *guofa*)'" (Pan, 2010, p.93). "Natural law" and "human feelings", as the essence of ritual law, means that social conflicts have been traditionally settled by local grassroots organizations and gentry (鄉紳, *xiangshen*) who exercised flexible discretion in accordance with local customs and rites to "convince both parties in law suits not to appeal", instead of being settled by reliance on logical debate by legal professionals and strict adherence to regulations and articles (Pan, 2010, p.93-94).

Western separation of powers vs Chinese concentration of powers

Pan also argues that in addition to majoritarianism, Western separation of powers and

judicial independence are incompatible with Chinese political tradition of a concentration of powers. He argues that judicial independence is a "Western means to constrain majoritarianism" and the combination of judicial independence and electoral democracy is a "distinctive Western political system of 'liberal democracy'" (2010, p.80). The emergence of judicial independence, Pan reflects, is also explained by rigid Western social stratification, which is based on social classes and interest groups, making it difficult to centralize political power in Western society. Political power is thus decentralized in the West and a "group of the legal professionals" (法律人集團, *falu ren jituan*) has emerged and survived independently amid class conflicts and group politics (Pan, 2010, p.91).

China's family-based society with the unity of government and people implies that Chinese political power is traditionally centralized and as such has provided no room or foundation on which judicial independence could emerge (Pan, 2010, p.92). Pan contends that Western judicial independence is detrimental to Chinese judicial development, as is reflected in a recent development of the Chinese judiciary system. The corruption scandal in the Chinese Supreme Court in 2008 (resulting in detainment and a life sentence for Huang Songyou (黃松有) , the vice president of the Supreme People's Court), Pan argues, indicates that once the pace of Chinese judicial independence accelerates, the danger of the Chinese judicial system being corrupted and captured by capital becomes more apparent (Pan, 2010, p.95). Moreover, the Chinese legal community's poor comprehension of Western legal

principles explains why judicial independence is detrimental to Chinese judicial development. Western legal principles of a system that is low profile, conservative and nonpolitical, Pan argues, mean that Western legal professionals "avoid becoming the focus of public opinion", are "loyal to existing legal regulations" and "circumvent sensitive political issues" (Pan, 2010, p.92). The Chinese legal community, Pan says, could not comprehend these three principles because Chinese legal professionals who attempt to seize political influence are often seen, and some Chinese legal scholars are coined by Pan as being a "sorcerer who attempts to promote judicial independence to influence the Chinese future" (Pan, 2010, p.95). All these limitations imply that the Chinese judiciary under the Party's leadership is "reasonable and complies with Chinese national conditions", particularly in terms of "preventing the judiciary from manipulating politics" (Pan, 2010, p.97). Therefore, the Chinese judicial system should not be separated from the administrative and legislative branches, but more appropriately should be divided as a legal apparatus under the Party's leadership.

3.4: Limitations of denouncement of Western values—A narrow and exaggerated discussion of Western and global democratic development

The above discussion indicates that the Model's proponents of denouncing Western democracy focus on how American democratic development is eroded by problems such as plutocracy and vetocracy, on how global democratic systems are plagued by various

developmental problems, and on how Western democracy is incompatible with Chinese socio-political traditions. These perspectives, that seems plausible and convincing at first glance, have limitations in providing a more comprehensive understanding of Western democratic development and of Chinese social changes.

Chu narrowly focuses on American political decay in denouncing the legitimacy of Western democracy, while ignoring the fact that American institutional design and its political decay are also distinctive and exceptional. In the article "*Why are we still fighting over Obamacare*" (2013), Fukuyama argues that "the United States is an outlier among the world's rich democracies". Fukuyama contends that the American constitutional system distributes political power into the two chambers of Congress, the courts, the states and individual localities, and that various political players wield every institutional leverage to impair electoral winners and to block any government mandate that would be beneficial to social well-being. Other developed democracies, such as European parliamentary democracies, by contrast, attempt to prevent the state from overreaching, while at the same time they accept a majority that governs in elections and they maintain a determination to provide a certain level of universal health care. In his article *"The decay of American political institutions"* (2013), Fukuyama contends that the American government "remains an outlier" in terms of size, scope, government expenditures and tax revenues, in comparison with other OECD countries. Fukuyama also points out that vetocracy is more evident in America than in other democratic

countries, such as Britain, where the Westminster system is considered to be “one of the most decisive in the democratic world”, with fewer constraints by veto players and with greater formal powers enjoyed by the government through a concentration of power.

Although Zhang complains that a global democratic decay is attributable to the incompatibility between Western democracy and indigenous traditions, he ignores the fact that democratic development can be impeded by autocratic and anti-democratic rulers, as well. Political manipulation by autocratic and anti-democratic rulers, along with other regional factors and patriarchal structures, are identified as being critical factors in democratic deficits in Islamic countries (Minkenberg, 2007, p.901-903). Taking that factor into account, we can better understand whether the root cause of the disaggregation of Yugoslavia was really the advent of electoral and multi-party democracy or the political suppression by Tito. In contrast with Zhang’s argument about Tito’s contribution to Yugoslav unity, some studies reveal that that a united Yugoslavia was only Tito’s political tactic and expedited his quest for political power. Djilas argues that Tito concerned most about his personal cult by brutally removing liberal reformists from party leadership, by reintroducing party centralism to eliminate resistance and oppositional threats, and by obstructing any cultural and intellectual exchanges among the different republics that could attenuate traditional ethno-nationalism and forge genuine Yugoslav unity (Djilas, 1995, p.119). In addition, perhaps the advent of electoral and multi-party democracy was only the culmination

of Yugoslavia's disaggregation. Since the beginning of the first monarchical Yugoslavia (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes), Yugoslavia has already been non-synchronized and contradictory because of the conflict between the Serbian pursuit of territorial expansion and the Croatian pursuit of power devolution. That conflict endured, and the undemocratic Tito failed to peacefully tackle it (Pesic, 1996; Stojanovic, 1995). Therefore, Zhang may overestimate the national unity of Yugoslavia during Tito's era because a supranational Yugoslavism that Tito anticipated has long been eclipsed by ethno-nationalism in the different republics and led to the situation of "Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs" (Lendvaim, 1991).

Zhang's referral to international opinion polls is also limited in its ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of global democratic development. As the international opinion polls cited by Zhang reveal, the situation of democratic development is far more diverse and complex than his discussion would indicate. Zhang's perspective that global democratic advancement is obstructed by a low quality of democratic development, low public trust toward public institutions and a declining public support of democracy are only partly true. Whereas Zhang states that a 2009 Pew opinion poll reveals a sharp decline of public approval of a multi-party system in Ukraine, that poll also highlights that a high degree of approval of democratic changes is evident in several former Soviet republics, such as East Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland (85%, 80%, 71% and 70%, respectively, in 2009). Although the approval percentages decreased slightly from 1991 in Hungary,

Lithuania, Russia and Bulgaria, still, more than 50% of those countries' citizens approve of the 2009 change to a multi-party system. Zhang's enumeration of the ranking of democracy of Eastern European countries, even is in accordance with the 2009 Pew report and the EIU democracy index, also fails to broaden our understanding of Eastern European democratic development. Taking into account the measurement of democracy by the EIU democracy index, although all the Eastern European countries enumerated by Zhang score less well in terms of the functioning of government, political participation and political culture, they perform well in terms of the protection of civil liberties, with scores above 9 (10 being the maximum), except for Slovakia (8.82), Bulgaria and Romania (both 8.53). They also score well with regard to their electoral process and free, fair, transparent and competitive elections (scores of 9.58 in all these countries).

Moreover, Zhang also fails to acknowledge a democracy gap between what Eastern Europeans want and what they have, which makes it impossible for public institutions to live up to their citizens' expectation of democratic values, instead of a widespread public disenchantment with Western political values. As the 2009 Pew report shows, Eastern Europeans are not disenchanted with democratic values because majorities in all eight of the surveyed Eastern European countries believe that democratic features, such as a fair judiciary, honest multi-party elections and freedom of the press and religion are very important, even though many of them do not believe that these democratic features describe their countries

well. The case of a democracy gap is illuminating in Hungary, because Hungarians display the strongest support of democratic values of all eight countries surveyed (with a median of 66% of Hungarians viewing the above democratic features as being very important), but 77% of Hungarians are frustrated by how democracy is working in their country. These studies imply that the attraction of Western democratic values has not almost completely vanished in Eastern Europe as Zhang suggests, and the most critical problem is not the disenchantment with Western democracy but rather the failure of institutional reforms to actualize and consolidate various essences of Western democracy beyond the electoral mechanisms.

Pan's argument that the Western political model only support voting and election, majoritarianism and multi-party politics oversimplifies the essence of Western democracy. Charles Tilly argues that Western democracy not only constitutes electoral democracy, but it also comprises constitutional and substantive elements of enacting laws concerning political activity in visible constitutional form and of promoting conditions of life such as human welfare, freedom and social equality (Tilly, 2007, p.7-11). *The Economist*, in the article "*What's gone wrong with democracy*" (2014), which Zhang cited, also argues that the reason for the failure of democratic experiments worldwide is "too much emphasis on elections and too little on the other essential features of democracy". Getting democracy right thus entails far more elements than simply elections and majoritarianism—it involves such things as checks and balances on state power, the protection of freedom of speech and organization,

and robust constitutions to avoid majoritarianism. Diamond also argues that "for a country to be democracy, it must have more than regular multiparty elections under a civilian constitutional order for a country to be a democracy" (Diamond, 2008, p.39).

In terms of discussing indigenous Chinese traditions, Pan's argument that no social class emerges in China is implausible. Whereas Pan contends that the gentry is traditionally decisive in settling local dispute in rural China, he ignores the fact that this group of rural gentlemen has already constituted a class. According to Fei Hsiao-Tung, economic inequality between the peasantry and the gentry creates "a social gulf between the two classes", because the gentry is "a class of landowners" and "a class differs from peasantry both in kinship and in local organizations" (Fei, 1946, p.1, 3-4). Fei's argument implies that the gentry is not only a mediator between officials and people in settling disputes as Pan suggests, but also a more influential social class than the peasantry that is eager to possess greater political power by entering into officialdom for the purpose of protecting privileges. In addition, as Bian Yanjie points out, sociologists have long paid attention to Chinese class stratification in an effort to comprehend rapid Chinese social changes, and they have conducted fruitful research on how various social classes, such as rural cadres, private entrepreneurs, intellectuals and state factory workers as the middle classes, have emerged in both rural and urban China since 1978 when a rigid social hierarchy developed by Mao began to evolve (Bian, 2002, p.92-98).

Pan's argument on ritual law as an undisrupted Chinese tradition is superficial and

simplistic, as well. Some Chinese legal scholars argue that ritual law has faced a crisis since the Tang and Song dynasties because the rites began to lose their function of social control, and the construction of social order amid more acute social conflicts has been replaced by punishment and law as its judicial foundation (Han, 2003, p.67). Thus, the Chinese judicial tradition has undergone various stages of development that Pan has not clarified. Moreover, the Party's crackdown on Chinese right lawyers also challenges Pan's argument that Western judicial independence is incompatible with China because of the egoism of Chinese legal professionals in influencing the Chinese political development. The "709 incident", an unprecedented detainment of Chinese right lawyers in 2015, indicates that, by representing their right-defense clients such as political dissidents and victims of illegal land seizure, those lawyers receive little financial reward in return. Instead, they are accused of subversion and swindles by the Party, and even are discredited as being unscrupulous by news reports (Jacobs & Buckley, 2015). The political assault on right lawyers who are martyrs to a perilous career thus challenge Pan's argument that Chinese legal professionals are egoistic in the pursuit of personal political influence. This raises further doubts on whether judicial independence is truly incompatible with China, or any attempt for prompting Chinese judicial independence is intentionally suppressed by the Party in the name of subversion.

Conclusions

This chapter has discussed how the Model's proponents apply a three-step discourse

strategy for challenging Western political legitimacy. Chu specifically targets the American political system to criticize how neo-conservatism causes plutocracy and vetocracy, both of which deflect American democracy from its political ideal of "rule by the people". Zhang highlights a global democratic decay and the limitations of global democratic system in building national development and tackling various developmental problems, and he also suggests that an underlying reason of that decay and limitations is an incompatibility between Western democracy and indigenous traditions of embryonic democratic countries. Pan argues for the incompatibility between Western democracy and Chinese socio-political traditions—an incompatibility that he says is caused by the different social structures of the West and China, one of which is a class-based society and the other of which is a family-based society in nature. China, therefore, lacks fertile ground in which Western social classes could emerge and in which a Western electoral democracy and a separation of powers could sprout.

Although the three strategies of denouncing Western political legitimacy are different, they share a referral to certain reflections by Western academia on the deterioration of American and global democratic development, and that common ground makes their criticisms of Western political legitimacy sound more convincing and grounded. Nonetheless, their reference to Western academic reflections entails limitations that magnify the American political decay while ignoring the diversity of global democratic development, and they fail to provide a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of other critical essences of

Western democracy.

Although the Model's proponents fail to provide a more balanced, objective and comprehensive discussion on global democratic development, their narrow discussion on electoral democracy is justifiable to them because of the sharp contrast between the Western academic pursuit of preventing the so-called "fallacy of electoralism" and the political reality in which superficial forms of elections are prevalent and endured. The political reality is that, "the fallacy of electoralism" that Western intellectuals consistently warn against is ignored by America and its allies, who have "remained far too comfortable with this superficial form of democracy and are reluctant to criticize more subtle degradations of democracies" (Diamond, 2014, p.38-39). These imply that development of a robust democratic system entails more substantive elements than just elections, and in fact it requires more delicate and prudent institutional support in order for those democratic elements to sprout. However, developed democracies do not always take these substantive elements seriously and they may fail to promote a more vibrant external environment for global democratic development. The discrepancy between Western academic pursuits and political reality indicates that the Model's proponents are taking advantage of that reality—that superficial electoral democracy is tolerated and causes a global democratic decay—to denounce Western political legitimacy, while ignoring a more in-depth discussion by Western academia on other critical democratic elements that can sustain more robust democratic development. The failure of electoral

democracy in America and other emerging democratic countries is exaggerated by the Model's proponents as being the failure of Western democracy and even of the entire Western world, despite the fact that electoral democracy only represents the most superficial form of Western democracy and that such democracies "always look weaker than they really are and have lots of hidden strengths (*The Economist*, 2014). This exaggerated strategy of discourse is explained by the Model's proponents' intention to create more maneuverable and normative spaces for themselves in which to promulgate their assertion of Chinese values.

The next chapter extends Pan's arguments further, and in that discussion the incompatibility between Western democracy and Chinese traditions is remarkable in terms of the proponents' assertion of Chinese values. Even though Pan's argument in favor of Chinese tradition entails limitations, the Model's proponents commonly resort to the subject of Chinese traditions not just to challenge the legitimacy of Western values in guiding and judging Chinese national development but also to refine and associate those traditions with the contemporary successes of Chinese development. The proponents assert the superiority of Chinese values, such as *min ben* ideology and meritocracy, over Western electoral democracy, in their desire to break away from Western political and economic discourse. The next chapter will further discuss how Pan's discourse strategy resonates with Zhu and Zhang and serves as common ground for the assertion that Chinese social, economic and political traditions are a means to challenge the predominance of the Western discursive system.

Chapter 4

Assertion of Chinese political values

Introduction

The previous chapters have discussed how the Western political and economic discourses remain the primary theoretical concepts that are used to understand the China Model and suppress China into a defensive conformity with the existing international system. The Model's proponents are not content with this Chinese suppression and present a three-step discourse strategy to universally delegitimize Western democracy, by pointing out American political decay and the incompatibility between the traditions of Western democracy and the socio-political traditions of embryonic democratic countries. The Model's proponents also argue that an incompatibility exists between Western democracy and Chinese traditions and that this incompatibility underscores the assertions of Chinese political values by the Model's proponents in their efforts to bring further challenges to the Western discursive system.

To further develop a legitimate ideological foundation for the China Model that can strengthen Chinese discursive power and help China challenge the Western discursive system, Model's proponents are not satisfied with a collection of literature that offers a relatively positive evaluation of the significance of the Chinese one-party rule because of its development of a certain degree of responsiveness and adaptability. This body of literature is

encapsulated in the perspective of "authoritarian resilience", which is connected to the argument that China's political resilience lies in the nation's various positive political changes, such as its creation of an institutionalized political succession, strengthening of collective leadership, consolidation of the selection of competent officials, initiation of an anti-corruption campaign, development of a consultative and deliberative democracy, co-optation of emerging social elites and institution of governmental responsiveness to social demands (Brodsgaard & Zheng, 2014; Fewsmith, 2006; 2007; Nathan, 2003; 2006; Miller, 2007; Shambaugh, 2008; Dickson, 2005; 2008; Dmitrov, 2008). To a certain extent, the Model's proponents echo those positive evaluation by highlighting that Chinese political achievement has been remarkable in terms of political successions, collective leadership, deliberative and consultative democracy (Chu, 2015, p.139,152; Pan, 2010, p.67-68; Zhang, 2014, p.118). Nonetheless, their objective is not to adopt those positive evaluations of Chinese political resilience as a justification of the efficacy of the Chinese authoritarian system, but instead to deviate from those institutional explanations of Chinese political development and to depend on Chinese traditions to create a new ideological foundation for the China Model that can be used to challenge Western discourses and norms.

This chapter will first discuss how the Model's proponents present a responsibility-based ideology that distinguishes Chinese moral and neutral politics from Western democracy. Such ideology then functions as a logical starting point that helps the Model's

proponents to assert traditional political values, such as *min ben* democracy, *min xiang* and meritocracy, which all together develop an ideological foundation of the Chinese political model. This chapter will then examine how the Model's proponents argue that those Chinese political values are manifested in the Chinese economic model, and how they offer a Chinese interpretation of the Model's success which differs from the mainstream explanation that attributes China's developmental success to a pragmatic approach and an emulation of state developmentalism and Western economic model.

The chapter will conclude by discussing several limitations of the Chinese political values put forth by the Model's proponents that may undermine the attractiveness and legitimacy of China's assertive soft power. The Model's proponents offer an idealistic description of Confucianism in China's political reality, and such description casts doubt on whether Confucian values as the Model's proponents assert can become a serious competitor to Western democracy.

4.1: Responsibility-based ideology and the essence of Chinese politics

Pan argues that a responsibility-based ideology is the most fundamental Chinese social ideology and is in sharp contrast to a Western rights-based ideology. Whereas the Western rights-based ideology is based on individuals' rights that the state should respect and not violate, Chinese responsibility-based ideology implies that the individual is responsible to others when he or she is in the position of a specific role. The responsibility-based social

ideology, Pan argues, is the "logical starting point" of the China Model. The Chinese political and economic models are developed by this social ideology and are built around the moral responsibility borne by the Chinese government to preserve public well-being and coordinate diverse social interests. Pan (2010, p.142) states that,

> Responsibility-based ideology develops the ideological foundation of the China Model. Responsibility-based ideology is the logical starting point of the Chinese "state-people economy", Chinese "*min ben* politics" and the Chinese "*sheji* system" (社稷), which urges the government to coordinate state and private economies for public well-being, urges officials not simply to be accountable but to be responsible for public well-being, and promotes the interdependence of officials and people at the grassroots unit.

The responsibility-based ideology, Pan argues, originated in the traditional Chinese social structure of "a unity between government and people in terms of interest and ideology", which means that Chinese officials and people are interdependent, and the Chinese state and society are also in material and ideological unity (Pan, 2010, p.113). This unity implies that the Chinese government and people embrace the responsibility-based ideology and the government bears a moral responsibility to preserve people's material interests. Moral responsibility is thus the prerequisite for maintaining the interdependence between the

Chinese government and Chinese people.

The interdependence between the Chinese government and people implies that the Chinese state-society relationship is different from the West's distinct boundary between state and society. The Chinese state-society relationship is distinctive because the Chinese family, society and state are intertwined. The Chinese society, Pan argues, is the extension of ordinary Chinese families, and the Chinese state is the extension of Chinese society. This expansive relationship means that Chinese public and private interests are also interconnected. This material interconnectedness is bound together by the ideology of moral responsibility that the Chinese family and the state hold mutually. The state is regarded as the eldest patriarch, above all Chinese families and society, and is morally responsible for preserving Chinese material unity. Pan (2010, p.119) states that,

> Western social contract theory requires a clear distinction between public and private interests, and a clear boundary between self-regarding and other-regarding conduct. The boundary between the state and society is distinct. Chinese family morality downplays the public-private dichotomy, and regards the society as an extended family. Core family is ordinary family. Clan is big family. Community and unit are public family. The state is above the public family. Interests and ideology between them are connected.

The responsibility-based ideology, according to Pan, distinguishes Chinese moral politics (道德政治, *daode zhengzhi*) and neutral politics (中立政治, *zhongli zhengzhi*) from Western electoral democracy multi-party politics. Moral politics means that the Chinese government is not merely an administrative body but that it also undertakes a religion-like function to "enlighten" Chinese people through a demonstration of morality. That enlightenment aims to develop an intimate relationship between the government and people and to consolidate the legitimacy of Chinese administrative authority. Moral politics thus implies that the Chinese government should function as a moral incarnation to bear the moral responsibility of preserving the public interest. Pan (2010, p.59-60) states that,

> Responsibility is the guiding principle of Chinese bureaucracy, the foundation of government-people relations, the legitimacy of bureaucratic authority and the unbroken mainstream of Chinese ideology. Chinese politics therefore entails a strong sense of moral politics. The Chinese government is the moral incarnation and provides an enlightenment function like that of a Western church. Once the moral responsibility is abandoned, the government will lose its credibility and will fail to construct the common interest of people.

"Neutral politics" implies that the Chinese government is formed by the system of civil

service, which is administratively neutral and impartially preserves the public well-being. The Chinese government is built around neutral politics and thus is an executive-led system that meets social anticipations to safeguard the public interest fairly and uprightly. A politically neutral Chinese government thus differs from Western governments, Pan argues, which are formed by political parties that seek political power by winning the majority of votes in periodic elections, and are also developed by partisanship in order to preserve the interests of the particular social groups. Pan (2010, p.61) states that,

> The Western society supports "power politics". Interest groups form political parties. Parties' representatives rely on the vote of a relative majority to seek political power, and wield political power to protect groups' interests. The Chinese society supports "neutral politics" to form an honest and upright government to preserve people's interests. Chinese political institutions can only be a civil service system, which means a neutral administration to lead the government.

In short, Pan maintains that a responsibility-based ideology distinguishes Chinese moral and neutral politics from Western democracy and serves as the logical starting point for Model's proponents to propose political values such as *min ben* democracy, *min xiang*, meritocracy and *minxin* to explain the success of the China Model in terms of Chinese

perspectives. Those political values all stress moral responsibility of safeguarding the public well-being borne by the Chinese government. In addition, those values are significant in a sense that develop an ideological foundation for the Chinese political model, and such foundation differs from mainstream explanation of the authoritarian nature of Chinese one-party system.

4.2: A Confucian ruling party with an inheritance of min ben democracy and min xiang

The Model's proponents contend that the Chinese Communist Party has evolved as a Confucian ruling party that is altruistic in preserving the public well-being. Zhang states that China has converged with Confucianism to create a distinctive one-party system. Zhang (2011, p.72) argues that the "Chinese ruling party in nature is the continuation of the unified Confucian ruling group in Chinese history". The Chinese ruling party, Zhang contends, has not evolved into the American and Western form of political parties that embrace bicameralism and represent fragmented social interests. The Chinese ruling party has inherited Confucian traditions to represent the collective Chinese interests. Zhang (2011, p. 137) writes that,

> The Chinese Communist Party is neither the Republican Party nor Democratic Party in the United States. It is also neither the Conservative Party nor Labour Party in Britain. What the Chinese ruling party inherits is the Confucian political traditions which

> represent the collective interest of people, not a Western political party which represents partial interests of people.

Pan (2010, p.88) also writes that "the Party is not a Western political party which embraces multi-party politics and competes in parliamentary politics". The Party is distinctive in terms of its inheritance of the Chinese Confucian political tradition. The behavior of the Party's officials, Pan argues, is regulated by Confucian norms. The Party's officials are similar to traditional Confucian scholar officials who are educated, reasonable and altruistic in fairly and uprightly preserving the public well-being. Its Confucian inheritance therefore molds the Party as being not just unified but also elitist. The Party is constituted by elitist political vanguards to fairly and uprightly preserve the public well-being. Pan (2010, p.88) states that,

> The Party has inherited the Chinese political tradition and represents the collective interest of Chinese people. Behavioral norms regulated by the Party are similar to the Confucian ruling group with 2000 years of tradition. There is almost no difference of the ideology and behavioral norms between the modern Communist Party's members regulated by the former Chinese president Liu Shaoqi's (劉少奇) "How to Be a Good Communist" (論共產黨員的修養, *lun gongchandang yuan de xiuyang*) , and the traditional Confucian ruling group. Advanced people are commoners, educated and

reasonable. They believe in the principle of "be the first to worry about the troubles across the land, the last to enjoy universal happiness" (先天下之憂而憂 後天下之樂而樂, *xian tianxia zhi you er you hou tianxia zhi le er le*) , and serve public wellbeing with fairness and uprightness. These advanced people are vanguards who constitute an elitist ruling party.

The Model's proponents maintain that the Party as a Confucian ruling party has inherited the *min ben* democracy to develop distinctive Chinese democracy that differs from Western democracy, which is based on political rights. Pan differentiates Chinese *min ben* democracy from Western procedural democracy that legitimizes the struggle of different political parties in the pursuit of factional power and interests. Pan argues that because *min ben* democracy "requires the people's representative to transcend the affiliation of any political parties, and be fairly and uprightly responsible for taking care of the public well-being" (Pan, 2010, p.60), it is different from Western electoral democracy and multi-party politics, which legitimize factional struggles for power and money. *Min ben* democracy implies that the government is also democratic if it bears the moral responsibility of preserving public well-being. If the government is irresponsible toward the public well-being, it will be considered undemocratic, and rebellion against the government becomes justifiable. Pan (2010, p.58) states that,

> Modern *min ben* democracy has inherited the traditional Chinese *min ben* doctrine. The implication of the *min ben* doctrine is simple and clear. The only reason of the government's existence is the responsibility of taking care of the wellbeing of all citizens, otherwise rebellion against the government is reasonable.

Chu also echoes Pan's argument that *min ben* democracy is centered around the moral responsibility borne by the Chinese government to preserve the public well-being. He contends that the essence of Chinese *min ben* democracy is the Confucian principle of *min xiang* (民享, for the people). Such principle differs from the Western procedural understanding of *minzhi* (民治, by the people) and it emphasizes outcomes more than procedures in Chinese public governance. Delivery of substantial outcomes for the public interest is therefore far more imperative than democratic procedures of political participation to consolidate Chinese political legitimacy. *Min xiang* also implies that no matter what governing procedure is adopted, that procedure is regarded to be politically legitimate if it can achieve substantial policy outcomes for public well-being. Legitimate governing procedures thus are not limited to Western political participation, but vary in accordance with diverse national conditions and cultural inheritances. Legitimate Chinese governing procedures, Chu holds, are certified by elitism instead of by bottom-up political participation

because *min ben* ideology stresses that political elites are responsible for eradicating disadvantages and bringing benefits for the public well-being. (Chu, 2014, p.998) states that,

> *Min xiang* as the core of Chinese discourse of political legitimacy, can be traced to traditional Chinese thought. Confucian *min ben* ideology also aims to achieve substantive outcomes of eradicating disadvantages and bringing advantages for the public through elitist politics. Furthermore, traditional Chinese thought emphasizes outcomes while downplaying procedures. Procedural legitimacy is incomparable to the appropriateness and rationality of the outcome. Governing procedure is just the means, and the means must be selected in accordance with its effectiveness for achieving outcomes. Governing procedure must also be adjusted on the basis of national conditions and keep up with the times.

Min xiang, Chu contends, has become a distinctive foundation for the Party's political legitimacy through its preservation of the collective Chinese interests and its fulfillment of social demands. This distinctive foundation of legitimacy also implies that Chinese political institutions deviate from Western multi-party politics and electoral democracy. Chinese political institutions, Chu argues, are based on one-party rule and consultative democracy, which he coins as "institutional prerequisites" for achieving *min xiang*. In addition, Chu

argues that the Party has developed guiding ideologies, such as Jiang Zemin's (江澤民) "Three Represents" (三個代表, *san ge daibiao*) and Hu Jintao's "New Three People's Principles" (三個為民, *san ge weimin*), to achieve *min xiang* by representing the interests of most Chinese and satisfying the most fundamental public interests. Chu (2014, p.997) states that,

> The most fundamental difference between the Chinese political system and Western representative democratic system is that the Chinese legitimacy foundation is based on substantive achievement of *min xiang*. One party rule and its institutional arrangements of democratic centralism and consultative democracy are considered to be the necessary conditions to assure that the Chinese political system does not deviate from *min xiang*. No matter Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" theory or Hu Jintao's "New Three People's Principles", their core ideals are to achieve *min xiang* and urge the Party's cadres to represent the fundamental interests of most people.

Min xiang as the essence of Chinese democracy and the Party's legitimacy, Chu maintains, is also widely endorsed by Chinese society as the mainstream ideology for understanding Chinese politics. Chu refers to the study of Shi Tianjian, a leading scholar in the Chinese examination of political values, to argue that Chinese people endorse *min xiang*

in order to understand democracy and political legitimacy. Chu also argues that *min xiang* is held by most Chinese to be the definition of democracy, especially among those who define democracy in the substantive terms of a governmental responsiveness that proactively responds to social needs. In this sense, the Western procedural understanding of democracy, such as democratically elected government and multi-party politics, is not widely endorsed by the Chinese people. *Min xiang* is therefore suggested by Chu as the mainstream Chinese social ideology and provides stronger social support for the Party in its effort to sustain its distinctive foundation of legitimacy, even without the Western procedural legitimacy of *minzhi*. Chu (2014, p.1002-1003) states that,

> Some recent empirical studies imply that the foundation of regime legitimacy of the Chinese political system is to achieve *min xiang*. This foundation resonates the political idea commonly accepted by the Chinese public. Professor Shi Tianjian has recently designed a group of delicate scales to study how the Chinese public understands "what is democracy". He found that most Chinese understand democracy in substantive instead of procedural terms. Chinese people think the essence of democracy is based on whether the government can effectively and proactively satisfy public needs or prioritize public interests, not on whether political leaders are elected by public elections or opened multiparty competitions. This study is very significant since it helps us to understand

why the Chinese political system, even without Western mechanisms of democratic participation, can still enjoy relatively high legitimacy.

In short, the Model's proponents maintain that the Chinese Communist Party is the continuation of a Confucian unified ruling group that inherits Confucian political tradition to preserve the collective social interests and regulating the behavior of the Party officials in accordance with Confucian norms. They suggest that, one of the Confucian political tradition inherited by the Party, is *min ben* democracy that understands democracy in terms of governmental moral responsibility, not political rights granted for mass political participation and multiple parties' competition for factional power. They also argue that one of the essence of *min ben* democracy is the principle of *min xiang* that contributes to a distinctive foundation of Chinese political legitimacy which is based on delivery of substantive outcomes. The Model's proponents also refer to empirical study to show that *min xiang* is also widely endorsed by most Chinese as a means to understand Chinese politics. In addition, the Model's proponents suggest that meritocracy as another Confucian ideology, is also central to the Party as a Confucian ruling group to groom altruistic, virtuous and competent officials who bear moral responsibility of preserving the public well-being.

4.3: Meritocracy and stringent mechanisms for the evaluation of officials' performance

Chu explains that meritocracy traditionally has been central to the Chinese Confucian

political model. The Confucian *min ben* ideology develops the traditional Chinese political model to be meritocratic in order to groom virtuous and competent political elites who will deliver substantial outcomes for the public well-being. Chu argues that the traditional Confucian political model has launched mechanisms of rewards, supervision and punishment to strengthen the Chinese governing ability to monitor the performance and achievements of political elites in preserving the public well-being. Chu (2015, p.148-149) writes that,

> Confucian thought stresses the principle of 'people as the cornerstone of the country' (民為邦本, *min wei bang ben*). This principle is an elitist political model with 2000 years of tradition. This model relies on the nurturance and promotion of virtuous and competent people as officials. In association with the mechanisms of moral incentives, material rewards and punishment, and supervision, this model can assure that public institutions are oriented towards the preservation of public wellbeing and the achievement of *min xiang*. This is the essence of *min ben* doctrine.

Pan argues that virtue (賢, *xian*) and competence (能, *neng*) are crucial to all global political systems, because every political system requires their officials to be virtuous and competent. Nonetheless, the distinctiveness of Chinese meritocracy lies in its definition of virtue and competence. Pan argues that virtue and competence in Western multi-party politics

are defined as party loyalty and the effectiveness of protecting party interests. The Chinese understanding of virtue and competence instead is one of "altruism of *min ben* ideology", and "the achievement of serving public wellbeing" (Pan, 2010, p.84). Pan explains that this Chinese understanding is related to the Chinese responsibility-based ideology. Virtue is associated with moral politics, which means that only when officials bear the moral responsibility of altruistically preserving the public interest can they be qualified as virtuous. Competence is defined by political achievements, which means that throughout their political career officials should demonstrate their competence in preserving the public interest. Pan (2010, p.81-82) states that,

> All political systems emphasize "virtue" and "competence" of officials. In the West, people who are loyal to the group interest are considered to be "virtuous" and people who effectively protect the group interest are considered to be "competent". Within Chinese family-based society, "morality" is the fundamental standard of "virtue", followed by "competency" reflected in "political achievement". These were named "meritocracy" in the ancient time.

To assure that government officials are virtuous and competent, Pan argues that the Chinese meritocratic system has developed stringent mechanisms of performance evaluation

to evaluate officials' political achievements. Officials are promoted, rewarded and even punished according to their performance in preserving the public well-being. The Chinese meritocratic system is therefore highly performance-based. Pan (2010, p.60) states that,

> The mechanism of selecting the people's representatives, which stresses evaluation of merits and demerits, is the continuation of the traditional Chinese meritocratic system. All officials enter the government based on performance evaluation. Their promotions, rewards and punishments are based on the comprehensive government performance examination of serving the people's welfare.

Zhang suggests that one indication of the development of stringent mechanism of performance evaluation is that, the Party has "put poverty reduction and environmental protection as critical criteria of officials' promotion" (Zhang, 2011, p.139). Moreover, Zhang also explains that such stringent mechanism is imbued with the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), because before their promotions, its members are expected to accumulate an unprecedented level of sophistication—a level that the Western electoral democratic system finds it cannot match. Zhang explains that PSC members should serve at least two provincial tenures before they are promoted to the PSC. Such experience is decisive in grooming competent PSC members, because the scales of the provinces they govern are

magnificent and require extraordinary administrative sophistication. The size of one Chinese province, Zhang argues, is equivalent to that of four or five European countries. Before their promotion, PSC members are required to have at least two provincial tenures, which means they have already accumulated administrative experience that is equivalent to the aggregation of at least eight European national leaders' governing experiences. Zhang suggests that Western leaders, whom he considers to be inferior, such as former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and former American President George W. Bush, would be wiped out by the Chinese meritocratic system. Zhang (2014, p.122) states that,

> The candidates of the Chinese highest decision-making body, namely the PSC, almost always have served two tenures of provincial chief or possess other relevant working experiences. Chinese provincial governance requires governors to have extraordinary talent and competency, since one Chinese province is almost the scale of four to five European countries. It is unthinkable that low quality politicians such as George W. Bush and Yoshihiko Noda could enter the highest national ruling class under the Chinese meritocratic system.

Chu explains that one of the stringent mechanism of performance evaluation is "innovation in terms of public governance" encouraged by the Party for selecting talent (Chu,

2015, p.139). This mechanism is designed to nurture officials' economic managerial skills, promote regional economic competition that is conducive to the nurturance of officials' competence. Innovative public governance, Chu argues, is reflected in how the Party encourages officials to adopt innovative economic experiments for inspiring local economic development. Varied local conditions require a sophistication of officials who can develop different economic policies. Local economic experiments then trigger intense regional economic competitions in which the local officials can demonstrate their competence to the greatest extent and can overtake and even outperform others. Chu (2015, p.140) states that,

> Every local government can conduct different experimental innovation according to varied local conditions. The outcome is severe Chinese regional competition. Not only do provinces have to directly compete for resources, talents and capital with each other, counties also must compete. For instance, Kunshan under the jurisdiction of Suzhou transforms from a village to an important city of high technology. Cities nearby, such as Wuxi and Changzhou, begin to emulate and strive to be the second Kunshan.

Zhang also echoes Chu's arguments that the nurturance of economic managerial skills is a stringent mechanism of the Chinese meritocratic system to groom competent political leaders. Zhang mentions that Xi Jinping has accumulated abundant governing experience in

economically affluent regions, such as Fujian, Zhejiang and Shanghai, where both a private economy and state enterprises prosper. Thus, in economically prosperous regions, Xi has developed sophisticated economic managerial skills that contribute to his competency as a meritorious and outstanding Chinese political leader. Zhang (2014, p.122-123) states that,

> Taking the upcoming successor Xi Jinping as an example, he has served as the governor of the economically versatile Fujian. Then he has served as the party secretary of Zhejiang, where private economy is highly developed. After that he has served as the party secretary of Shanghai. Shanghai is the financial and business center of China, and there are many strong state enterprises. In other words, before Xi becomes a PSC member, the regions he has governed exceed 120 million population and are beyond the Indian economic scale.

In addition, the Model's proponents maintain that supervisory mechanism is also crucial in terms of the evaluation of officials' political performance and punishment of those who are corrupt. Chu argues that the Party's supervisory mechanism is imbued with traditional and modern characteristics. At higher political levels, the Party relies more on traditional measures to supervise the performance of officials and punish those who are undermined or who themselves undermine the Party's governing capability. These traditional measures, Chu

contends, are reflected in the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the Party's watchdog that emulates the mechanism of open and secret investigation adopted by Chinese dynasties and launches central patrolling groups and different levels of reporting mechanisms (Chu, 2015, p.148). At local levels, Chu explains that the Party has applied modern measures, such as opinion polls and anonymous voting, to monitor officials' behavior by evaluating public perceptions, and to enhance the transparency of officials' selection and promotion through broader participation. Chu (2015, p.146) states that,

> Although the Chinese political system lacks Western democratic mechanism, its socialist democratic mechanism is not superficial but entails substantive functions. Its most importance is cadres' selection and assessment. Many municipal organization departments every year conduct opinion polls on every departments, to see whether the public satisfy with their performance; In addition, many units will disclose qualified candidates before internal selection and allow every unit member to vote anonymously. These examples explain that China has explored its accountability system of checks and balances.

Pan contends that since the Chinese meritocratic system has developed stringent mechanism of performance evaluation and supervision, it is more advantageous than the

Western political model in balancing diverse social demands. Such advantage is attributable to the so-called *minxin* (民心, the people's heart), which refers to the officials' ability, through their political achievements, to preserve the collective and long-term interests of the Chinese people. *Minxin* is different from Western public opinion, since the former "does not only comprise public opinion but also indirect judgment on long term and collective interests", while the latter "comes from direct cognition of current and partial interests" (Pan, 2010, p.23). The Chinese meritocratic system, Pan argues, requires officials to win *minxin* by balancing diverse types of social interests instead of by directly responding to temporal public opinion. The Chinese meritocratic system, centered around *minxin*, therefore strengthens the flexibility of officials' performance evaluations and is more adaptive to social dynamics. Pan (2010, p.61) states that,

> Meritocracy is a mechanism of forming government that can win *minxin*. Meritocracy urges officials to be sensitive about public opinion, and also to be responsible for balancing current and long-term interests, partial and collective interests, and the interests of development and order. Meritocracy is not just an ancient mechanism. In terms of the criteria of officials' selection, meritocracy has broader space to advance with the times than the electoral system, which is advantageous in winning public opinion.

Pan asserts that *minxin* is central to the Chinese meritocratic system to groom distinctive political leaders who are different from Western politicians. Pan (2010, p.85) argues that a leader who can win *minxin* is considered to be a statesman who can "judge and preserve collective and long term social interest", and a leader who is only concerned about temporal public opinion is a politician who "lacks principle". *Minxin* therefore fosters the Chinese meritocratic system in order to groom statesmen who can sensitively judge what is optimal for the collective and long-term public well-being among diverse types of interests, whereas the Western electoral democratic system can only spawn politicians who are unprincipled and who respond just to short-term social interests.

In short, the Model's proponents suggest that Chinese meritocracy understands virtue and competence in terms of moral responsibility borne by officials to demonstrate political achievements in preserving the public well-being. Political achievements or performance of officials are evaluated by various stringent mechanisms at different levels of the Chinese meritocratic system. Those mechanisms thus indicate the advantages of the Chinese meritocratic system in responding to collective and long-term interests of the society, and in grooming distinctive political leaders who are more farsighted than Western politicians.

4.4: Chinese political values and the success of the China Model

A major advantage of the China Model, the Model's proponents contend, is the

emphasis on “substantial content” through delivery of “good governance” (良政善治, *liangzheng shanzhi*). Substantial content means “whether good governance is practiced and whether diligent and competent leaders are in place to make most of the people satisfied” (Zhang, 2014, p.121-122). Good governance, Zhang contends, is even a “subversion” of and a “paradigm shift” from Western political discourse, which only emphasizes “form” and “procedural correctness” (Zhang, 2011, p.135). The Model’s proponents imply that Confucian political values help the Party practice good governance by delivering substantial outcomes for various social demands, and those values also develop a distinctive Chinese economic model which serves as a major contributor to the success of the China Model. Such Chinese economic model, the Model’s proponents suggest, is even more successful than the Western market economy to improve people’s livelihoods and facilitate national modernization.

Confucian *min ben* ideology, Pan and Zhang contend, has developed a distinctive form of Chinese *min ben* economics (民本經濟學, *min ben jingji xue*) which is the guiding principle of the Chinese economic model. Such economics emphasizes the importance of satisfying public well-being and the significance of state economic intervention in order to “repress the disadvantages of market competition” (Pan, 2010, p.30-31). Zhang explains that this form of economics emphasizes the inseparability between development of a national economy and administration of state affairs. The Chinese government should therefore

administer state affairs through economic development by formulating economic policies, planning and guidelines that will benefit people's livelihood and maintain national stability. Zhang (2011, p.76) writes that,

> Economics in traditional Chinese sense is not "market economics", but the "*min ben* economics", or a distinctive Chinese political economics. Its most important feature is associating economics with the national economy, national economic policies and planning, guidelines and administration of state affairs, people's livelihood, and the assurance of national stability. The economics that most Chinese understand is to administer state affairs and benefit the people. Economic development is for public well-being, not capital gains at first.

Min ben economics, Zhang stresses, challenges the Western assumption of an "invisible hand" in the market that plays a decisive economic role. Zhang believes instead that a "visible hand" of active state economic intervention is imperative and that the Chinese state must administer state affairs through economic development. Ancient Chinese governments, Zhang holds, have long intervened in economic development by means of state ownership of strategic economic resources and initiation of critical economic reforms for national modernization. Zhang (2011, p.76) states that,

The traditional Chinese economy always emphasized more of a "visible hand". The function of the state sector can be traced back to the "state monopolization of salt and iron" in the Western Han Dynasty or even earlier. The Self-Strengthening Movement was also promoted by the government.

According to Zhang and Pan, *min ben* ideology accompanied by neutral politics, moral politics and *minxin*, develop a distinctive Chinese economic model that primarily relies on the government to function. Zhang points out that the Chinese socialist market economic system is "the combination of Western 'market economics' and the traditional Chinese '*min ben* economics' under new historical conditions" (Zhang, 2011, p.77). Zhang argues that this system has integrated the advantages of Western economics with those of Chinese economics because it "demonstrates high efficiency of market economy in resources allocation and ensures the advantage of socialism of macro integration power, and rejects market fundamentalism" (Zhang, 2011, p.109). Socialist macro integration power, Zhang stresses, challenges Western market fundamentalism because it inherits the Chinese economic tradition of active state intervention, such as state ownership of land, finances and key large enterprises, accompanied by a macro-economic control, which refers to direct state control over inflation (Zhang, 2011, p.109).

Neutral politics, moral politics and *minxin*, Pan maintains, are the essence of a distinctive Chinese economic model, which he coins as "state-people economy" (國民經濟, *guomin jingji*). Such model is the combination of the "state economy" and the "people's economy". The "state economy" comprises "state control over land, finance, large enterprises", while the "people's economy" comprises "free labor and a commodity market based on family and communal small-medium enterprises" (Pan, 2010, p.32). Pan states that "the prerequisite of the state-people model is administrative neutrality", which means that a politically neutral Chinese government is the major mechanism for satisfying public economic demands (Pan, 2010, p.38). The Chinese government adheres to neutral politics to maintain a dynamic balance between the state economy and the people's economy, and to win *minxin* by satisfying diverse types of public economic demand through long-term economic planning. Pan (2010, p.37-38) states that,

> Reliance on market mechanisms is impossible to balance the demand of both a state and people economy. The way to balance demand is to perceive "*minxin*" and make scientific and long-term planning of economic development. "*Minxin*" is the satisfaction of the demands of public wellbeing, which means current and long-term demands, partial and collective demands, and demands of development and stability.

Moral politics, as Pan describes it, is also imbued with the Chinese economic model that stresses the moral responsibility borne by the Chinese government to maintain "the unity of interests" in an effort to strike a balance between Chinese public and private interests (Pan, 2010, p.37). Such responsibility is borne by the Chinese government through a combination of state economic retreats and interventions to preserve the public well-being. The Chinese government is morally responsible for retreating from economic sectors, such as the high-technology sector, which is profitable for private enterprises. The Chinese government is also morally responsible for intervening in infrastructural sectors to prompt the development of the Chinese private economy and to stabilize commodity prices when private enterprises seek to monopolize the supply of public commodities. Pan (2010, p.37) states that,

> If the "state economy" is too influential and is crowding out private interest, it should shrink and relinquish control over the private economy, such as internet and wireless communication. When the "people's economy" lacks infrastructural support, the "state economy" should be determined to provide infrastructural facilities. When the "people's economy" is too influential and seeks a monopoly in infrastructural sectors that affect people's livelihood, it requires state intervention to stabilize commodity prices in terms of housing, high-speed railway, water, public transportation, health care and education. The Chinese economic model is therefore the model of government-people cooperation

and preservation of public wellbeing.

A distinctive Chinese economic model imbued with Chinese political values then helps China to achieve substantial and favorable developmental outcomes in terms of improving people's livelihood and facilitating national modernization. Chu implies that Confucian principle of *min xiang* which emphasizes the governmental responsiveness to social demand prompts the Party's political elites to proactively respond to unbalanced development and social inequality through the Chinese socialist market economic system. He argues that Chinese political elites have decided to expand the coverage of social welfare and redistribute public funding for more complete financial subsidies in the provision of rural health and education. Another significant developmental outcome is how the Party has unprecedentedly abolished the rural taxes in order to alleviate the financial burdens of rural dwellers. Chu (2015, p.138) states that,

> The Party's elites also keep tackling the problem of Chinese social inequality. Although the progress is a matter of debate, the driving force of the Party's self-rectification and responsiveness towards social demand still exists. The Party keeps pursuing balanced development, such as more comprehensive coverage of the social welfare system and reliance on the transfer payment system, to tackle developmental inequality as much as

possible. Some policies are unprecedented, such as the abolishment of all rural taxes, and complete subsidies on rural health care and fundamental education by central and local financial subsidies.

Due to a *min ben* principle of "people's livelihood is the foremost concern" (民生為大, *minsheng wei da*), Zhang contends that the Chinese economic model is more advantageous than the Western development model in reducing poverty as a means to improve people's livelihood. This principle implies that improving people's livelihood should be the foremost objective of economic development. Because China has incorporated this *min ben* principle of developing a distinctive understanding of human rights, the improvement of people's livelihood through vigorous poverty reduction has been elevated to the level of a core human right and fosters China's unprecedented achievement of poverty reduction. By asserting an alternative path for human rights development, Zhang maintains that Chinese human rights challenge the Western discourse of human rights that has an "enduring deviation which only emphasizes civic political rights, not the rights of people's livelihood" (Zhang, 2011, p.129). Zhang (2011, p.105) states that,

One important experience of China over the past 30 years is that a developing country must put people's livelihood as the foremost concern, put poverty reduction and the

improvement of people's livelihood as core human rights to promote, because poverty, particularly extreme poverty, damages human dignity and rights. By this idea, China vigorously promotes the improvement of people's livelihood and gets worldwide achievement particularly in terms of poverty reduction. According to the statistics of the United Nations, the number of Chinese people who escape poverty account for 70% of the total number of people out of poverty over the past 20 years.

Min ben principle of "people's livelihood as the foremost concern", Zhang argues, has not just fostered Chinese poverty reduction, but also has guided the Chinese economic model to develop a distinctive ownership system in order to achieve modernization. Zhang asserts that an advantage of the Chinese socialist market economic system is that it has not emulated the Western market economic model to privatize land ownership but instead has adhered to the Chinese economic tradition of state ownership of land. Zhang explains that the Chinese state adheres to Chinese economic traditions of "all land under the heaven belongs to the king" (普天之下莫非王土, *putian zhi xia mofei wang tu*) and "land to the tiller" (耕者有其田, *geng zhe you qitian*), to retain state ownership of land. This Chinese land system is in association with a distinctive ownership system that prevents China from complete privatization by comprising various types of ownership that mutually develop, such as state-owned, collective-owned, private-owned and foreign-owned entities (Chu, 2015, p.137). A

distinctive ownership of land imply that all Chinese land is traditionally owned by the Chinese state, and only through state ownership of the land can every Chinese farmer retain a sufficient piece of land for agricultural production and subsistence. Zhang shares Chu's perspective that if China were to emulate the Western economic model to privatize rural land, the result would be land annexation, which means that rural land would be clustered and annexed by a minority of landlords, and that annexation would undermine farmers' livelihood (Chu, 2015, p.138). State ownership of the land, Zhang contends, not only preserves Chinese rural livelihood but also provides the Chinese government with greater leverage to directly intervene in infrastructural development for rapid urbanization. The Chinese state has fully utilized the advantages of its land ownership to initiate infrastructural development that contributes to unprecedented achievements in the development of transportation, property markets and household ownership. Zhang (2011, p.109) writes that,

> Some people think that land as a factor of production should be completely marketized and the state should abandon the control of land. This is a free market economy. However, Chinese arable land per capita is one of the world's lowest. The greatest possibility of land privatization is that land will be rapidly gathered towards the minority and cause farmers land loss and poverty. Chinese traditions are "all land under the heaven belongs to the king" and "land to the tiller". We have not emulated the

> mainstream Western model, but separate the land ownership from the right of land use, and integrate macro-integration with market mechanism instead. The result is the world's largest progress of urbanization, largest property market and highspeed railway network, second largest highway network, and higher household ownership rate than developed countries.

Pan concludes that the Chinese economic model, in which the government plays decisive roles in accordance with Confucian political values, is different from any of the mainstream economic models around the globe. The Chinese economic model is neither a market economy nor a state capitalism in which private enterprises and private ownership play strong economic roles. The Chinese economic model is "not founded on private ownership", is "not dominated by a few large private enterprises", and is different from "the very confusing 'East Asian Model'" (Pan, 2010, p.36). The confusion with the East Asian Model, Pan explains, is that East Asian economies, such as those of South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong, embark on different paths of economic development. Pan argues that South Korea relies on chaebols, such as Samsung, to achieve its economic growth, while the economies of Taiwan and Hong Kong are mainly bolstered by small and medium enterprises. The Chinese economic model in which the Chinese government plays not just a strong but moral role therefore differs from any of the East Asian economies.

In short, the Model's proponents argue that Confucian political values have prompted the Party to practice good governance and developed a distinctive Chinese economic model that succeeds in safeguarding the public-wellbeing by delivering favorable developmental outcomes, such as poverty reduction and rapid urbanization. This interpretation deviates from mainstream explanation of the China Model that attributes the Model's success to how the Party has embarked on a pragmatic developmental path, adopted state developmentalism, and emulated the Western economic model for liberalizing Chinese economy.

4.5: Limitations of the assertion of Chinese values—An idealistic description of China's political reality

The above discussion reveals that the Model's proponents depend on traditional Confucian values, such as *min ben* ideology and meritocracy, to create a more legitimate ideological foundation for the China Model in an effort to provide a Chinese understanding of the Model's success. Yet, a major limitation of such ideological assertion is that, the Model's proponents present an idealistic portrayal of Confucian values in Chinese political reality while ignoring other critical issues that may bring challenges to the attractiveness of those values. As ancient Chinese philosopher Han Feizi (韓非子) pointed out, a fundamental shortcoming of Confucianism is that, it is too idealistic in assuming that a nation can be governed by a majority of virtuous people, and a political reality in which mediocre leaders with lesser ability and virtue are common makes the ideal of Confucianism difficult to realize

(Hutton, 2008). Han's criticism of the idealism of Confucianism was remarkable in ancient China, because due to a patron and client relationship between rulers and their unqualified supporters, the efficacy of the Chinese meritocratic administrative system traditionally was sometimes undermined (Fukuyama, 2011, p.313-314). Whereas the Model's proponents portray an ideal of the Chinese meritocratic system that promotion of officials are in accordance with virtue and competence, a political reality that officials' factional ties continue to play a decisive role in officials' promotion, accompanied by corruption scandals of top Chinese leaders, such as Zhang Gaoli (張高麗) and Liu Yunshan (劉雲山), challenges the Model's proponents' idealistic portrayal and casts further doubt on the legitimacy of the Chinese meritocratic system (Shih, Adolph and Liu, 2012; BBC, 2016).

The Model's proponents also offer an idealistic discussion of the definition of what count as merit and ignore the fact that the understanding of merit can be more complex than what they expect. What the Model's proponents promulgate is a top-down Chinese meritocratic system in which the political authorities possess absolute discretionary power to define who counts as meritorious for selection and promotion. Such top-down meritocratic system will engender arbitrariness and controversy in defining what counts as merit. As Daniel Bell argues, what counts as merit is highly controversial in the governmental setting because it also depends on how ordinary citizens think, not just on what political leaders define from the top (Bell, 2015, p.93). Even the government takes a more holistic approach to

broadening the standards for merits, understanding that merits between the government and society may be in conflict (Bell, 2015, p.94-95). Examples of controversial understanding of merits are how Chinese top leaders, such as Li Keqiang (李克強) and Zhang Dejiang (張德江), who are praised by the Party as being meritocratic in terms of academic qualifications and iron-fisted problem-solving skills, have been challenged by serious social criticisms, because of social crackdowns and suppression throughout their provincial tenures (Agence France-Presse, 2013; SCMP, 2004; Tam, 2012). Bell's argument thus reminds us that, defining what counts as merit, or who counts as a meritocratic leader in a top-down fashion, may precipitate more controversy than attractiveness in promulgating Chinese meritocracy.

Last but not least, various empirical studies cast doubt on whether *min ben* ideology can become a serious competitor to Western democracy. Chu's own empirical study on Chinese regime legitimacy reports that *min ben* ideology bolstered by paternalistic values, such as belief in benevolent governments, no longer remains important and relevant for sustaining Chinese institutional trust among urban Chinese (Chu, 2013, p.19-22). Perhaps, Shi's studies can explain such irrelevance of *min ben* ideology, because he finds that the conception of democracy among Chinese citizens is not unanimous, but mixed and complex. Shi reported that although *min ben* conception of democracy remains quite dominant in Chinese popular thinking, Western liberal democracy of political participation has also made headway among Chinese (Shi, 2008, p.216). In addition, more Chinese people now endorse Western liberal

democracy's procedures and institutions than do those who understand democracy in terms of *min ben* ideology (Shi & Lu, 2010, p.128). These studies therefore remind us that, despite the fact that the Model's proponents have vigorously denunciated Western political legitimacy, Western democracy still undeniably occupies a significant position within Chinese ideological space—a position which is difficult for *min ben* democracy to sway.

Conclusions

This chapter has discussed how the Model's proponents identify a responsibility-based ideology to distinguish Chinese moral and neutral politics from Western democracy. Such ideology then serves as a logical starting point that helps the Model's proponents to assert Confucian values, such as *min ben* democracy, *min xiang* and meritocracy, that the Model's proponents anticipate as a legitimate ideological foundation of the China Mode. The Model's proponents then explain how those Confucian values prompt the Party to practice good governance and to develop a distinctive Chinese economic model that succeeds in delivering favorable developmental outcomes for the public-wellbeing. Nonetheless, the Model's proponents present an idealistic portrayal of China's political reality by ignoring the fact that the Chinese meritocratic system continues to be plagued by factionalism and corruption, and that a top-down approach of defining what count as merits may precipitate greater controversy than attractiveness in promulgating Chinese meritocracy. Despite those limitations that may undermine the legitimacy of China's political values, the discourse

strategies discussed in this chapter are significant to an understanding of how China's soft power development has shifted from its early, defensive nature of national image management to its current assertive nature of challenging the Western discursive system. Whereas the Chinese state primarily wields its soft power through cultural and foreign policies in an effort to defend China's undemocratic national image as one of a peaceful Western conformant, the Model's proponents have displayed a far greater soft-power assertiveness that promulgate the assertion of Chinese values in an attempt to challenge Western normative convictions.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The objective of this research was to study the assertive nature of China's soft power—an assertiveness that is ignored by the existing literature. That assertiveness adopts a constructionist theoretical approach from which to consider the various China Models proposed by Chinese intellectuals to provide new ideological sources for China's soft power. The previous chapters have responded to two research questions with regard to the development of China's soft power: 1) How do the Model's proponents deviate from the Western discursive system through the various proposed China Models? and 2) What are the underlying political values that the Model's proponents have embedded into their proposed China Models? Chapter 3 responded to the first question, by presenting a three-step discourse strategy for denouncing Western political legitimacy. This discourse strategy includes: 1) pointing out the American political decay and the deviation of the American democratic system from "rule by the people"; 2) highlighting the argument that an incompatibility between Western democracy and the socio-political tradition of embryonic democratic countries is responsible for a global democratic decay and the limitations of global democratic systems; and 3) arguing that an incompatibility prevails between Western democracy and Chinese traditions. The chapter concluded by arguing that the exaggerated

and narrow discussion of Western democracy by the Model's proponents is, however, justifiable and conceivable because the political reality that Western democratic development is superficial in form provide a broader maneuvering and normative space within which the Model's proponents can attempt to promulgate their assertion of Chinese values.

Chapter 4 addressed the second question of how the Model's proponents assert different Chinese values through their proposed China Models in an effort to strengthen China's assertive soft power in ideological terms. This chapter first discussed how the Model's proponents assert a responsibility-based ideology that distinguish Chinese moral and neutral politics from Western electoral democracy and multi-party politics. Such ideology then helps the Model's proponents assert traditional Confucian values, such as *min ben* democracy and meritocracy, which all together develop an ideological foundation of the Chinese political model. This chapter then examined how the Model's proponents argue that those Chinese political values are imbued with the Chinese economic model by offering a Chinese interpretation of the Model's success. The chapter concluded by discussing how an idealistic description of China's political reality offered by the Model's proponents may undermine the attractiveness and legitimacy of the Confucian values.

This concluding chapter will first explain how the Model's proponents, through an exhaustive denouncement of Western democracy discussed in Chapter 3, attempt to challenge a political dichotomy of democracy and non-democracy that is central to the Western

discursive system and that enshrines Western electoral democracy as being the only legitimate model of political modernization. This chapter will then revisit the ideological assertions of Chinese values by the Model's proponents and will discuss how those assertions associate with various Chinese conceptual dichotomies, such as *min ben* democracy vs electoral democracy and *min ben* economy vs market economy, that the Model's proponents construct in an attempt to develop ideological sources for China's assertive soft power. Those dichotomies provide a broader normative space from which China can operate in its challenge to the Western normative convictions of social, political and economic development.

Criticisms of the Western political dichotomy

Chapter 3 has discussed how the Model's proponents adopt a denouncement of Western democracy as a discourse strategy to challenge the Western discursive system that provides a broader maneuvering space for them to promulgate their assertion of Chinese values. Such exhaustive denouncement, even though fails to provide a more comprehensive understanding of global democratic development, is justifiable, because it attempts to target a political dichotomy that divides global political systems into democracies and non-democracies. The Model's proponents consider that dichotomy as being central to the domination of the Western discursive system because it enshrines Western electoral democracy as the only legitimate political model for achieving political modernization. To terminate its ideological

domination, the Model's proponents criticize that that dichotomy no longer succeeds in sustaining the Western discursive and ideological domination by arguing that it ignores the fact that non-Western countries can develop different modernization paths in accordance with their own socio-political traditions.

Chu argues that the Western political dichotomy has an assumption of "singular modernity" that implies that non-Western countries should converge with the Western democratic system, regardless of its limitations—such as manipulation of public opinion, and corrupt politicians. The assumption also ignores and demonizes the varied modernization experiences of non-Western countries that result from those countries' diverse cultural inheritances. Chu argues that singular modernity should be substituted by recognition of "multiple modernities", which is a new political understanding that reshuffles the Western understanding of modern and backward, because diversified cultural inheritances are taken into account in order to understand the critical elements with which non-Western countries develop their own modernities (Chu, 2015, p. 8). Chu (2015, p.7) writes that,

> When electoral democracy is put forward as the only legitimate political model, most people choose to ignore its power corruption, oligopoly and manipulation of public opinion. In the meantime, people also easily accept the demonized delineation of non-democratic regimes by the Western media. In the past, Western centrism has long

> dominated the interpretative power on non-Western modernization experience. Diversified non-Western modernization experiences are frequently cut the feet to fit the shoes, being stiffly put to the framework of "singular modernity". Different modernization paths that result from diverse cultural inheritances are intentionally glossed over or excluded. From Japan, Korea, Singapore, Turkey and Qatar, "multiple modernities" is a conceptual framework that is closer to the historical development of the 20th century.

Zhang also criticizes the Western political dichotomy as being limited in its understanding of the complexity and diversity of global modernities. Zhang maintains that this dichotomy lacks sufficient explanatory power and oversimplifies the complexity of global politics. The dichotomy, he argues, simply defines the goodness or badness of a regime by whether it has undergone Western democratization, regardless of whether it can deliver good public governance. Zhang contends that Western democracy does not necessarily guarantee the delivery of good public governance, and he gives the example of Nazi Germany. On the contrary, undemocratic regimes, such as Singapore's, can be more effective than those of most third world developing countries in delivering good public governance. Zhang (2011, p.134) writes that,

The democracy-autocracy dichotomy is embraced by many Western people. Some Chinese also like to adopt this concept to understand politics. This concept can explain some phenomena, but also lacks explanatory power since it simplifies the complexity of global politics. This world only remains either democracy or autocracy. The West defines that democracy is good and autocracy is bad. If global politics can be understood in this straightforward way, then how to explain the fact that a democratic system had elected Hitler? How to explain the fact that the level of Singaporean governance far exceeds that of all democratic countries in the third world, even though Singapore is considered by the West as undemocratic?

Pan also criticizes the Western political dichotomy as being too narrow to understand diversified global modernization experiences. Pan argues that political concepts like democracy and autocracy, which are central to this dichotomy, are developed by distinctive histories of Western political development (Pan, 2010, p.33). Pan therefore casts doubt on the generalizability of those Western political concepts for studying the diverse political models and modernities that result from varied cultural and political histories. Pan even criticizes this dichotomy as being a "new obscurantism" (新蒙昧主義, *xin mengmei zhuyi*) that obstructs rational understanding of non-Western political systems. The new obscurantism, Pan explains, is a new variation of the past European obscurantism that went against intellectual

enlightenment and diffusion of knowledge and restricted rational understanding to matters of truth and facts. The Christian-heathen dichotomy, Pan argues, has been substituted by the democracy-autocracy dichotomy, which obstructs rational understanding of global political diversity, such as the distinctiveness of the Chinese development model. That model, which results from the distinctive Chinese civilization, Pan argues, cannot be understood as being either a democracy or an autocracy. Pan (2010, p.53) states that,

> Obscurantism was prevalent in the Mid Century Europe, which dichotomized people into Christian and Heathen. New obscurantism has become prevalent after the Cold War. Global polities are divided into democracy and autocracy. The Chinese political system enlightens the new obscurantism. The exploration of the Chinese political system is to comprehend the Chinese economic system and the integrated China Model. It also means to resist the new obscurantism and the democracy-autocracy dichotomy and sustain the unique political civilization that fits into Chinese social structure and ideology.

In short, the Model's proponents argue that the Western political dichotomy fails to understand the diversified modernization path of non-Western countries because it ignores the fact that diverse cultural traditions could develop different modernities. Through an

exhaustive denouncement of Western democracy, the Model's proponents attempt to sabotage the most fundamental foundation of the Western discursive system—the political dichotomy of democracy and non-democracy, and create a new normative space from which the Model's proponents can justify the distinctiveness of Chinese political and economic modernization. That normative space is imbued with various Confucian values discussed in Chapter 4, and those values associates with various Chinese conceptual dichotomies that the Model's proponents construct in an attempt to provide Chinese understanding of legitimate social, political and economic development.

Chinese conceptual dichotomies—Ideological sources of assertive soft power

Whereas the Model's proponents criticize the Western political dichotomy as being limited in its ability to understand the varied modernization experiences of non-Western countries, they have constructed various conceptual dichotomies with which to articulate the distinctiveness of Chinese values and to compete, by their discursive power, with the West. Those Chinese conceptual dichotomies include 1) responsibility-based ideology vs rights-based ideology; 2) government-people unity vs civil society; 3) *min ben* democracy with meritocracy vs electoral democracy; 4) *minxin* vs public opinion; 5) *min ben* economy vs market economy. All these dichotomies together attempt to justify a distinctive Chinese modernization path by challenging the Western normative convictions of social, political and economic development.

In terms of social concepts, the Model's proponents construct a dichotomy of responsibility-based ideology and rights-based ideology as a logical starting point to distinguish the essence of Chinese politics that is built on moral responsibility from Western democracy which is built on the respect of individual rights. The responsibility-based ideology also prompts the Model's proponents to assert various Confucian political values that all originate in the responsibility-based ideology and that stress the significance of moral responsibility borne by the government to safeguard public interests. The concept of government-people unity is also in sharp contrast to the Western concept of state-society separation, or civil society which Western critics argue is indispensable for Chinese social stability. The concept of government-people unity may only be a social ideal, and may have a weak explanatory power in China's social reality, because the Chinese government and people may be in conflict due to malfeasance, rampant corruption and social crackdown that precipitate widespread social grievances. Yet, the significance of this concept lies in the creation of a normative space from which China can deviate from the Western presumption of a civil society and can provide theoretical and ideological justifications (even if limited) for a Chinese social development in which the Party plays a leading role and which is deeply embedded in Chinese society.

In terms of political concepts, the Model's proponents develop a political dichotomy between *min ben* democracy and the electoral democracy, to challenge the Western

presumption that democracy should only be understood in the procedural terms of mass political participation and free and competitive elections. *Min ben* democracy, Model's proponents argue, understands democracy in substantive terms that concerns whether a government bears a moral responsibility of preserving the public well-being by delivering substantial developmental outcomes. This substantive understanding of democracy provides a Chinese theoretical justification for the foundation of legitimacy of the Chinese one-party system that is based on the Confucian principle of *min xiang*. Whereas Chinese political legitimacy is criticized as being politically risky that lacks Western procedural legitimacy, the Model's proponents contrast *min xiang* with the Western procedural legitimacy of *minzhi* to justify a distinctive foundation of Chinese political legitimacy. Such foundation legitimizes the Chinese one-party system that demonstrates governmental responsiveness in an effort to achieve the objective of delivering substantial outcomes for the public well-being—an objective to which Western electoral democracy has not paid attention. In addition, the Model's proponents also contrast meritocracy with the Western electoral democracy to argue for a more legitimate means to select leaders and officials. The Model's proponents maintain that the Chinese meritocratic system is more able than the Western electoral system in developing more stringent mechanisms of evaluation of officials' performance in order to select and promote competent leaders. Furthermore, the Model's proponents also construct a political dichotomy of *minxin* and public opinion to contrast the Chinese meritocratic system

that groom farsighted statesmen in safeguarding collective and long-term social interests with the Western electoral democracy that only spawns shortsighted politicians in responding only to temporal public opinion. All these dichotomies of political concepts challenge the Western presumption that political modernization is legitimate only through emulation of Western electoral democracy.

To present a Chinese understanding of the Model's economic success, the Model's proponents construct a dichotomy of *min ben* economy and market economy to alter China's suppression under Western economic norms. A major difference between *min ben economy* and market economy, the Model's proponents maintain, is that the former is about a distinctive Chinese political-economics, which means Chinese political ideologies, particularly *min ben* ideology, and governmental intervention, should play a decisive role in Chinese economic development. The Model's proponents use *min ben* economy to reinterpret the essence of a market economy by arguing that the Chinese understanding of a market economy is based on the market always complying with governmental intervention to preserve the public well-being and to ameliorate the shortcomings of market competition (Pan, 2010, p.30-31). Thus, *min ben* economy provides a Chinese theoretical justification for the Model's proponents to argue that governmental economic intervention can better preserve the public well-being, particularly amid a highly speculative global economic environment that does not accommodate completely free competition and that challenges Chinese

economic security (Zhang, 2011, p.133). Whereas the Chinese socialist economic system with its SOEs is often criticized as being obsolete and redundant in transiting the system to a genuine market economy, *min ben* economy helps the Model's proponents to justify the socialist nature of the Chinese economic system by associating that nature with the inheritance of *min ben* ideology. Such association is reflected in how the Model's proponents argue that the SOEs have played an irreplaceable moral role in safeguarding the public well-being by preserving China's financial stability, securing the supply of global natural resources for domestic consumption and developing industrial infrastructures and social welfare sectors (Pan, 2010, p.35,39). All these assertions justify the legitimacy of the Chinese socialist market economic system by challenge the Western presumption that the Western market economy is the only legitimate economic norm for economic modernization.

Conclusions

In summary, this concluding chapter has reviewed the economic and political ideological assertions by the Model's proponents and has explained their significance within the developing ideological sources of China's assertive soft power, extending that power beyond cultural and foreign policies. These ideological sources can provide a broader maneuverable and normative space from which China can challenge the Western discursive system. Whereas the Model's proponents criticize a Western political dichotomy that divides global political systems into democracies and non-democracies and that fails to understand the

varied modernization paths, they construct Chinese conceptual dichotomies to serve as fresh ideological sources of China's soft power and to lay a more solid discursive foundation for justifying the distinctiveness and legitimacy of Chinese social, political and economic development. All those Chinese conceptual dichotomies challenge the Western theoretical presumptions of an inevitable Chinese convergence with the Western development model. Those dichotomies also deviate from the argument that the Chinese one-party system can retain a limited resilience to postponing Western democratization, and that the Party's political resilience will reach its limit and precipitate a further governance crisis that will be fatal to the survival of the Chinese Communist regime. All of these assertions are the outcomes of the Model's proponents making use of their academic identity and expertise to contribute to the development of China's assertive soft power in an ideological and normative space. That soft power entails a stronger assertiveness than just a simple promotion of cultural and foreign policies and is also congruent with the Party's more recent, assertive efforts to fend off unfavorable Western ideological inroads into China and to promote China's political distinctiveness.

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