

# TAIWAN'S SOFT POWER AND THE FUTURE OF THE CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

Yun-han Chu



# My Key Points

- The fact that Taiwan is exercising significant soft power over the mainland has so far not been duly recognized, documented and appreciated.
- Taiwan actually possesses enormous potential in shaping mainland China's future. Also, by so doing, the island is equally able to steer the future course of cross-Strait relation despite of the growing asymmetry in the distribution of hard power across the Strait.
- Maximizing its soft power is the best and perhaps the only strategy available to the island for protecting its long-term interests and for making Taiwan a significant, responsible and constructive player in East Asia and the world stage at large. Without it, Taiwan will become increasingly vulnerable and marginalized.

*“Soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies”*

*“Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy and human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive.”*

Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*

# Soft Power for a Small Player

- The examples that Joe Nye cited and analyzed in his work were all about how a great power or at least a major player in the world arena can employ soft power to complement or compensate its hard power.
- He said very little about how a small player can move others in its favored direction without much hard power , i.e., carrots and sticks, at its disposal.
- Although in theory soft power can exist without hard power, it is not very clear what difference it makes when soft power is employed by a small player rather than a major player and by a strategic underdog facing up a gigantic rival.

# Some Useful Insights

- Soft power depends more than hard power upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers.
- Soft power is not limited to public diplomacy, such as public relation campaign, public information service, government-sponsored cultural exchange, second-track dialogue, etc.
- In a democracy, it is difficult for the government to control or centrally coordinate the exercise of soft power. Private actors acting spontaneously are often time more influential and effective than government agencies.
- Culture is a powerful and inexhaustible source of soft power. Personal contacts are another important channel for soft power.
- The effect of soft power takes time.

# Elements of Taiwan's Soft Power

- There are many willing receivers in the mainland and enough willing interpreters from Taiwan.
- For better or worse, the way democracy works in Taiwan is always closely watched and extensively talked about by ordinary citizens and carefully examined by the intellectual and the CCP elite across the Strait.
- For them, Taiwan's democratic experience constitutes a crucial social experiment as it is the first and the only democracy ever installed and practiced in a culturally Chinese society. Furthermore, Taiwan's unique mode of democratic transition illustrated a viable exit strategy for a hegemonic party to engineer a peaceful and gradual transition from one-party authoritarianism on the basis of its successful record of economic modernization.

## Elements of Taiwan's Soft Power (II)

- Taiwan can serve as a Chinese model of social and political pluralism featuring free mass media, autonomous civic organizations, open political contestation, and unconstrained individual freedom.
- Taiwan has served as an important source of inspiration for re-engineering the party-state to meet the challenge of rapid socio-economic transformation.
- Taiwan offers practical know-how about the nuts of bolts of developing a *Rechtstaat*, a modern law-bound state embedded in an open market economy.

# Elements of Taiwan's Soft Power (III)

- Taiwan's strength lies not just in its experiences with economic modernization, social transformation and democratic development, but also the permeation of Chineseness in the society, in terms of preserving and practicing Chinese culture, social custom and ethics, dietary habit, concepts about body and health as well as space and time, and values in their daily life.
- Most of all, the elements of modernity and the elements of cultural heritage have been blended into one, which is alive, vibrant and keeps evolving all the time.

# Elements of Taiwan's Soft Power (IV)

- Inherited cultural and linguistic unity, acceleration of economic integration, growing cross-Strait social network and the expansion of shared culture space make Taiwan-based political, economic and social actors powerful agents of change.
- Many of the island's social actors, such as academia, writers, media star, interlocutor of popular culture, religious groups and NGOs have been conducive to mainland China's political liberalization especially through the transmission and dissemination of information, ideas and practical knowledge.
- The opening up to mainland Chinese tourists has further expanded the army of willing interpreters.

# Agents of Change

- The penetration of Taiwan-based TV programs through satellite dishes has been ubiquitous
- Taiwan-based NGOs have engaged their counterparts in the mainland over a full range of social causes from charity, consumer rights, assistance to battered wives, preservation of cultural heritage, to campaign against deforestation.
- Taiwanese religious groups have played a key role in reviving the Buddhism, Daoism and folk religion.
- The textbooks by Taiwanese law professors are important intellectual sources as Beijing modernizes its civil and criminal codes.
- Taiwanese entrepreneurs have played a very significant role in shaping the institutions of local governance.

# “I am a singer” tournament 2013



台灣歌手林志炫、楊宗緯分列2、3名，彭佳慧、辛曉琪列第4、5名

Taiwanese popular singers captured four out of top five awards



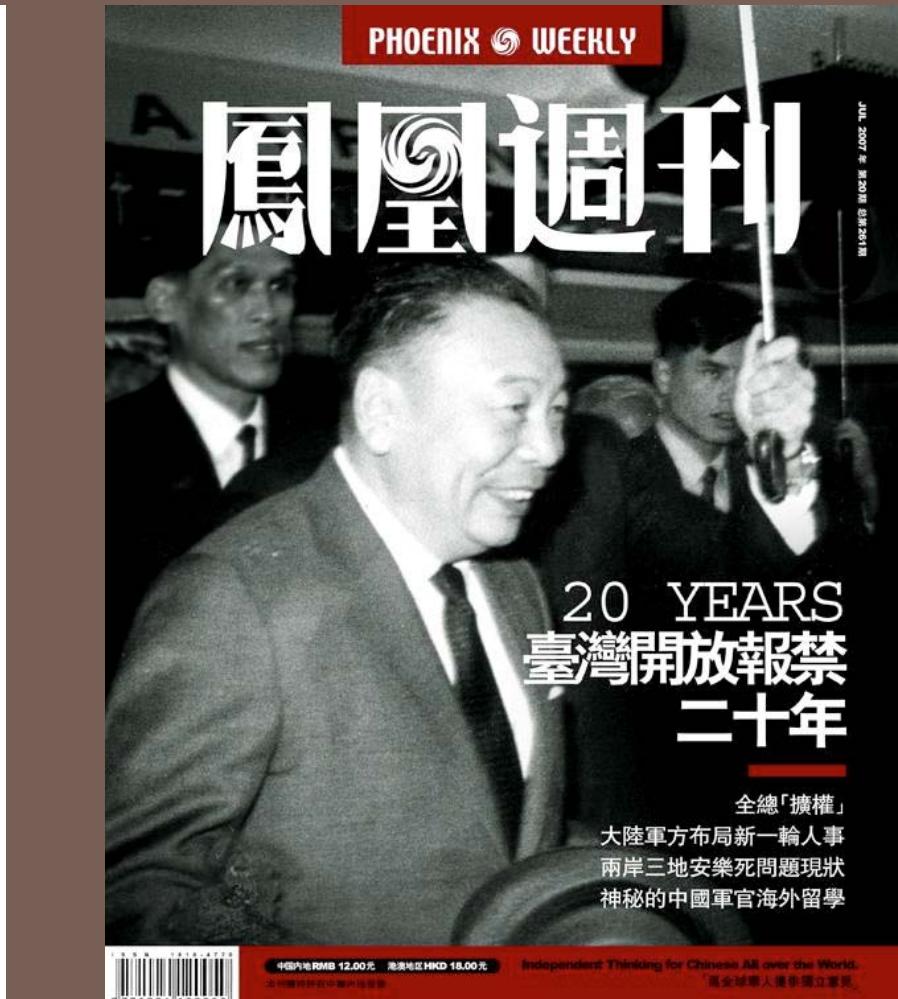
Han Tang Yuefu  
Ensemble at the  
Forbidden City

cnsphoto

# The hero behind the revival of traditional Kunqu Opera by injecting new elements



Despite of the censorship, the leading news magazines managed to carry cover stories about Taiwan's democracy.





Some best-known  
Taiwanese media stars  
in mainland China





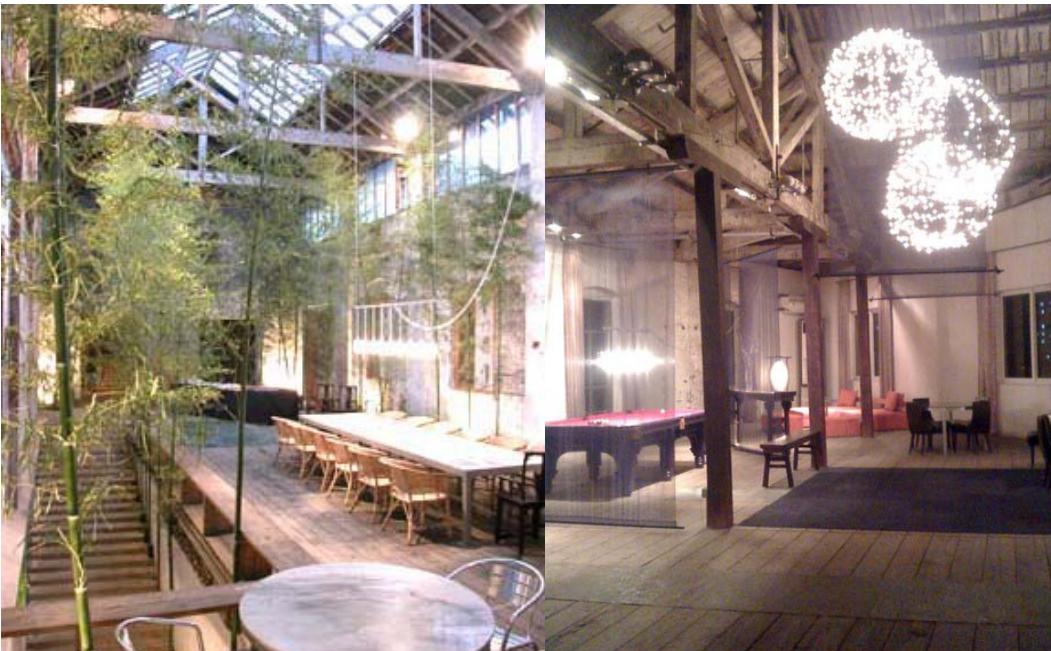
# Mr. Wen's (溫世任) Huangyangchuan Project in Gansu Province



SEE: An environmentalist NGO that brings CEOs from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the mainland together.



SEE is the pioneer in every aspect of Chinese NGO sector.



# Suzhou River: One Taiwanese architect's intervention in Shanghai



# Found Museum in Beijing's new International Art Village



中国网  
china.com.cn

# The fingerprints of a Taiwanese architect



The most respected  
Taiwanese Buddhist  
organization





World Buddhist  
Forum in Wuxi  
and Taipei, 2009





## 佛光山 宜興大覺寺



高雄佛陀紀念館





## Revival of Matsu Belief and cross- Strait Pilgrim





Bringing back the  
traditional holidays

Tomb-sweeping  
(ancestor  
worshipping) Day

Dragon Boat Festival

Confucius' birthday  
(Teacher's Day)

Moon (Mid-Autumn)  
Festival



高市龍舟點睛 陳市長期許熱鬧盛況為世運揭開美好序曲



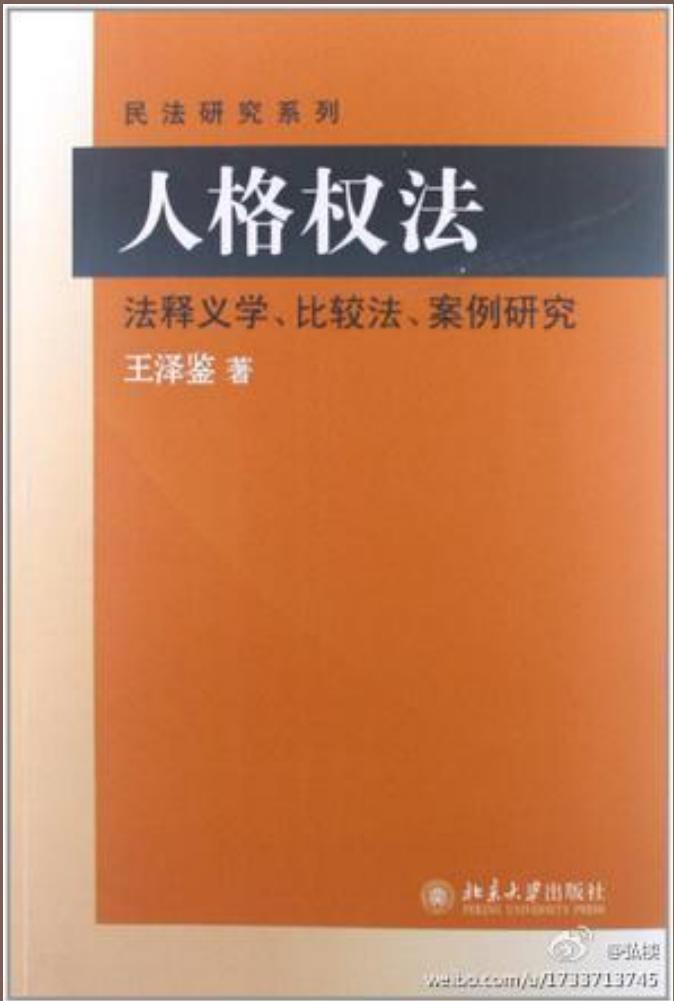
A businessman  
and his China  
dream.

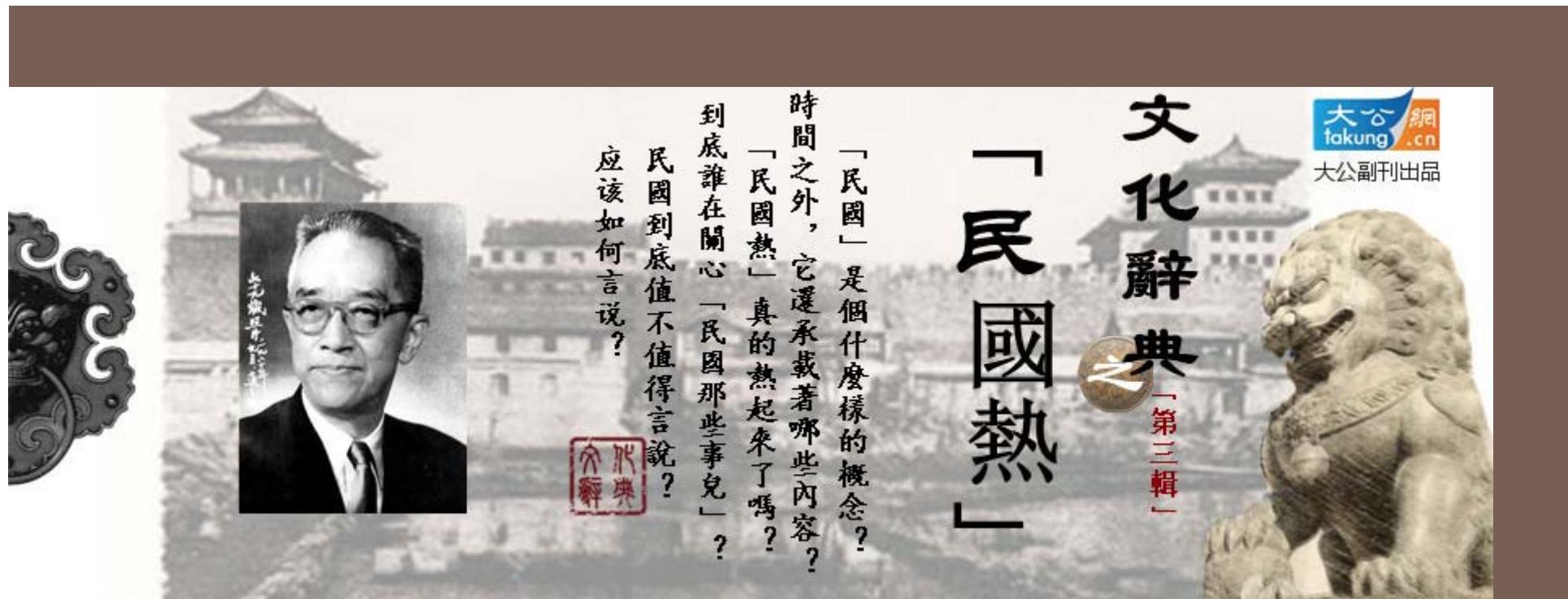




上海交大安泰經濟與管理學院

The most influential  
law professor in  
mainland China

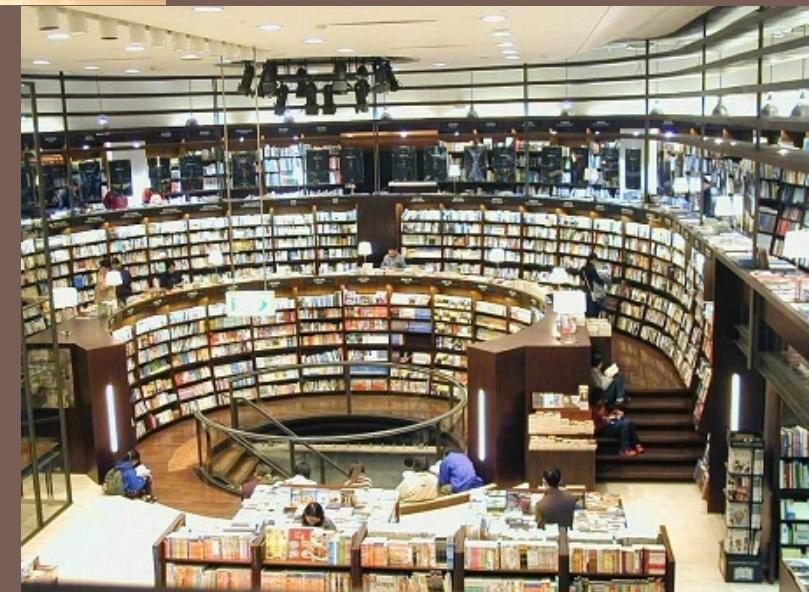




Cross-Straits exchange, among other things, has spurred a Republican fever in the mainland by revisiting the politics and culture of Republic Era, 1911-49.



Most sought-after  
Taiwanese  
investor in the  
mainland



Not all aspects  
of Taiwan's  
soft power are  
welcome by  
Beijing



Cross-  
fertilization  
between  
Occupy LY and  
Occupy Central

# The Accommodation and Adjustment

- With more and more willing interpreters in China and many more Chinese intellectual elite becoming perceptive to Taiwan's views and concern, it becomes increasingly less convincing and legitimate for Beijing to pursue coercive strategy toward Taiwan
- Beijing has learned to live with Taiwan's democracy and cope with its uncertainty. Beijing recognizes that it has to work hard on influencing the view and winning the heart of the island's electorate. In so doing, it has to use more carrots and less sticks.
- Beijing has recognized that it has to satisfy at least partially the wish of the Taiwanese people over dignity, autonomy and international space under its one-China framework.

# The Maximum Approach

- Many pro-democracy Chinese intellectual believe that Taiwan can maximize its magnetic power over mainland if its leaders are willing to engage Beijing over unification under a democratic one China.
- Prof. Fei-ling Wang of Georgia Institute of Technology wrote, “Taiwan is a very precious and highly potent catalyst for China’s rise and transformation. Imagine how Taiwan’s very Chinese but free media, legal norms and practice, and multiparty democracy could, on direct contact with and extensive presence in the PRC, captivate, energize, and edify the Chinese people on the mainland.”

# Engagement is the kingly way

- As the cross-Strait relation is entering a new era of in recent years, Taiwan is in a position to enhance its soft power as more visitors and students coming to the island.
- This can happen if, first of all, Taiwan is able to improve the overall quality of its young democracy, and secondly, if Taiwan pushes vigorously for deepening the cross-Strait economic, social and cultural ties.
- In the long run, Taiwan can exert tremendous soft power over the mainland through comprehensive engagement. The tail can wag the dog only if the tail is somehow culturally, economically and politically attached to the dog.

# Ready or not, here they come!

