

COUNTERING THE CHINA THREAT: CHINA'S GOODWILL CAMPAIGN

IN FOREIGN POLICY, 2002 - 2012

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Political Science  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Science

September 2012

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: Countering the China Threat: China's Goodwill Campaign in Foreign Policy, 2002 – 2012.

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Degree awarded September 2012

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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September 2012

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– 2012

Many scholars observed that the “China threat” narrative greatly influenced the contours of Chinese foreign policy beginning in the mid-1990s. While scholars initially devoted significant attention to this change, there is little systematic analysis of the actual policy shift, particularly over the past decade. This thesis explores current manifestations of China's “Goodwill Agenda,” examining three strains of Chinese foreign policy in the 21st century: culture, institutions and aid. The paper also evaluates the success of this so-called campaign, using global surveys to determine if the new orientation correlates with changed global opinions about China. Despite extensive efforts, my findings indicate that the Goodwill Agenda has not been successful at improving China's reputation abroad.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the mid to late 1990s, a narrative emerged in Western academic and policy circles about the looming threat of China. China's rise, especially in terms of economic growth, had been an ongoing phenomenon since the 1970s, but the "China threat" theory, which gained widespread attention especially among American policy wonks, did not emerge as a consensus until the post-Cold War period. This development did not go unnoticed in China; in fact, the coalescence of the China threat theory in Western quarters deeply disturbed members of China's governing elite.

Many scholars argue that this threat narrative greatly influenced the direction of Chinese foreign policy beginning in the mid-1990s, and they often refer to this orientation as China's "new grand strategy" or "security diplomacy" for the twenty-first century (Deng 2006; Gill 2007; Glaser and Medeiros 2007; Goldstein 2005; Taylor 1998). This strategy is specifically designed to promote a benign image of China and to show that it is a responsible stakeholder in the international system currently dominated by the United States. Indeed, as Yong Deng (2006) notes, "It has become a scholarly consensus that contemporary Chinese foreign policy has countered its negative reputation through a commitment to building a cooperative, responsible image in the international society" (186).

This subject and the study of soft power, more generally, have also gained significant traction in Chinese scholarship. In response to the literature on soft power, Wang (2008) observes: "Few Western international relations phrases have penetrated as deeply or broadly into the Chinese vocabulary in recent years" (258). Indeed, soft power

has been embraced by the highest levels of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) leadership. In a 2007 address to the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, President Hu Jintao officially recognized soft power as a key component to China's national cohesion and strength. Wu Youfu, vice president of the Shanghai Public Relations Association and chancellor of Shanghai Foreign Language University, even suggested that "China should use the panda rather than the dragon as its national symbol" (Wang 2008, 258).

Unfortunately, while scholars initially devoted significant attention to this general trend of change, there has been little systematic analysis of the actual policy shift, particularly over the past decade. Even more curiously, there has been almost no study of the broader effects of this changed policy for China's international relations. Western scholarship, in particular, is preoccupied with international relations (IR) theory and whether, as a rising power, China exhibits the behavior of a revisionist or status quo power. Yet no one has asked the basic question: has China's campaign actually been successful at improving the country's image abroad?

This research seeks to provide a more complete understanding of this question by evaluating the effectiveness of China's new foreign policy orientation, which I refer to as "China's Goodwill Agenda" in international relations.<sup>1</sup> The Goodwill Agenda can be seen as a soft power campaign that combines cultural, rhetorical, institutional and aid-related strategies in order to boost the country's image and influence across the globe. The thesis examines three disparate strains of Chinese foreign policy, including cultural, institutional and aid-related strategies. My research then evaluates the effectiveness of these efforts by analyzing public opinion polls gathered by the Pew Global Attitudes

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow the term "Goodwill Agenda" from Paradise (2009).

Project from 2002 to 2012. Has China's Goodwill Agenda in foreign policy correlated with changed global opinions about China? Which of these strategies proves most successful? When and why have attitudes towards China improved, and when and why have they stagnated or soured?

The thesis begins by reviewing perceptions of Chinese foreign policy prior to the 1990s. It then offers a brief discussion of the origins of the China threat theory and the resulting Chinese grand strategy that coalesced during the 1990s. I argue that China's Goodwill Agenda mirrors the strategies of other great powers throughout history, and it is unsurprising that China developed a new orientation for its foreign policy for the twenty-first century. The thesis then moves into deeper discussion of the Goodwill Agenda and finally advances into my primary research question: has the Goodwill Agenda been successful at improving China's image abroad?

In my analysis, I use four indicators in a time-series analysis to evaluate the success of China's Goodwill Agenda across multiple dimensions from 2002 to 2012. To measure the effectiveness of China's cultural strategies, I examine the Confucius Institute project, a language and cultural promotion program which began in 2004 under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (Chinese Language Council). To measure the appeal of China's foreign policy – frequently cited as a critical component of soft power (Nye 2004; Voeten 2012) – I incorporate voting behavior at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) using an S-score, which represents the level of similarity in voting behavior between countries (Strezhnev and Voeten). The S-score is an increasingly common and useful proxy for measuring state preferences (Dreher and Jensen 2011; Voeten 2012). Finally, I measure the level of China's foreign aid by analyzing two

indicators: the number of completed aid projects from 2000 – 2005, documented by the China Commerce Yearbook and summarized in Hawkins et al. (2010) and the cumulative amount of food aid distributed by China between 2000 and 2010 recorded by the World Food Programme (2012). Together these indicators represent key components of China's Goodwill Agenda across cultural, institutional, and aid dimensions. Therefore, the Confucius Institute project, China's voting behavior at the UNGA, and China's aid to other countries set the stage for a useful analysis of China's Goodwill Agenda in the twenty-first century.

My analysis reveals that, overall, favorable opinions toward China have actually decreased between 2002 and 2012 and that the Goodwill Agenda's has produced little success at improving China's image abroad (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2012). This does not mean that China's Goodwill Agenda has been completely unsuccessful. In fact, there are some elements to this foreign policy orientation (such as the Confucius Institute project and foreign aid program) that probably have helped improve the country's image abroad. Specifically, China's food aid program has succeeded in building goodwill among a few developing countries. In addition, without the Goodwill Agenda, it is very likely that China's reputation would have suffered even more over the past decade, in light of China's continued rise in the global system. Unfortunately for the Chinese, the effects of the Goodwill Agenda are not enough to offset an overall deteriorating trend.

The findings raise concern about China's overall global image and the extent to which soft power foreign policy strategies can alleviate negative and threat-oriented opinions about China. Scholars who argue that Beijing's domestic policies undermine China's soft power resources may have a point. The thesis finds that liberal countries are

much more likely to hold lower opinions of China than their illiberal counterparts. The cultural, institutional and aid-related strategies of China's Goodwill Agenda have not been able to mitigate these effects, and China may need to reform its own domestic policies if it truly wishes to effect change in its international reputation.

## CHAPTER II

### CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

To lay the foundation for my analysis, the thesis builds from two broad strains of literature: the China threat narrative, which appeared popularly and academically in the early 1990s, and the literature on Chinese grand strategy, which gained particular attention among Western scholars during the mid-1990s. In what follows, I briefly review each of these literatures, although I first provide an account of China's relationship with the West since the 1970s normalization of relations.

#### *China and the West*

China's renewed partnership with the rest of the world began with the normalization of relations between China and the United States during the 1970s, which cemented a partnership with the West grounded in Cold War politics and buttressed by economics. In what David Lampton (2001) calls a "grand bargain," Beijing and Washington came to an understanding on a wide variety of policy issues in order to stabilize Sino-American relations in light of a common adversary, the Soviet Union. After President Nixon's visit to China in 1972, China and the United States formalized these understandings in the Shanghai Communiqué, which reiterated the two countries' commitment to peace in Asia by increasing contact and communication, promoting mutual respect and understanding, and discussing a broad range of policy issues. In the ensuing decades, China pursued a kind of "commercial diplomacy" that highlighted economic development and mutual benefit under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping who wanted to maintain a low profile in international relations (Ding 2012).

Though sharp disagreements and points of contention existed – chief among them the issue of Taiwan – China and the West managed to push these concerns to the background and concentrated, instead, on their shared common interests. No other issues, including Chinese arms sales to the Middle East, human rights abuses, political repression, espionage activities, and protectionist trade practices, seriously threatened China’s strategic partnership with the West during this period (Cohen 2010). Taylor (1998) elaborates: “Perceived as undergoing a much-applauded modernization programme with social as well as economic ramifications, Beijing was throughout the 1980s given favourable treatment by the Western media who saw/hoped that China was being remade as a Chinese imitation of the West's self-image” (446). This tenuous and sometimes uneasy, yet amicable relationship persisted throughout the 1980s, but the Tiananmen Square crackdowns in June 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union upset this delicate coexistence.

The crackdowns in Tiananmen Square brought the kind of attention that Deng Xiaoping had long sought to avoid. “The June crackdown was ... seen as not only a violent reaction to domestic unrest,” Taylor argues, “but also a conscious rejection by the Beijing elite of the West's own aspirations vis-à-vis China and its ultimate destination” (446). In the United States, public opinion polls charting China’s favorability ratings plunged from 72 to 33 percent between February and August 1989 (Lampton 2001). Though opinions in Europe tend to reflect more positively, China’s image throughout the West bounced back in subsequent years but has never fully recovered from pre-Tiananmen polling heights (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2011).

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War only exacerbated these tensions. Without a common and clearly identifiable adversary, long-suppressed points of conflict suddenly rose to the fore. While worldwide reactions to the Tiananmen Square crackdowns do not fully explain the origins of the China threat theory in the West, the events in June “served as a catalyst for change in Chinese and American policies toward each other,” Lampton writes (2). Indeed, Deng shows that most Chinese accounts of the origins of the China threat theory date to the early 1990s and focus on policymakers in the United States, Japan and Taiwan – the three primary propagators of the China threat theory. For example, in 1992, he explains, the United States debated whether to send F-16s to Taiwan, and Japan considered a bill that would allow its Self-Defense forces to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. Deft political maneuvering by proponents in both countries highlighted China’s military threat to support their cause.

### *Origins of a Theory*

Thus, a confluence of factors occurring at roughly the same time contributed to the development of the China threat theory. The events of 1989 had fundamentally altered the West’s perception of China, but the end of the Cold War had also changed the rules of the game. China’s rise suddenly began to look more sinister, and by the mid-1990s, there is a well-documented movement within scholarly, journalistic and policy circles about the idea of a “China threat.” For Western scholars, Huntington’s famous thesis (1993) on the “clash of civilizations” ushered in a proliferation of literature on China’s threat to the West, which ranged from how China’s overpopulation and food shortages would result in a global food crisis to how China’s steady rise in the political

landscape would soon displace the United States as the world's only superpower (Brown 1995; Friedberg 2011).

Bernstein and Munro (1997) capture a popular sentiment that unites these and numerous other works in *The Coming Conflict with China*. “[E]ven without actual war,” they write, “the rivalry between China and the United States will be the major global rivalry of the twenty-first century, the rivalry that will force other countries to take sides and that will involve all of the major items of competition: military strength, economic well-being, influence among other nations and over the values and practices that are accepted as international norms” (4). Perhaps it is not surprising then, that Mearsheimer (2001) and other IR scholars returned so enthusiastically to the study of great power politics at the onset of the twenty-first century.

#### *A New Grand Strategy?*

Many scholars (Deng and Wang 2004; Gill 2007; Goldstein 2005; Shambaugh 2006; Sutter 2008) have argued that during the 1990s China developed a new grand strategy for its global relations. (Though, there is some contention about whether a Chinese “grand strategy” can be said to exist at all. At the very least, these authors argue that there has been a marked shift in the orientation of Chinese foreign policy that dates to the mid-1990s.) Indeed, in what he calls a neo-Bismarckian strategy, Goldstein (2005) explains: “China’s capabilities were increasing and its military was improving, both compared with its own recent past and relative to others. Yet its modest increase in power hardly seemed to justify the alarmed reaction it elicited, and it was this reaction that would shape China’s emerging grand strategy” (69).

The contours of this overarching strategy remain somewhat vague, but most scholars point to China's active role in regional and international organizations; commitment to multilateralism; proliferation of partnerships and alliances around the globe; and leadership role in several pressing issue areas, including arms control, nuclear nonproliferation, and the six-party talks (Gill 2007; Goldstein 2005; Johnston and Ross 2006). Collectively, these examples represent a marked shift in Chinese foreign policy, which had focused almost exclusively on economic relations. As Gill (2007) notes, this attitude is significantly "more confident, proactive, and convergent with international norms and, generally speaking, with U.S. interests" than previous Chinese policy had been in the years prior to the mid-1990s (203).

Most importantly, scholars (see, for example, Deng and Wang 2004) argue that this new orientation – with its emphasis on diplomacy and activist international agenda – flows directly from perceptions of a "China threat." As the China threat theory gained traction in other countries, and particularly in the United States, Chinese leaders began to worry about the dangers of a negative international reputation. To counter this image, Chinese leaders needed to develop a strategy that could work within the unipolar system dominated by the United States. In other words, "China's grand strategy, [needed] to increase the country's international clout without triggering a counterbalancing reaction" (Goldstein 2005, 12). Indeed, Deng (2006) shows that Chinese rhetoric and foreign policymaking since 1995 has been designed specifically to reduce the perception of threat.

That Chinese foreign policy changed course during the 1990s should not be surprising for scholars of great power politics. China's behavior in international relations

reflects that of other rising powers throughout history, including the United Kingdom, Germany, France and the United States. During the post-World War II era, for example, the U.S. launched a goodwill agenda of its own. The Fulbright Program, Marshall Plan, Peace Corps, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) were all established between 1946 and 1961, just as the United States was cementing its position as global superpower. Couched in terms of moral obligation and benevolence, these programs were designed to engender goodwill across the globe and help the United States achieve its foreign policy objectives; and as part of their mission, the Fulbright Program and the Peace Corps were specifically designed to promote mutual understanding between the United States and the people of other countries (Peace Corps; U.S. Department of State). China's Goodwill Agenda can be viewed through a similar lens. The country's steady rise in the international system coupled with the China threat theory necessitated a response in foreign policy. The Goodwill Agenda represents the softer side of China's international relations, the side that mitigates the effects of global anxieties related to displays of hard power and the country's ongoing growth.

Just as Bismarck artfully navigated the uncertain waters of European politics in the late nineteenth century, Chinese leaders in the twenty-first actively seek to allay international (and particularly American) fear and anxiety regarding China's steady rise in the global system. The strategy, as Goldstein explains, is two-fold. First, it is designed to build partnerships around the globe, particularly with other major powers, in order to make China an indispensable part of the international system. Second, it works to perpetuate the image of China as a responsible stakeholder in the current global order, and by extension, a status quo power. Like other great powers throughout history, Wang

(2008) writes, “Chinese public diplomacy has tried to transform China’s rise from a hard rise to a soft rise” (258).

## CHAPTER III

### CHINA'S GOODWILL AGENDA

From this context, China's Goodwill Agenda can be seen as a soft power campaign designed to boost the country's overall global influence and counteract negative and threat-oriented images about China. Joseph Nye Jr. coined the term 'soft power' in 1990, which he defines as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments" (Nye 2004, x). Distinct from more traditional understandings of military and economic power, soft power provides a country an additional base of power, one with the ability to get "others to want the outcomes that you want" without exerting significant resources or strong-arm tactics to achieve your goals (5).

Nye argues that a country's soft power can come from three places: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policies (11). He writes, "The countries that are likely to be more attractive and gain soft power in the information age are those with multiple channels of communication that help to frame issues; whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy); and whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international values and policies" (32). This conception of soft power favors Western values, and thus it is not surprising that Nye (2012) and others have cast doubt on China's ability to harness its soft power resources, especially in light of many of China's domestic and foreign policies that have garnered international condemnation such as China's treatment of human rights activists, censorship of the media, and relationship with authoritarian regimes like Sudan and Zimbabwe. But any country, including the United States, carries a mixed record

when it comes to policy. Even more fundamentally, values and practice do not always align. There is no doubt that many of China's policies and values present challenges to building a positive China brand, but there is also no reason to disregard China's soft power resources without a deeper evaluation of Chinese efforts in this arena.

Thus, if we think of soft power as attractive power, China's Goodwill Agenda is clearly designed to make China more appealing to international audiences. It works to promote a benign, positive, and peaceful image of China around the globe through cultural, institutional, and aid-related strategies. In areas where the Chinese have deployed language institutes and foreign aid and when Chinese foreign policy preferences become attractive to foreigners, we would expect global opinions of China to improve. The Goodwill Agenda is designed to build a secure material environment, one where China can more easily achieve its foreign policy objectives. "Soft power has to make China's rise palatable to the world and has to create understanding, regard and ultimately support for China's political model and policies," writes d'Hooghe (2011). "It has to help China win friends and allies, and to advance the country's agenda. It is therefore no surprise that building and projecting soft power have been put firmly on China's international agenda..." (1).

Admittedly, "Goodwill Agenda" is a somewhat ambiguous designation, and this campaign guides Chinese foreign policy along multiple fronts. It includes, for example: the spread of Confucius Institutes, Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) to Asia, the international expansion of CCTV, the proliferation of foreign policy white papers, rhetorical references to "peaceful rise," and the development of organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). All of these efforts are designed to increase

China's influence and deter negative images of a threatening China. Although they do not always fit perfectly with Nye's conception of soft power, these strategies are united by Chinese intentions to engender goodwill among global audiences. On the other hand, policies likely to upset international audiences such as China's military modernization, power projection, and even vetoes on the UN Security Council do not fall within the bounds of this agenda. In fact, these are precisely the policies that the Goodwill Agenda is designed to offset.

The thesis examines three manifestations of the Goodwill Agenda across three dimensions of Chinese foreign policy: the Confucius Institute project, China's voting behavior in the UN General Assembly, and foreign aid. While the Confucius Institute project represents a straightforward example of a cultural soft power strategy in the Goodwill Agenda, China's voting behavior in the UNGA fits less perfectly under the Goodwill Agenda, and foreign aid remains a questionable source of soft power. I include these proxies for several reasons. First, in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the Goodwill Agenda, it is necessary to look beyond the cultural domain. Institutions, in particular, are frequently cited as evidence of a recent policy shift, and I include UNGA voting patterns in order to better understand China's behavior within these international organizations (IOs). It is unlikely that China plans its votes according to how its preferences are received in other countries, but in terms of examining the internal dynamics of IOs, an analysis of UNGA voting is simply the best available proxy.

Second, even though aid straddles the line between hard and soft power, it is probably more akin to soft power and thus deserves attention in my examination of the Goodwill Agenda. Aid is difficult to classify, especially in the case of China, where lines

between economic policy and foreign assistance are often unclear. However, there are clear examples of soft power forms of aid such as medical volunteers, food aid, and untied project aid. In my analysis, I use two aid indicators to measure the Goodwill Agenda because Chinese aid data is so scarce. Food aid represents a clearer example of soft power than aid projects (which are often infrastructure-related) but together they form a more comprehensive understanding of China's overall aid program, which is designed to build goodwill among developing countries.

Nye (2004) explains the difficulty with identifying and wielding soft power, which "often has a diffuse effect, creating general influence rather than producing an easily observable specific action" (16). Though he cautions against reading too much into public opinion polls, he explains that "polls are a good first approximation of both how attractive a country appears and the costs that are incurred by unpopular policies, particularly when they show consistency across polls and over time" (18). Following Nye's advice, the thesis then examines public opinion polls of 51 countries between 2002 and 2012 conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Goodwill Agenda. If successful, these strategies should improve global opinions about China in areas where the Chinese have deployed one or more types of these soft power resources. In what follows, I provide a deeper analysis of the cultural, institutional and aid strategies of the Goodwill Agenda and show that the effectiveness of these strategies is mixed, at best.

### *Culture and the Confucius Institute Project*

Chinese culture provides the basis for one of the country's richest assets and has appealed to foreigners throughout history. Nye (2004) argues that culture plays an important role in a country's soft power, and it is thus unsurprising that cultural strategies feature prominently in China's Goodwill Agenda. Culture carries the power of attraction, and in his prolific writing on American soft power, Nye consistently points to Hollywood, educational exchanges, popular sports, CNN, and other cultural strengths that help the United States achieve its foreign policy objectives and represent an enduring feature of American soft power. If harnessed effectively, culture has the ability to engender tremendous goodwill. Many countries, including the United States and China, sponsor language institutes, student exchanges, or cultural programs to enhance their national identity. The Confucius Institute project is an outgrowth of Chinese efforts in this arena. Designed to spread interest in Chinese culture, promote foreign business activity within China, and increase the number of people studying Mandarin, Confucius Institutes and Classrooms are an attempt to highlight the positive elements of China's image.

The Confucius Institute project is not the only cultural strategy of China's Goodwill Agenda. China has successfully employed high-profile events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo to showcase Chinese modernity, history and culture. Other cultural promotion efforts include international exhibits for Chinese art, Chinese television programs broadcasted abroad, and the international expansion of China's media giants, including Xinhua News and China Central Television (CCTV). Of course, the government is not always involved in these efforts, and events

such as musical concerts remain largely apolitical (Paradise 2009). But there are cultural elements to the Goodwill Agenda that Beijing influences directly. For instance, CCTV International, which launched in 2000, now airs in six languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish (CCTV News). This international expansion is part of a larger government effort to improve China's international reputation through its state-run media organizations, including CCTV, Xinhua News, *People's Daily*, and the Shanghai Media Group (Barboza 2009). Beijing makes no secret of its frustration with Western media outlets, and CCTV's growing international reach allows it to present "greater diversity and wider perspectives in the global information flow" (CCTV News).

However, the Confucius Institute project represents China's most important strategy along the cultural front, and the Chinese government helps fund and facilitate the program. Modeled after European language institutes such as the Alliance Française and especially the German Goethe Institute, the Confucius Institute project similarly strives to promote language and culture for diplomatic purposes (Paradise 2009). The program began in 2004 under the guidance of the Office of Chinese Language Council International, known as Hanban, a nonprofit organization with ties to the Ministry of Education (Chinese Language Council). Confucius Institutes are typically pairings of two universities, one Chinese, one foreign with a three-fold purpose: to teach Chinese language abroad, promote cultural exchange between the two countries, and foster foreign business activity within China (Paradise 2009). Confucius Classrooms are another outgrowth of this project; they are usually pairings of secondary schools at the city level. By the end of 2010, there were 322 Confucius Institutes and 369 Confucius

Classrooms in 96 countries, representing every continent except Antarctica, and the program continues to expand (Chinese Language Council).

Because it is a new and rapidly expanding program, the Confucius Institute project remains “very much a work in progress” (Paradise 2009, 653). Despite considerable funding from Beijing, the program has expanded at such a rapid rate that resources are sometimes scarce. Moreover, each institute is unique. Some of the institutes specialize in a particular area such as business or even Chinese opera (as is the case for the Confucius Institute at Binghamton University in the United States), while some have yet to establish a clear identity or focus. In short, there is wide variation among the hundreds of institutes across the globe (Paradise 2009).

The project also seems to be aimed at certain geographical regions. Of the 322 Confucius Institutes in operation, over half of them (57 percent) are in Canada, the United States and Europe (Confucius Institute Online). With 72 institutes, the United States has more Confucius Institutes than any other country – by a significant margin. The countries with the next largest numbers of Confucius Institutes are Russia (17), South Korea (17) and France (14). Africa has only 21 Confucius Institutes across its continent, and developing countries, in general, are underrepresented. It is not clear whether this is a strategic decision or whether this is simply an outgrowth of the bias towards regions with well-developed university systems. Every continent is at least represented, and it should not change our general expectations. We would expect countries with Confucius Institutes, and especially countries with multiple institutes, to possess more favorable opinions of China over time. Because it highlights only positive elements of the China brand and generates interest in the country, the overall project can

be considered a “type of impression management” that fosters the image of “a kinder, gentler China” (Paradise 662). In this way, the Confucius Institute project represents a strong example of a cultural strategy in China’s international Goodwill Agenda.

### *Institutions and the Affinity of Nations*

Institutions provide another avenue to promote China’s Goodwill Agenda in international relations. In addition to culture, Nye (2004) explains that a country’s foreign policy preferences and political values provide major sources of soft power. He writes: “The values a government champions in its behavior at home (for example, democracy), in international institutions (working with others), and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights) strongly affects the preferences of others. Governments can attract or repel others by the influence of their example” (14).

China’s approach to institutions plays an important role for the Goodwill Agenda in the twenty-first century, and China has steadily added to IO membership lists around the globe. If China actively participates, cooperates, takes on leadership roles and advocates popular policies within these settings, institutions can provide a fruitful platform for China to demonstrate its Goodwill Agenda. The thesis focuses on the nature of China’s participation in these institutions, concentrating in particular on China’s voting behavior in the UN General Assembly in order to evaluate the attractiveness of China’s political values and foreign policy preferences on a wide array of global issues. This is not a perfect proxy of the Goodwill Agenda, which ideally would focus on clear and intentional efforts to engender goodwill across the globe. However, an analysis of UNGA voting behavior allows us to assess the internal dynamics of international organizations

and the attractiveness of China's foreign policy preferences, which should matter a great deal if the country wants to build a positive reputation.

Voting behavior in the UN General Assembly is an increasingly common measure of state preferences (Stone 2006; Dreher and Jensen 2011; Voeten 2012), which has traditionally proven exceptionally difficult to operationalize. It offers a better method to evaluate state preferences than, for example, alliances which are often outdated, informal, and lasting even though they are often based on temporal strategic interests (Voeten 2012). Moreover, the UNGA handles a wide variety of global issues, on everything from financing peacekeeping operations to promoting multilingualism in the classroom. Between its main committees, the General Assembly addresses disarmament and international security; economics; and social, humanitarian and cultural issues. Finally, as Dreher and Jensen (2011) note, "While the UNGA is generally considered a weak institution, it is a relatively unique environment where we can easily observe the relative policy positions of essentially every nation in the world in the same institutional setting" over a significant period of time (2). Even the U.S. Department of State recognizes the importance of examining UNGA voting behavior in order to better understand which countries have similar interests and harmonious values to its own, which countries do not, and which countries fall somewhere in the middle (Dreher and Jensen 2011, 2).

Institutions have played a large role in China's Goodwill Agenda for many years. Since the mid-1990s, China has emphasized multilateralism, cooperation, and leadership within regional and international institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which it co-founded with Russia and three other central Asian countries in 1996; the World Trade Organization (WTO), which it joined in 2001; and the Association

of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which spawned ASEAN Plus Three when China, Japan and South Korea joined in 1995. China has also demonstrated a willingness to cooperate on a number of global issues, including terrorism, nuclear disarmament, and the six-party talks; in each of these arenas, China has taken on a leadership role (Goldstein 2007). Of course, not all of these institutions indicate that China shares converging interests with liberal democracies. The SCO and ASEAN, for example, are largely comprised of authoritarian members, and thus China's participation in these settings may simultaneously appeal to certain groups of countries while alienating others. On the other hand, China's ascension to the WTO and cooperative leadership on issues like North Korea demonstrate a changed orientation towards institutions that should appeal to Western countries.

China also participates in several far-reaching regional organizations. The country has long fashioned itself as a leader and a voice for developing countries. For many years, Beijing has touted "win-win" relations with developing countries, and this phrase has emerged repeatedly in official speeches and white papers, especially in relation to Chinese foreign policy towards countries in Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America. It should not be surprising, then, that the institutional strategies of China's Goodwill Agenda extend to this arena; over the past ten to fifteen years, China has taken a particularly active role in development programs around the globe. China became a participating member of the African Development Bank Group in 1996. It represents one of five non-regional members in the Caribbean Development Bank, which it joined in 1998; and in 2009, China became a non-regional member of the Inter-American Development Bank (Central Intelligence Agency).

But the United Nations General Assembly provides the most fruitful area for analysis. A study of UNGA voting behavior will provide a deeper understanding of the attractiveness of China's global political preferences and values, which – as we have determined – form a key component of a country's soft power. If Malawi, for instance, votes similarly to China in the UNGA, it means that the two countries likely share foreign policy preferences and China's political values – by extension – should seem more attractive to Malawi. This attractiveness should contribute to a positive image of China and enhance the effectiveness of the Goodwill Agenda. To be clear, member states in the General Assembly do not address bilateral relations; they vote on global issues. If China and another country vote 'no' on the same resolution, it does not mean they agree on a specific policy, nor does it make them allies. Rather, it reveals a common and general policy preference. To illustrate, Voeten (2012) explains, think of Pakistan and India or Ethiopia and Eritrea – countries that have violent histories of enmity and territorial conflict yet carry similar UNGA voting profiles on territorial issues because many of their foreign policy preferences and values align on this subject.

For the purposes of this study, China's behavior in the UN General Assembly deserves attention because it demonstrates China's willingness to work (or not work) with other countries in an international context; reveals China's preferences on a wide array of global issues that may or may not align with other countries; and provides a measurable indicator of state preferences in a controlled setting. When China and other countries share similar voting patterns in the UNGA, China's foreign policy preferences should serve as a source of attraction and we would expect the other countries to view China more positively, as a result. On the other hand, when China systematically

disagrees with other countries on UNGA votes, we would expect that China's policy preferences are seen as unappealing, thus undermining China's soft power and the Goodwill Agenda. The thesis is interested in studying the appeal of China's policy preferences and values to an international audience, and whether China's behavior in institutions strengthens the effectiveness of China's Goodwill Agenda. China's voting affinity with other countries in the UNGA should serve as a useful proxy to achieve these purposes.

### *Building Goodwill through Foreign Aid*

China's foreign aid program forms another important strain of the Goodwill Agenda. Like all other donors, the Chinese give aid for a combination of political, economic, and ideological reasons, and China is certainly not the only country to use aid partly to engender goodwill. The Chinese approach to aid, however, is somewhat unique. Decisions about where and how to invest Chinese aid are usually based more on business interests and experimentation in development strategy than on any other factors. China's aid program, in both rhetoric and practice, is based on principles of non-interference in domestic affairs, which contrasts markedly with Western aid conditionality (Brautigam 2009). Thus, China is sometimes willing to work with countries neglected by Western donors. China also has a tendency to sponsor big budget, high-profile infrastructure projects like government buildings and hospitals that carry "tangible benefits and serve as constant reminders of China's beneficence" (Lum et al. 2008, 34).

Even though aid does not represent a clear-cut example of soft power and often blurs into economic policy, which belongs to the realm of hard power, aid remains an

important element of the Goodwill Agenda. More often than not, foreign aid constitutes a soft power strategy because it does not exert significant resources or coercion to engender goodwill. Aid is used by many countries for a combination of political, economic and altruistic reasons, and China is no different. I include foreign aid in my analysis of the Goodwill Agenda to provide a more comprehensive picture of the diverse strains of this agenda.

We can expect aid to play an especially prominent role among developing countries. Because developed countries are not aid recipients, they are likely to remain unaffected by the aid strategies of China's Goodwill Agenda. The thesis examines the influence of Chinese aid projects completed between 2000 and 2005 and food aid distributed between 2000 and 2010. In regions like Africa, which receives significant amounts of Chinese aid, we should expect to see more favorable opinions of China if the Goodwill Agenda proves effective.

Though China's foreign aid program has garnered recent international attention, its aid program dates back to the 1950s (State Council). However, because China has long operated its aid program in secrecy, the study of foreign aid can prove exceptionally difficult. The Chinese aid system is not centralized. Multiple agencies are involved in the distribution of Chinese foreign assistance. The State Council is responsible for overarching policy, and the Ministry of Commerce handles the majority of Chinese aid; but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Export-Import Bank of China, and the China Development Bank are also involved in the aid process (Dreher and Fuchs 2011).

To complicate matters, Chinese aid differs in some ways from official development assistance (ODA) defined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation

and Development (OECD), which is the standard measure of foreign aid for most countries. Rather, much of China's aid program resembles foreign investment (Brautigam 2009; Lum et al. 2009). Because of the difficulty in determining what constitutes Chinese aid, there is wide variation in its estimates, and the numbers depend, in large part, on what type of assistance an observer includes in his or her estimates (Lum et al. 2009). China's aid program is much smaller than its Western counterparts (though it is expanding); exaggerated numbers often mistakenly include economic activities (such as non-concessional loans) that do not actually constitute aid (Brautigam 2009). Lastly, China does not publically release aid data and statistics. On occasion, China releases overall aid figures, but these numbers are not fully explained nor can they be independently corroborated. Much of the scholarly literature relies on estimates and combinations of piecemeal data from multiple sources to sketch a broad picture of China's aid program. All of these factors make the study of Chinese aid extraordinarily cumbersome.

In response to complaints about its lack of transparency, the Chinese government published a white paper on foreign aid in 2011 (State Council) that provided a glimpse of China's overall aid program. First, China's aid program is growing – significantly. From 2004 to 2009, China's overall aid program increased by about 30 percent. Over the years and by the end of 2009, China had provided aid to 161 countries, 123 of which regularly receive aid from China. This distribution is balanced geographically between Asia, Africa and Latin America. In monetary figures, it corresponds to 256.29 billion yuan (approximately \$38.5 billion USD). Grants make up roughly 40 percent of this total, interest-free loans constitute 30 percent, and concessional loans make up the final 30

percent (Dreher and Fuchs 2011; State Council). “Still,” as Dreher and Fuchs note, “it is not clear which financial flows are included in these calculations” (4). Thus, aid may be considerably greater than these estimates.

Nevertheless, what is clear is that Beijing has targeted foreign aid as an important element of China’s Goodwill Agenda. In 2000, China ushered in a new era in foreign assistance with the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), and it declared a “new strategic partnership” with the continent in 2006 when it pledged to double its aid to Africa by 2009 (Dreher and Fuchs 2011). Wang Yizhou, a scholar at Beijing University, recently remarked in anticipation of the fifth FOCAC summit:

"African countries are impressed most by China's strength as an emerging economic power. At the same time, China's international assistance teams have created many miracles in Africa, demonstrating wisdom and hard work of the Chinese people and establishing a good reputation... China needs to enhance an image of comprehensive social development instead of leaving an impression of 'a limp giant.' We have to explore soft assistance in cultural, social, military and other areas" (Yang 2012).

To measure the effectiveness of aid strategies in China’s Goodwill Agenda, the thesis will focus on two indicators of aid: the total number of Chinese aid projects completed between 2000 and 2005 and cumulative food aid distributed by China between 2000 and 2010. First, a dataset compiled by Hawkins et al. (2010) from the Chinese Commerce Yearbook provides the number of Chinese aid projects completed between 1990 and 2005, though my analysis focuses on the period between 2000 and 2005. Aid projects form a major component of China’s aid program; they are usually “productive or civil” infrastructure projects sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) in the form of grants and interest-free loans (State Council 2011). Second, the World Food Programme’s Food Aid Information System maintains a site that records annual food aid

distributions by donor countries, including China, beginning in 1988. My research examines cumulative amounts of food aid distributed between 2000 and 2010 (World Food Programme). China has targeted food aid as an increasingly important element of its aid program in light of the UN Millennium Development Goals and global food security concerns (State Council).

These measures carry a number of advantages. First, we know that these projects and distributions were actually completed and distributed, unlike many aid data which come from project budgets and policy plans. Moreover, since they are recorded in the year that either the project was completed or the year that the food aid was distributed, there is less of a time lag than aid figures which come from the early stages of the aid cycle. Second, these measures are countable and verifiable over an extended time period. This is important because Chinese aid data have a tendency to vary wildly year-to-year (Dreher and Fuchs 2011). Third, and most importantly, these measures definitely constitute aid -- under the traditional ODA definition -- unlike many Chinese foreign assistance programs which blur the line between foreign investment and aid.

Though measurements of China's foreign assistance program present tremendous challenges to scholars, China's aid projects from 2000 to 2005 and food aid allocations from 2000 to 2010 should provide useful indicators of aid strategies in the Goodwill Agenda. If effective, we should expect to see more favorable opinions of China in countries that have received recent Chinese aid, though the effects of these types of aid may differ. Because Chinese aid projects are usually infrastructure-related and are often accompanied by unveiling ceremonies, they attract more attention and notice (Lum et al. 2008). In addition, state of the art sports facilities (like the construction of three

natatoriums in Morocco) and extensive highway bridges (like the transportation project in Bangladesh) are more permanent as well as eye-catching. For this reason, I expect Chinese aid projects to have a more significant and lasting impact than food aid on public opinions of China. The use of two aid indicators provides a more nuanced evaluation of the effects of China's Goodwill Agenda in developing countries.

### *Expectations of the Goodwill Agenda*

Overall, China's Goodwill Agenda resembles American foreign policy programs like the Peace Corps, Fulbright Program, and USAID, which are similarly designed to build goodwill among international audiences and help the United States achieve its foreign policy objectives. The thesis focuses attention on China's cultural, institutional and aid-related strategies, using indicators to evaluate the Goodwill Agenda along multiple dimensions. Some of these strategies apply to a broad audience. For instance, UNGA voting, which provides insight into the attractiveness of China's foreign policy preferences, has the potential to appeal to a wide swath of countries. China holds a unique position within the UN, straddling the line between developed and developing country. It is a permanent member of the Security Council and has a powerful voice representing the world's second largest economy, yet it belongs to the Group of 77 voting bloc of developing nations. China's unique position is significant because "the North-South divide explains a huge share of variation in voting behavior" within the General Assembly (Dreher and Jensen 2011, 11). Chinese policy preferences, therefore, may be uniquely positioned to appeal to diverse groups of countries. Or, from a more cynical perspective, China may hold the unfortunate position of policy preferences that appeal to

no one. Regardless, when China resembles another country's voting patterns, the two countries' foreign policy preferences and political values are more likely to align. This should tell us about the level attraction Chinese foreign policy holds to a global audience, which is a major component of soft power and the Goodwill Agenda.

The other two indicators of the Goodwill Agenda examined here seem more clearly skewed toward specific audiences. China's foreign aid program is obviously targeted to engender goodwill among developing countries, roughly balanced between Central Asia, Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia. I expect aid projects to have a larger and more lasting impact than food aid simply because infrastructure projects are more permanent, but also because they garner attention and are often accompanied by symbolic ceremonies and news headlines. I expect countries that have benefited from Chinese aid projects to have more favorable opinions of China than countries that have just received food aid or that have received no Chinese aid at all.

The Confucius Institute project, whether by design or happenstance, is biased – at least in number – towards Western countries. Moreover, the United States has at least four times as many Confucius Institutes as any other country. Cultural strategies within the Goodwill Agenda are no more likely to influence the West than any other region of the world, but in terms of sheer resources, the Chinese have spent inordinate amounts of money on the Institute project in North America and Europe. Any evaluation of the Goodwill Agenda must take these biases into account, but in general we should expect China's image to improve over time after an institute opens in a given country. If the project is effective at improving China's image, there is likely a threshold on the number of Confucius Institutes at which effectiveness peaks. It is unlikely that the resources spent

building 72 Confucius Institutes in the United States translates to that much more improvement in China's favorability ratings compared to other countries.

## CHAPTER IV

### PUBLIC OPINION

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies, I divide my analysis into three strains of foreign policy (culture, institutions and aid) using the four indicators mentioned previously. My goal here is to observe general patterns of China's Goodwill Agenda and determine whether these strategies positively affected China's image in countries around the globe during the twenty-first century. I use polling data from the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which conducts annual surveys on opinions of China, to evaluate the effects of these efforts. This is in line with other scholars (Nye 2004; d'Hooghe 2011) who use opinion polls to measure the influence of soft power strategies. The Goodwill Agenda is designed to build a positive China brand, and we should expect that countries improve their overall opinion of China when they open a Confucius Institute, share foreign policy preferences with China in the UN General Assembly, and receive Chinese project or food aid.

Of course, the influence of these strategies is diffuse and it is impossible to isolate the effects of the Goodwill Agenda from political and other contextual factors that likely play a large role in whether China's intended message is received. Nye (2004) illustrates this point. "Soft power is more difficult to wield," he writes, "because... many of its crucial resources are outside the control of governments, and their effects depend heavily on acceptance by the receiving audiences. Moreover, soft-power resources often work indirectly by shaping the environment for policy, and sometimes take years to produce desired outcomes" (99). Still, public opinion polls are probably the best measure of China's Goodwill Agenda because they can measure the effects of multiple strategies

across diverse groups of people (d’Hooghe 2011). As long as we exercise caution when interpreting results, opinion polls can provide a rough sketch of China’s image abroad over time.

The publically available Pew Global Attitudes Project functions as a particularly useful survey because of its consistency over time and its geographical scope. The question – “Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of China” – has been asked since 2002 and every year since 2005. Over the years, the project has canvassed more than fifty nations on this question, although the surveyed countries can vary somewhat year to year (Pew Global 2012). The thesis will focus on responses of 51 countries between 2002 and 2012. (It excludes responses from China, which are not relevant to the study since the thesis aims to evaluate opinions *outside* of the country; it also excludes Palestine, which does not exercise voting rights in the UNGA.) Since most countries were polled at least once, this produces 168 unique data points for our dependent variable: the percentage of favorable opinions of China in a given country in a given year. Respondents who viewed China very favorably and somewhat favorably are pooled into a single category for this analysis.

The data for my independent variables are gleaned from a number of secondary sources. Information for the Confucius Institute project comes from the project’s official website, which lists the location and history of every Confucius Institute currently in operation. Some of the historical information on the site, however, is more thorough than others and there are discrepancies between some of the dates. A portion of the institutes list the date when the agreement between two partnering institutions was signed; others

list the date that the institute first opened to the public. Sometimes these dates fall within the same year, but that is not always the case. Whenever possible, I use the opening date of the institute, although this information is not always available. This problem should be somewhat mitigated by the fact that Confucius Institutes, in my measurement, accumulate over time. Within my sample, the first institute opened in 2005 and the last opened in 2010. Polling data up to 2012 should capture the effects of even the latest Confucius Institute, and we should expect to see more improvement in opinions of China as Confucius Institutes open over time.

To measure the attractiveness of China's foreign policy preferences, I test the similarity of China's voting behavior with other states in the UN General Assembly. The Strezhnev and Voeten dataset on UNGA voting covers 1946 to 2011 and calculates annual S-scores that represent voting affinity between dyads on a linear scale from -1 (least similar interests) to +1 (most similar interests). My analysis focuses on the period between 2002 and 2011 to coincide with the Pew polling data. This dataset is particularly useful because it distinguishes between abstentions and 'no' votes, unlike earlier UNGA voting datasets which classified them in the same way and probably distorted analysis (Voeten 2012). In short, countries that share similar UNGA voting preferences with China (represented by S-scores close to +1) should find Chinese foreign policy preferences more attractive and hold higher opinions of China than countries with dissimilar voting patterns (represented by S-scores close to -1).

The thesis employs two indicators to measure China's foreign aid program. First, Hawkins et al. (2010) compile an extensive list of completed aid projects between 1990 and 2005 gleaned from the China Commerce Yearbook and the Almanac of China's

Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, which are published annually by the Ministry of Commerce. Data is available for every year except 2002, and the thesis concentrates on the total number of completed aid projects between 2000 and 2005. In addition, the dataset offers brief descriptions of every project, although financial and budgetary information are scarce. We should expect countries such as Tanzania, Jordan, and Pakistan that benefited from multiple aid projects to hold higher opinions of China than countries that did not receive this type of foreign assistance.

Second, the World Food Programme maintains the public and web-based Food Aid Information System, which tracks annual food aid distributions by China and other donors. Food aid is measured in tons of grain equivalents and classified as project, programme or emergency aid. The thesis cumulates the total amount of food aid distributed by China since 2000. Only a few countries within the survey have received Chinese food aid, although this should not be entirely surprising. Countries that require emergency assistance and food aid are often in conflict-ridden areas that pollsters have difficulty reaching; therefore, many of them are not represented in this sample. In general, there may be a bias in the Pew survey against countries which need donor assistance the most. This is yet another reason I employ two measures to evaluate the impact of China's foreign aid program. In brief, we should expect countries that have received Chinese food aid (such as Ethiopia, Mali and Bangladesh) to exhibit higher opinions of China than countries that have not received this type of aid.

For my control variables, I also incorporate five other indicators that may account for variation in China's favorability rating. The World Bank Group provides annual data on GDP per capita measured in USD. I also account for population size and a country's

distance from China, by measuring (in miles) the capital city's distance from Beijing (Central Intelligence Agency). As the literature on great power politics explains, wealthier countries with larger populations may be wary of a rising China that can challenge their position in the international arena. Moreover, China's neighbors may prove distrustful of the country even as it invests enormous resources in the Goodwill Agenda. These three variables work to mitigate the effects of patterns in wealth, population and distance in my analysis.

Lastly, I employ two political indicators to help control for any bias in liberal or democratic regimes against illiberal and autocratic China. Since most of the polled countries in the Pew survey are democracies, I use the Polity IV score as a proxy for regime type. For each year, the Polity IV Project (Marshall) ranks countries on a democratic scale from -10 to +10, where +10 represents consolidated democracy and -10 represents hereditary monarchy. To account for liberalism, I code Freedom House scores on a three-point scale, where +1 means the country is free, 0 signifies that it is partly free, and -1 means that it is not free. Unlike the Polity scores, which focus primarily on institutional design, the Freedom House score gives insight into the level of civil liberties a country enjoys, including freedom of speech and the rule of law. These are two areas that China has gained particular notoriety and probably contribute to its negative reputation, especially in Western liberal societies. Together, these political variables help isolate the effects of regime type and liberalism. Table 1 provides summary statistics, with information on the number of cases, means, minimums, maximums and standard deviations for each variable employed in my analysis.

Table 1  
Summary Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Favorable Opinion of China	168	14	92	52.49	15.963
Confucius Institutes	168	0	71	6.21	11.810
UNGA S-Score	149	-.6974	.9538	.554032	.3906725
Total Aid Projects 2000 - 2005	168	0	7	.64	1.216
Cumulative Food Aid since 2000	148	.0000	5,052.4000	87.485811	487.8963777
GDP per capita	168	252	50558	17,671.80	16770.353
Distance from China	168	592.4100	11985.3800	4,978.222500	2330.0029343
Polity IV Index	164	-7	10	6.74	4.416
Freedom House	168	-1	1	.43	.747
Population	168	2,646,314	1,205,073,612	103,033,129.12	145,667,346.68
Year	168	2002	2012	2008.38	2.364
Valid N (listwise)	145				

To summarize my expectations, I anticipate that the four independent variables representing China’s Goodwill Agenda (Confucius Institutes, UNGA S-Score, Total Aid Projects, and Cumulative Food Aid) will produce positive coefficients. Of these, I expect that Confucius Institutes and Chinese project aid will probably produce the largest and most significant coefficients because their presence is more newsworthy and long-term than food aid or the ongoing dynamics in the UN General Assembly. Within the control variables, I anticipate that GDP per capita, Population, Polity IV Index, and Freedom House will have negative coefficients while Distance from China will have a positive coefficient (although I do not expect any of these variables to be statistically significant). Lastly, Year should produce a positive and potentially statistically significant coefficient as the Goodwill Agenda deploys soft power strategies over time.

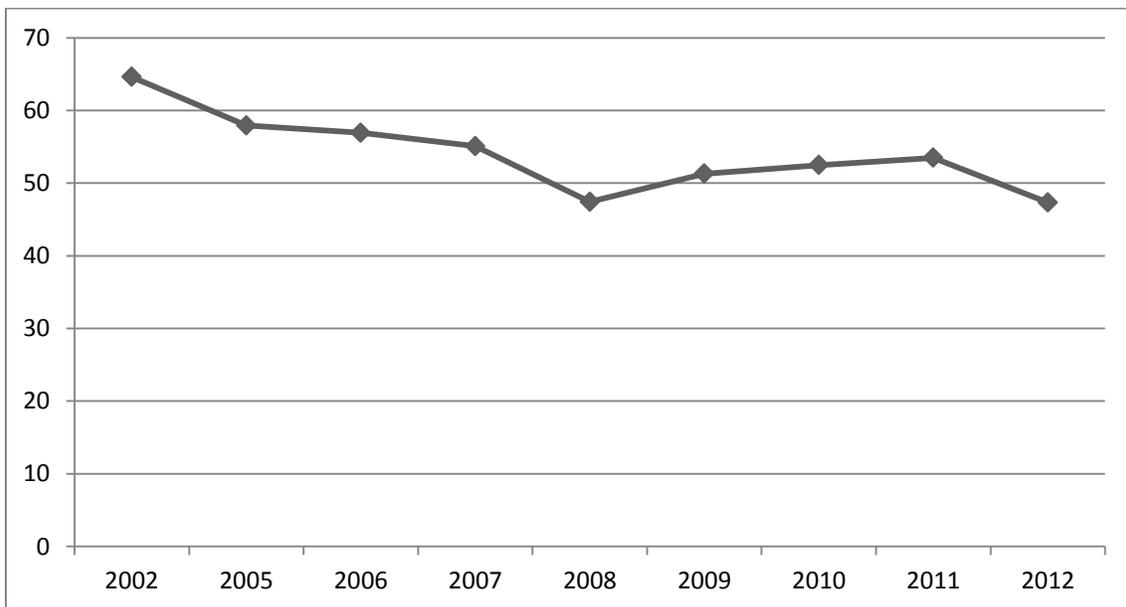
## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

My results indicate that China's cultural and aid-related strategies have improved China's reputation during the twenty-first century, but that the institutional strategies of the Goodwill Agenda may actually undermine China's soft power resources. Contrary to expectations and despite extensive efforts from Beijing, the Goodwill Agenda has not succeeded in improving China's image abroad. In fact, between 2002 and 2012, average favorable opinions of China actually decreased slightly. Figure 1 displays the combined global averages of favorable opinions of China between 2002 (64.6 percent) and 2012 (47.3 percent).

Figure 1

Average Favorable Opinion of China (as a percentage), 2002 – 2012.



Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project. 2012.

China's reputation experienced modest gains between 2008 (47.4 percent) and 2011 (53.5 percent), which is perhaps a function of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, a high-profile and highly successful event that showcased China among international audiences around the globe. However, these improvements did not manage to compensate for an overall deteriorating trend over the course of the decade. A linear regression model, detailed in Table 2, provides deeper analysis into these dynamics. First, the coefficient for year tells us that time has negatively influenced China's reputation between 2002 and 2012, despite the efforts of the Goodwill Agenda. The variable is also statistically significant at the ten percent level. This finding contradicts my expectations which supposed that opinions of China would improve over time as the soft power strategies of China's Goodwill Agenda were deployed.

Table 2  
Linear Regression Model<sup>2</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1931.806	1109.395		1.741	.084
Confucius Institutes	.089	.146	.065	.612	.542
UNGA S-Score	-1.960	5.210	-.050	-.376	.707
Total Aid Projects 2000 - 2005	1.079	1.161	.087	.929	.354
Cumulative Food Aid since 2000	.012	.004	.211	2.743	.007
GDP per capita	.000	.000	-.450	-3.523	.001
Distance from China	.000	.000	-.038	-.497	.620
Polity IV Index	.720	.477	.203	1.510	.133
Freedom House	-4.928	2.767	-.232	-1.781	.077
Population	-2.318E-009	.000	-.019	-.225	.822
Year	-.933	.553	-.127	-1.688	.094

To assess the Goodwill Agenda along the three strains of foreign policy discussed here, we can observe the coefficients for the four indicators representing China's cultural, institutional and aid-related strategies. First, most of the coefficients representing China's Goodwill Agenda – including Confucius Institutes, Total Aid Projects 2000 – 2005, and Cumulative Food Aid since 2000 – are positive. This matches my expectations. Confucius Institutes and China's foreign aid program have a generally positive influence on China's reputation abroad. Aid projects may have a sizeable impact on opinion. For every completed aid project, favorable opinions of China increase by about one

<sup>2</sup> When I use only the Polity IV Index as a political indicator, year loses its statistical significance ( $p = .104$ ). Using just the Freedom House indicator, cumulative food aid falls outside of statistical significance ( $p = .149$ ) and Freedom House also moves outside of this threshold ( $p = .285$ ). All other coefficients maintain their signs and statistical significance.

percentage point, although this variable is not statistically significant. Confucius Institutes and cumulative food aid also positively influence opinions towards China, but this last variable is highly significant – at the one percent level.

These findings loosely coincide with my initial hypotheses. I expected the Confucius Institute project and China's foreign aid program to have generally positive effects on China's reputation abroad. However, most of these variables are not statistically significant, and the results should be interpreted with caution. At the same time, some of my other expectations were wrong. Within the category of aid, I assumed that project aid would influence opinions of China more than food aid since Chinese project aid – usually in the form of infrastructure projects -- tends to be more newsworthy and long-lasting than food aid. Yet food aid is the only strain of the Goodwill Agenda that we can confidently conclude has an impact on global opinions of China. While this effect may appear small, keep in mind that food aid is measured in tons of grain equivalents and China donates food in large quantities. For instance, if China donated 500 tons of food to a country (as it did for Bangladesh in 2004), we should expect opinions of China to improve by six percentage points, which is a very significant increase. Indeed, 74 percent of Bangladeshis viewed China favorably in 2007. Pakistan was also a beneficiary of Chinese food aid and showed more favorable opinions over the duration of the Pew survey (from 79 percent in 2005 to 85 percent in 2012). Viewed in this light, food aid may be China's most effective strategy for improving its reputation in other countries.

One of the more surprising elements of the analysis reveals that China's voting affinity with other nations in the UN General Assembly negatively influences opinions of

China. The coefficient for UNGA S-scores is negative, which contradicts my expectations. Remember, countries with similar voting preferences in the UNGA are represented by S-scores near +1, whereas countries that hold opposing interests are represented by S-scores closer to -1. Since the coefficient for UNGA S-scores is negative, this means that countries that share policy preferences with China in the UN General Assembly are *less* likely to hold favorable opinions of China than countries that exhibit opposing voting interests. For instance, Egypt which shares remarkable voting affinity with China (and has an average S-score of 0.942) averages only a 57 percent favorability rating between 2006 and 2012. Conversely, favorable opinions in Israel are only slightly lower, averaging 50 percent, even though the country consistently exhibits opposing interests in the UNGA with an average S-score of -0.476. The coefficient of the UNGA variable is surprising, although it is not significant. At the very least, we can say that countries that share policy preferences with China in the UN General Assembly are just as likely (or perhaps even more likely) to hold unfavorable opinions of China than countries that share opposing voting interests.

For my control variables, GDP per capita and a country's distance from China have no effect on opinions of China. Wealth and geography play little role in determining whether another country thinks highly or poorly of Beijing. Population effects are equally small though its variable is not significant at all. These findings are somewhat surprising since I assumed that larger and wealthier countries, especially those in China's neighborhood, would be more wary of its rising status as a global or regional challenger, but the thesis finds that opinions of China are influenced by other factors.

My political indicators merit more discussion. The Polity coefficient is positive (+0.720), meaning that democratic countries hold higher opinions of China than their nondemocratic counterparts. This is surprising given that many scholars question China's soft power resources based on its one-party, autocratic regime. Of course, the Polity score does not carry statistical significance, but the sign of its coefficient is puzzling, to say the least. On the other hand, the Freedom House indicator, which I coded on a three-point scale, may give credence to these arguments. Countries that are classified as "free" by Freedom House (coded +1 in my analysis) have less favorable opinions of China – by a large and statistically significant margin (-4.928\*). We can say with some degree of confidence that liberal countries have an average opinion of China that is five percentage points lower than their illiberal counterparts. Therefore, the findings of the thesis supports scholars like Nye (2004) and d'Hooghe (2011) who argue that Beijing's domestic repression undermines China's soft power resources.

To test the durability of these results, I also run a first-difference model summarized in Table 3. This model neither confirms nor discredits the majority of the earlier findings; the results are decidedly mixed. However, there are some notable differences. Signs change for two of the coefficients, including Confucius Institutes and UNGA S-score, although neither carries statistical significance. Unfortunately, these two indicators represent strains of the Goodwill Agenda. In the first-difference model, UNGA voting affinity positively influences opinions of China while Confucius Institutes may actually undermine China's reputation abroad. This contradicts the findings of the linear regression model, although in neither model are these variables statistically significant.

Table 3  
First-Difference Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.565	1.595		2.236	.028
DIFF(Year)	-2.348	1.214	-.189	-1.934	.056
DIFF(Confucius Institutes)	-.211	.232	-.087	-.907	.367
DIFF(UNGA S-Score)	7.402	12.823	.054	.577	.565
DIFF(Cumulative Food Aid since 2000)	.017	.123	-.132	-1.436	.094
DIFF(GDP per capita)	-.001	.000	-.303	-3.074	.003
DIFF(Polity IV Index)	1.105	.923	.111	1.198	.234

Note: Total Aid Projects 2000 - 2005, Distance from China, Freedom House, and Population are time-invariant indicators. They function as constants in the first-difference model and are thus excluded from the output.

On the other hand, the first-difference model confirms several key findings of the linear regression model. The coefficient for year remains negative and cumulative food aid stays positive; moreover, both of these variables maintain their statistical significance. Despite my initial hypothesis, it is clear that time has not helped China build a positive brand over the course of the past decade. In addition, this second model confirms that food aid represents China's most effective strategy for engendering international goodwill. In both models, cumulative food aid is the only consistently positive and statistically significant variable of the Goodwill Agenda. Lastly, we are unable to test four of the variables from the linear regression analysis, including Total Project Aid 2000 – 2005, because they are time-invariant indicators. They are excluded as individual variables from the first-difference output, although their effects are captured in the constant.

## CHAPTER VI

### LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

Of course, we must interpret these results with a healthy degree of caution, especially since the two models differ in several key areas. Opinion polls are not perfect tools for evaluating China's Goodwill Agenda or any other soft power strategy. The Pew survey does not ask respondents to explain their opinions, and these findings "do not tell us much about why people have negative feelings about China and why they have changed their minds over time" (d'Hooghe 2011, 15). Moreover, the thesis only examines four indicators of the Goodwill Agenda, though this is an amorphous foreign policy orientation that seeps into many areas of China's international relations. The Confucius Institute project, for instance, can hardly offer a full picture of the cultural strategies associated with the Goodwill Agenda.

Most importantly, there may be serious limitations to the data and indicators used in this analysis. The contradictory findings between the linear regression and first-difference models may reflect problems with the indicators used to evaluate the Confucius Institute project and UNGA voting affinity. First, the Confucius Institutes probably require a longer time lag before they have any influence on opinions of China. In some cases, I am forced to use the date of the signed agreement between a Chinese and foreign institution even though it can take many additional months before a Confucius Institute actually opens its doors to the public. But even the institutes that provide information about their public opening may suffer from this problem. Because the overall project is very new, there remains wide variation among the hundreds of Confucius Institutes in operation. It can take years before a Confucius Institute develops its own

identity, purpose and presence. The first-difference model, in particular, probably underestimates the impact of the Confucius Institute project because it does not provide an adequate time lag. This may explain why Confucius Institutes have a negative coefficient in the first-difference model.

Second, my proxy for assessing the attractiveness of foreign policy may prove problematic in the case of China. The UN General Assembly is frequently used as a platform to compare state preferences. However, within the Pew survey, there are only two countries that consistently exhibit negative S-scores with China: the United States and Israel. (Canada also had a negative S-score with China, but in one year only.) Across the survey, 48 of 51 countries shared positive S-scores with China in every year that they were polled, which signals surprising consistency in voting affinity with China. Thus, there may not be enough variation in the data to adequately assess China's behavior in international institutions. Scholars seeking to understand the attractiveness of Chinese foreign policy as a soft power resource probably need to examine different countries or they need to employ another measure of this indicator.

Third, China's foreign aid program is uncommonly difficult to evaluate. Unlike all of the other Goodwill Agenda indicators used in the thesis, the information for project aid is not available for recent years, and I am forced to rely on a static measure. Because of this, I am unable to corroborate the findings for project aid in the first-difference model. Undoubtedly, this impacts my findings. If and when Beijing decides to release more information on its aid program, scholars will gain a much clearer picture of the breadth and impact of China's aid strategies within the Goodwill Agenda.

From a broad perspective and across all indicators, the thesis is limited by time constraints. Most scholars agree that the effects of soft power strategies can take many years to manifest, and the Pew survey, while offering a decade-long glimpse, may require more time to observe the Goodwill Agenda's actual effects. The Goodwill Agenda is still relatively young, and time may offer a different picture of its impact on Chinese foreign relations. Nevertheless, the thesis does shed some light on the general trends of China's reputation across the decade and among a wide global audience.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

For supporters of China's Goodwill Agenda, the results of this thesis should be sobering. Despite the hundreds of Confucius Institutes that have opened since 2004, despite increasing cooperation in international institutions, and despite significant amounts of aid that have flowed into developing countries, perceptions about China remain stubbornly entrenched. If anything, China's reputation has suffered over the past ten years, disappointing hopes that the Goodwill Agenda could help to build a positive China brand. The analysis illustrates that there are elements of the Goodwill Agenda that seem to be effective. China has successfully utilized its food aid program to engender goodwill in several developing countries, and it may want to expand the program beyond its typical handful of African countries if it wants to harness this strategy more effectively in the future. The thesis also finds that the Confucius Institute project and Chinese aid projects – while probably positive influences on China's reputation – produce no tangible results. Worse still, China's foreign policy preferences, even when they align with other countries, do nothing to improve global opinions. Certainly, time may yield more productive results, and there is reason to believe that the Confucius Institute project, in particular, will have a longer-term impact than the analysis reveals here.

Of course, the findings do not indicate that the Goodwill Agenda has been wholly unsuccessful. Without Chinese efforts across these cultural, institutional and aid dimensions, global opinions may have deteriorated even more significantly between 2002 and 2012. There are certainly other dynamics that color China's relations with the rest of the world, and the thesis does not discuss China's military or economic relations with

other countries, nor does it account for current events or other news stories that may influence people's opinion of China. The impact of China's military modernization, ownership of increasing American debt, tainted milk scares, etc. compete with the Goodwill Agenda to inform people's perceptions of China. Indeed, given these examples, it seems very likely that global opinions of China would be much worse without the efforts of the Goodwill Agenda. Moreover, reputation can take years to build and seconds to destroy, as the events in Tiananmen Square eloquently illustrated. China has devoted significant time, resources, and official attention to the Goodwill Agenda and it remains to be seen whether this is money well spent. The Goodwill Agenda must be viewed through a long-term lens, and it must also be viewed in the broad context of China's overall international relations. Therefore, definitive assessments of the success or failure of this foreign policy orientation go beyond the scope of my analysis.

The only conclusively successful strategy is China's food aid program, which impacts a small number of developing countries. Part of China's problem may be communicating the goodwill message to broad audiences. While China's cooperative behavior in institutions like the United Nations may appeal to political leaders, it is unlikely to sway the personal opinions of average citizens. And if China seeks to build a wide-reaching and positive reputation, it will need to focus its attention on strategies that influence elites as well as publics. This may explain why food aid produces such effective results: it garners goodwill from leaders that desperately need assistance, but it also directly impacts the general populace. Therefore, it may be prudent for the Chinese to focus more on programs and policies that impact and appeal to broad audiences. This might include maintaining long-term support for the Confucius Institute project, but it

also might include expanding China's international media presence and increasing foreign direct investment in regions around the globe. However, despite China's best intentions, even strategies targeted at broad audiences may not impart the country's intended message of peace and positive relations. Many of the agenda's programs and policies, while seemingly benign, have generated heated controversy in foreign countries. For example, Chinese aid to Africa and many Confucius Institute openings in the United States have met resistance, protests, and negative media attention.

My findings cast some doubt on the effectiveness of soft power strategies in combating negative and threat-oriented opinions about China. For instance, the political variables in this analysis indicate that China's illiberal tendencies undermine the Goodwill Agenda. As Nye (2012) recently observed, "Great powers try to use culture and narrative to create soft power that promotes their national interests, but it's not an easy sell when the message is inconsistent with their domestic realities." Some degree of political reform may be the best way that China can build a positive international brand. When China imprisons human rights activists, suppresses Tibetans and censors its internet, it is also sending an international message – one that contradicts the efforts and promises of the Goodwill Agenda. Reputation matters in international politics but the Goodwill Agenda can only succeed if China's message to international audiences remains consistent.

There may be limits to soft power strategies, and if China wants to learn from its successes and failures, then the Goodwill Agenda will need to adapt in order to maximize its effectiveness. China may need to turn away from institutional strategies that probably only apply to political elites and have shown, at best, mixed results in improving China's

global reputation. Instead, I argue that China should be patient with the cultural strategies of the Goodwill Agenda such as the Confucius Institute project that will likely take years to fully develop. Beijing should also devote more resources and expand China's foreign aid program, which has been the Goodwill Agenda's most successful strategy to date. It does not matter whether a country is rich or poor, large or small, near or far; China's Goodwill Agenda needs to target the broadest possible audience if it wishes to improve its reputation globally, and it should focus on elements of foreign policy that appeal to political leaders as well as the general populace. While the results of the thesis question the effectiveness of the Goodwill Agenda, it is likely that China's reputation would have deteriorated even more between 2002 and 2012 without China's significant efforts in this arena. All three strains of the Goodwill Agenda, including China's cultural, institutional, and aid strategies, require further study, especially research that allows for more time to pass in order to account for effects that may not yet be observable.

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