

# China's soft power has expanded in the new era—Take the construction along the Belt and Road Initiative as an example

**Mingyan Li**

*School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China*

**Abstract:** *The dream of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation requires not only the vigorous development of economic construction and the improvement of people's material living standards, but also the strong cultural accumulation to support the rejuvenation of Chinese civilization. As General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out, "Without a high degree of cultural confidence and a flourishing culture, there can be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." In terms of economic development, China has now become the world's second largest economy, second only to the United States, with remarkable achievements and strong momentum. However, in terms of soft power such as cultural attraction, cultural development level and cultural diplomacy, China can not be called a strong country at present. Therefore, the construction along the "the Belt and Road Initiative" is an important link in the realization of China's soft power expansion in the new era.*

**Keywords:** *new era, The Belt and Road, soft power, cultural communication platform*

"The Belt and Road" is mainly a contest of soft power against countries and regions. In this sense, the construction of soft power of "the Belt and Road Initiative" cultural implication demonstrates the turn and evolution of multicultural communication in the global spatial pattern, elucidates "the recognized value of a political order", and interprets the realistic expansion and spatial extension of cultural functions. Among them, the declaration and expression of cultural values and the win-win and common development of mutual learning among civilizations demonstrate the Oriental context of soft power construction. As Xi Jinping put it, "Cultural confidence is more fundamental and profound. Broader confidence." The promotion of cultural soft power is an important part of enhancing cultural confidence. The proposal and implementation of the "the Belt and Road Initiative" initiative have added new development impetus to the promotion of China's cultural soft power, which not only enriches the cultural resources needed to promote the cultural soft power, but also broadens the space for China's cultural development.

## **1. The basic connotation and characteristics of national cultural soft power**

### ***1.1 The basic connotation of national cultural soft power***

The concept of soft power comes from Joseph Nye's view of soft power, "Joseph Nye regards cultural soft power as an important part of national soft power, and constitutes national soft power together with political values and foreign policies. Thus it can be seen that this view of soft power mainly takes cultural soft power as its main content, and interprets the connotation of soft power from the perspective of national strategy and foreign policy, which is inevitably instrumentalist.

Most scholars in China believe that culture is the primary factor in the construction of national soft power. Joseph Nye's soft power is combined with China's cultural power, which opens the study of China's national cultural soft power. Congress has explicitly put forward we need to continue efforts to promote national traditional culture of soft power and construction, and since our party's 18th, also repeatedly expounded on the soft power of national traditional culture and the importance of the construction, 18, 19 report are respectively to continue to work hard to promote national soft power as the main content of traditional culture and a major move.

National cultural soft power is based on a nation's economy, science and technology, and military hard power such as basis, and produce spiritual support and intellectual support to the national

comprehensive cultural influence, including a nation and the country's history and culture, ideology, traditional value system, academic level and influence, development of cultural industries and cultural resources in foreign communication ability and the spiritual value of influence, charisma and cohesion, etc.

Need special pointed out that the national cultural soft power as an important part of comprehensive national strength of a country should not only focus on the influence of the nation and the country's political value and the role of foreign policy should also focus on ideological and moral construction of our country, the construction of culture, science, civilization etiquette, at the same time more should lead the entire human race from social and cultural progress and civilization development, promote world peace and prosperity, and progress of height.

Therefore, we should not only view national cultural soft power from the perspective of instrumental rationality, but also examine, judge and measure it from the perspective of value rationality. In other words, national cultural soft power should not only act as a tool of hegemonism from the perspective of national egoism, but also should be considered from the perspective of promoting the overall interests and direction of human civilization. Only such national cultural soft power can truly guide social progress and the long-term development of human civilization.

### ***1.2 Basic characteristics of national cultural soft power***

The basic characteristics of national cultural soft power are shown in three aspects: traditionality and modernity, nationality and world, ideology and universal value.

#### ***1.2.1 traditional nature and modern nature***

As a comprehensive force reflecting the level and influence of cultural development, national cultural soft power not only has the tradition of national and national historical development, but also has a certain modernity. As a kind of thought and spirit, culture is the product of the nation and country through certain historical development and cultural accumulation, with the theoretical consciousness and cultural reflection of man and nature, man and society, and the mutual relationship and understanding between people formed in the long-term historical process of the nation and country. Due to the geographical environment, social changes and thinking mode and other factors, this nation and national culture is bound to have the realistic characteristics and spiritual appearance of that time, therefore, the culture is traditional. At the same time, because in the reflection and summary of the historical development and the progress of civilization, it is bound to contain some thoughts with modern value and long-term significance. Therefore, this kind of traditional national and national culture will have some characteristics of modernity, which indicates and leads human civilization to move forward continuously along the track of cultural development and civilization progress.

#### ***1.2.2 Nationality and Cosmopolitan***

The national character of national cultural soft power first refers to its subjectivity, which is based on the premise and foundation of a certain nation and country, so there is no abstract soft power. Due to the differences in geographical environment, social nature and way of thinking, each national culture must have many characteristics different from other nations, which constitute the particularity, richness, diversity, comparison and competitiveness of the soft power of its national culture. Different ways of life, language expression and behavior values form a unique national cultural tradition and national spirit. In the knowledge of the major issues have more profound understanding and the new understanding: "we can be born and later as a Chinese, one of the most fundamental reason is true is that we can have as a unique Chinese spirit of the Chinese people all over the world, there is a human common people daily and not consciously practice the socialist core values."

#### ***1.2.3 ideology nature and value universality***

Ideology is one of the important attributes of national cultural soft power. Culture is the thinking shell of ideology, while ideology is the soul and foundation of ideology and culture. According to the marxist historical materialism and the theory of human social development law, the national cultural soft power in essence belongs to the superstructure and social ideology, inevitably affected by the economic basis and the decision of the political system and restriction, and along with the social productive forces and production relations, economic basis and superstructure contradiction movement of change and change. Therefore, the cultural soft power of any specific nation and country will inevitably contain its unique ideology, reflect the survival interests and ideological characteristics of the nation and country, and become the spiritual pillar and value guidance of the nation and country's

culture.

While acknowledging that national cultural soft power has the ideology at the same time, we also cannot deny the value of national cultural soft power has a certain universality, when this kind of ideological performance enough with the peace and development of the human civilization and progress trend corresponds to the value of universality, the national culture of soft power has a universal value. In this sense, the "community with a shared future for mankind" advocated by China is a universal value that truly ADAPTS to the development trend and progress direction of human civilization.

## **2. Countermeasures to realize the expansion of Chinese national cultural soft power under the background of "the Belt and Road Initiative"**

The construction of "the Belt and Road Initiative" provides a rare historical opportunity to improve the soft power of China's national culture, but there are certainly some problems in the process. Therefore, only take the initiative to face up to the difficulties, seize the opportunity to face up to the problems, take various effective countermeasures, in order to effectively improve the national cultural soft power of our country.

### ***2.1 Improve the cultural exchange and cooperation mechanism and enhance the charm of Chinese culture***

#### ***2.1.1 Create cultural development alliance and promote cultural exchange and cooperation***

To improve China's national cultural soft power through the construction of "the Belt and Road Initiative", it is far from enough to rely only on excellent culture and ideological value. We must improve the corresponding cultural exchange and cooperation mechanism, through cultural exchange of visits and cultural activities in a multi-level and multi-field exchanges and cooperation, enhance mutual understanding and reached consensus on the idea, trying to change the international social bias against China's negative cognitive and thinking, to improve the appeal and influence of the Chinese culture better. National exchange platforms and mechanisms, such as overseas Chinese cultural centers, Confucius Institutes, and the Belt and Road International Summit Forum, have laid a good foundation for strengthening people-to-people exchanges and deepening multilateral cultural industry cooperation mechanisms during the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative. Of course, the cultural exchange and cooperation mechanism is not a single process, but a double or multiple process, including China's external cultural communication, including the introduction of domestic culture, including bilateral or multi-party cultural cooperation, which means both "China to the world" and "the world to China". While showcasing the fine traditional Chinese culture and the achievements of contemporary socialist culture and civilization to the international community, we should also show the achievements of other nations and countries to the domestic people to enhance and deepen their understanding of each other.

#### ***2.1.2 Strengthen cultural exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, and gather common values***

Cultural exchanges and mutual learning civilization needs certain platform and the media, for economic cooperation and mutual political trust need to certain ideas and value consensus as the premise and foundation, and can be obtained only by constant communication and mutual learning and condensed consensus of value, thus further promote in-depth cooperation and development, "the Belt and Road Initiative" is the Chinese and neighboring countries to strengthen cultural exchanges and mutual learning civilization rare platform opportunity.

And today's Internet technology development and the progress of all kinds of information and communication technology, there is no doubt for the "area" the construction of cultural exchange and mutual learning of civilization provides unprecedented convenience, but the premise must be based on respect for cultural diversity and tolerance, which is advocated by the Chinese traditional culture "harmony without uniformity". The most effective way to resolve cultural differences and conflicts of civilizations is to respect, tolerate and understand each other, so as to obtain ideological and spiritual identity and cultural value consensus. This is the fundamental way to improve the soft power of China's national culture and expand the influence of Chinese culture, as well as the fundamental choice to determine the future and destiny of "the Belt and Road Initiative" construction.

## ***2.2 Concentrate intellectual support and strengthen the training of talents along the "the Belt and Road Initiative" construction line***

### ***2.2.1 Improve personnel management mechanism and personnel appointment system***

Talent team construction is the intellectual support and important support for the "Belt and Road" construction. Without high-quality talent team as the bridge and link, cultural exchanges and mutual learning of civilizations among countries along the "Belt and Road" will be impossible to be realized. "the Belt and Road Initiative" spans three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa, and the cultural and social environment is very complex. Therefore, cultivating high-quality and high-level talent team has become an important way to improve the soft power of national culture in the process of "the Belt and Road Initiative" construction.

In the "the Belt and Road Initiative" regional economic and cultural cooperation and communication, through macroscopic understanding of the required talent development direction, for the formulation of a reasonable and effective human resources integration system to lay the foundation. In the specific practice of human resource management, the proportion of talents in various fields in the total talent market can be planned as a whole, and the specialty and quantity of talents needed in the cultural field in the process of "the Belt and Road Initiative" promotion can be estimated, and targeted talent training programs can be formulated. Through the joint training of the government and universities to improve the quality of talents, to ensure that relevant talents can meet the needs of "the Belt and Road Initiative" economic and cultural construction. Secondly, for key cooperation areas or specialized areas, it is necessary to implement precise training and key management. Finally, strengthen the implementation of talent introduction policies, improve the treatment of professionals, establish a scientific talent evaluation system, improve the incentive policies and systems related to talent training, and provide strong talent intelligence support for the construction of the "the Belt and Road Initiative".

### ***2.2.2 Building a new think tank platform to cultivate interdisciplinary talents***

The political and economic systems, language and religious beliefs, life, culture and customs of the countries and regions along the border and along the "the Belt and Road Initiative" are different. Through the construction of new think tanks, we can better understand the needs of talent construction and provide guarantee for the cultivation of compound talents. Think tanks, especially high-end think tanks, are professional research institutions with academic and practical features. They can provide strategic, forward-looking and operational countermeasures and suggestions in terms of professional knowledge and authoritative information for national decision-making, and are the key factor for the construction and improvement of modern national governance capacity and governance system. The construction of cultural industry talent database of "the Belt and Road Initiative" countries and regions and the connection with personnel in relevant fields can be used to systematize and digitize the required talents and grasp the overall trend of talent cultivation. The docking of "the Belt and Road Initiative" countries and regions along the border with Chinese culture can promote the construction of trans-regional cultural teams and drive the formation of think tanks

## ***2.3 Carry forward the Silk Road spirit and enhance the competitiveness of Chinese culture***

### ***2.3.1 Carry forward the spirit of cooperation and help the cultural industry construction of countries along the line***

Since the reform and opening up, with the rapid development of China's economy and science and technology, China's cultural undertakings and cultural industries have also undergone great changes, which play an increasingly prominent role in reflecting the achievements of reform and opening up and the socialist modernization drive with Chinese characteristics. In recent years, the proportion of cultural industry in the national economy has also increased, especially in the first - and second-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hangzhou, where the cultural industry accounts for more than 10% of GDP, and even 20% in some cities. Although cultural value compared with the developed countries still have large gaps, but in many ways such as film and TV, singing and dancing, publishing, animation, games, creative design, cultural trade import and export, and other fields, compared with the "area" all the way along the country has a larger advantage, including technical support, financial support and cultural resources reserves. The state can adopt relevant policies to vigorously encourage and support cultural enterprises to implement the development strategy of going global and establish closer cultural industry links with countries along the Belt and Road. To strengthen cooperation through complementary advantages and mutual benefit can not only promote the economic benefits of the

cultural industry itself, but also improve social benefits, promote mutual understanding, mutual tolerance, resolve differences, increase consensus, and strengthen friendly exchanges among people of all countries.

### ***2.3.2 Use the power of the media to tell China's story well***

It is an important trend of the modern media era to spread information by TV, computer, mobile phone and other terminal methods. In the process of "the Belt and Road Initiative" construction, in addition to helping the construction of cultural industry, another important way to improve the communication power of Chinese culture is to make skillful use of modern omnimedia power, breakthrough time and space limit, through the top design and the advantages of the technology development direction, intensify support, adhere to the integration to build a strong propagation force, guiding force, influence, a new type of transmission platform and the mainstream media credibility. To fully display the profound ideological connotation and cultural essence of excellent traditional culture to the world; Showing the brilliant achievements of the contemporary Chinese nation in achieving national prosperity and common prosperity of the people is a reminder of China's commitment to building world peace, contributing to global development and upholding the international order. Speak good Chinese story, spread Chinese sound, let the world understand China better, so as to promote our country's international voice, national cultural soft power and the influence of Chinese culture, it is completely can be expected, the situation of the western discourse take over the world will end, the Chinese model and words will be acknowledged and recognized by the world.

### ***2.4 Strengthen the construction of cultural security guarantee mechanism and improve the level of national cultural security***

#### ***2.4.1 Adhere to cultural consciousness and cultural confidence, and resolutely resist the erosion of foreign backward culture***

Cultural exchanges and inheritance have continued and developed. China is a multi-ethnic country with a large population, so to cultivate people's cultural consciousness, so that cultural confidence is really internalized in the heart and the outside in the practice, the focus is on "people". Historical experience tells us that in the face of complex cultural forms, we should learn to identify and distinguish. In the process of "the Belt and Road Initiative" construction, with the deepening of economic cooperation and cultural exchange, rich countries and areas along the diverse cultural concepts will be brought into our country, there is no lack of among them excellent cultural achievements, but also can appear a variety of religious extremism and various other input error values, cultural conflict and affect China's cultural security. In this regard, we must keep a clear mind and a scientific understanding, not only to properly absorb and draw on the excellent achievements of foreign cultures and human civilization. At the same time, we should consciously resist and discard decayed and backward ideas and unhealthy cultural influence. It is important to uphold an open and inclusive cultural mind and a broad spirit that embraces all rivers and rivers. It is also important to uphold the high level of cultural awareness and confidence embodied in the fine Chinese culture.

#### ***2.4.2 Improve the relevant legal system to provide a strong guarantee for the settlement of international disputes and the promotion of national cultural security***

Due to the huge differences in political environment, education level and religious customs of the countries and regions along the "the Belt and Road Initiative" route, as well as many unknowns in the process of cultural exchanges and cooperation among countries, the formulation and implementation of relevant laws are particularly difficult and complicated. Frequent international cultural exchanges across the area for our country must have a complete mature foreign legal system to deal with all kinds of emergency, not only to improve its policies and regulations, real time also want to master in time and attention to the laws and regulations of the countries and regions and along the new policies and regulations, and international legal environment, efforts to form a set of "area" each member of the generally accepted legal framework.

### **3. Conclusion**

With the continuous promotion and implementation of the "the Belt and Road Initiative" initiative, economic and trade cooperation between China and countries and regions along the Belt and Road has been carried out steadily, and people-to-people exchanges have become increasingly close. On this basis, the construction of China's cultural soft power has ushered in many opportunities. Its emergence

has irreplaceable practical significance for us to enhance our cultural confidence, build a strong socialist culture, and realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. At the same time, it is not a policy of China alone, but a policy of common development of countries along the Belt and Road. It is conducive to respecting the history and culture of countries along the Belt and Road, and gradually enhancing mutual benefit and mutual trust, so as to shape a world cultural pattern that does not recognize one country or another.

### References

- [1] Voon J P, Xu X. *Impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on China's soft power: preliminary evidence*[J]. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Accounting & Economics*, 2020, 27(1): 120-131.
- [2] YaĖCi M. *Rethinking soft power in light of China's Belt and Road Initiative*[J]. *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, 2018, 15(57): 67-78.
- [3] Sharma B P, Khatri R S. *The Politics of Soft Power: Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as Charm Influence in South Asia*[J]. *China and the World*, 2019, 2(01): 1950002.
- [4] Rahman S. *Does the "belt and road initiative" possess soft power*[J]. *Contemp Chin Pol Econ Strateg Relations: Int J (CCPS)*, 2019, 5(1): 301-31.