

The Necessity of Implementing Smart Power Strategy in Contemporary China

Comments on the Achievements of Reform and Opening up in the Past 40 Years from the
Perspective of Smart Power*

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Abstract—Smart power is a new theory of national development strategy born in the early 21st century. It has rich historical and realistic connotations. In view of the universal significance of smart power itself, the author will analyze the concept of smart power in contemporary China from the historical origin, realistic foundation, strategic necessity, long-term nature and the existing objective performance. It can be seen that the great achievements China has made in the past 60 years since the founding of the People's Republic, especially in the past 40 years of reform and opening up, complement each other with the strategy of smart power.

Keywords—smart power; hard power; soft power; smart power strategy; reform and opening up

I. INTRODUCTION

What is smart power? It was put forward by American Scholar Suzanne Nossel in 2004, emphasizing the comprehensive use of hard power and soft power to achieve the goal of American diplomacy. In 2006, Joseph Nye, a professor and famous scholar at Harvard University, published an article entitled "Rethinking Soft Power" in magazine *Diplomacy*. The article said, "It is wrong to rely solely on hard power or soft power, and to combine them effectively can be called smart power. [1]" In 2007, former US Deputy Secretary of State Armitage and famous scholar Joseph Nye published a research report entitled "Smart Power Strategy", which clearly proposed the use of smart power for foreign strategic transformation, to help the United States get out of the current predicament and revitalize its global leadership [2]. And the fact that smart power has really come into the public eye and become a hot word of concern also owes to former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. In her half-hour foreign policy statement to Congress on January 13, 2009, Hillary comprehensively explained the use of smart power and all available means, including diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal and cultural means, to unite friends and contact opponents, consolidate original alliances and form new alliances and

open up a new situation in American diplomacy. Once the concept of Hillary's smart power was put forward, it immediately aroused widespread concern from the outside world.

II. THE UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SMART POWER

Smart power is a theory of national development strategy born at the beginning of the 21st century. It is still relatively unfamiliar to many people. But it does not mean that there was no concrete reflection of this aspect in China before. Common sense tells us that no new concept can be fabricated from empty or out of thin air. If we really want to go back, behind a new concept, there are more or less historical and realistic origins. The same is true of smart power. Scholars only abstract and enhance the existing ideas and phenomena in the past and condense them into a new concept. Although smart power is a brand-new diplomatic strategy first proposed by the United States, it is not only confined to the diplomatic field, or meaningful to the United States. In the author's opinion, the reason why smart power has aroused heated discussion and pursuit once it was put forward is that it itself has great universal significance. Otherwise, how can it cause so much resonance? As large as a country, as small as a natural person, whether in internal affairs, diplomacy or other fields, we can actually get some degree of echo with smart power and find conjunction points with smart power. In a sense, smart power is everywhere and ever-present. It is precisely because of its ubiquitous universal significance that the author has the impulse to reflect on and examine the achievements of the reform and opening up in the past 40 years from the perspective of smart power. Recently, reports and discussions about the achievements of the reform and opening up in the past 40 years have emerged in endlessly, but few of them are really eye-catching and innovative. Why not talk about it again from the perspective of smart power?

III. THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF SMART POWER AND CONTEMPORARY CHINA

In reality, whether it is hard power or soft power, it is actually a tool and means to solve problem. It determines that if we solely rely on one tool or means, it ultimately cannot solve the problem well. To find the best way to solve

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the problem, we often need to combine two tools according to the specific situation. This is the so-called smart power. It is why we call it "smart power". Don't depend too much on hard power or emphasize too much on soft power. Instead, we can combine both hard power and soft power in a flexible and balanced way to achieve the effect of combining hard power with soft power and winning by smart power according to different specific circumstances. Although the concept of smart power was first put forward by American scholars, the author can responsibly say that it should be our Chinese to put forward the concept of smart power. Isn't that true? It is true that the concept of smart power is new and unprecedented, but the basic ideas contained in this concept have already been discussed by Confucius, Sun Tzu and other thinkers in ancient China.

Joseph Nye, an American scholar famous for his research on smart power, was once asked, "Where does the concept of smart power come from?" "From Lao Tzu, from China," he confessed. That is true. Lao Tzu said in *Tao Te Ching*: "Govern the country with justice, use troops with wonder, and take the world with disturbing the people." Sun Tzu's *Art of War* has said: "it is the best way if we can force other's army to yield without war." In China's traditional wisdom, Sun Tzu laid emphasis on strategy and put forward the best strategy for using soldiers is to win by stratagem. Lao Tzu attached importance to smart power and proposed "he strives not with men, and no man in the world can contend with him." It is really smart to the extreme. One can achieve the purpose of the contest without competing with others, and the effect is even better, for it reduces the negative factors of competition and struggle between the opposing parties to a minimum. From this, we can see that smart power is just a kind of discovery, innovation and application of Chinese traditional culture and Chinese classical wisdom by American scholars. Its real ideological source originated from our ancestors. Therefore, once the strategy of smart power is implemented in contemporary China, it can be said to have a good reason out of history and be with a strong foundation.

IV. THE REALISTIC FOUNDATION OF CHINA'S SMART POWER STRATEGY IN THE NEW ERA

The following shows 11 sets of data to interpret the remarkable achievements that China has made in the past 40 years of reform and opening up:

- China has increasingly become the source of power and anchor of stability for world economic growth. In the past 40 years of reform and opening-up, China's GDP has increased 33.5 times, with an average annual growth of 9.5%, accounting for 16% of the world's GDP, rising from 1.8%. It is second only to the United States and has become the second largest economy in the world. China's contribution to the world's economic growth is more than 30% [3].
- China, which accounts for one fifth of the world's population, has moved from insufficient food and clothing to a well-off society in an all-round way. The per capita disposable income of Chinese residents

increased 22.8 times as much as that of 1978, with an average annual increase of 8.5% [4].

- Strong financial strength can effectively improve the government's macro-control ability and effectively guard against various risks. The national fiscal revenue has increased 152 times over 1978, with an average annual increase of 13.8% [5], and the financial strength has increased significantly.
- The total grain output doubled. In 1978, there were only more than 600 billion jin, and in 2017, the total grain output was 1323.2 billion jin. The supply capacity has changed dramatically from shortage to abundance, which not only solved the problem of food, but also effectively supported the industrialization process [6].
- China has become the world's largest manufacturing country. Taking crude steel as an example, its annual output ranged from 31.78 million tons in 1978 to 831.73 million tons in 2017, which provided essential and important materials for the modernization of the country [7].
- The total value of China's foreign trade imports and exports has reached 27.79 trillion yuan, 782.82 times that of 1978, accounting for 12.8% of the global share. China has become the largest exporter of trade, second only to the United States, and the second largest importer of trade in the world [8]. At the end of 2017, China's FDI stock was US\$1.8 trillion, ranking second in the world and ranking second in the world as the second largest investor [9].
- Foreign exchange reserves have increased substantially. With the improvement of the level of open economy, foreign exchange reserves ranked 38th in the world in 1978, surpassed Japan in 2006 and leaped to the first place in the world, thus realizing the transformation from a foreign exchange shortage country to the world's largest foreign exchange reserve country [11].
- The urbanization rate has approached 60% from 10.6% in 1997. The primitive villages have become modern cities, gradually changing from coordinated development of urban and rural areas to integrated development of urban and rural areas [12].
- From 2011 till now, the proportion of education expenditure to GDP has exceeded 4% for six consecutive years, and the education level is close to the average level of middle-income countries [13].
- China is the second largest investor in R&D. R&D expenditure has accounted for 2.13% of GDP, with an average annual growth of 20.3%. The total R&D expenditure in China is second only to that in the United States. The strength of science and technology is constantly increasing, and major scientific and technological achievements are constantly emerging, which marks the transformation of China from a big

manufacturing country to a big innovative country [14].

- Attention has been paid to public health achievements, and the construction of "Healthy China" has been steadily promoted. The life expectancy of residents increased from 67.8 years in 1981 to 76.7 years in 2017, and the maternal mortality rate decreased from 88.8/100,000 in 1990 to 19.6/100,000 in 2017[15].

The above 11 sets of authoritative data fully show that the ancient land of China has undergone historic changes since the reform and opening up. From the old China, which was scarred and poor, it has gradually developed into a prosperous socialist new China, which the whole world is amazed by.

Smart power is not water without a source or a wood without roots. Only with a certain foundation of hard power and soft power can it be possible and qualified to talk about smart power. Obviously, smart power is based on deep hard power and soft power. It is inconceivable for a poor and weak country lacking in both hard power and soft power to have smart power. Even if there is, where can it be smart? If don't do it well, it's very possible to make a fool of yourself or draw a tiger like a dog. A modern history of China has clearly shown that a backward country has no status, no right to speak, and is bound to be beaten and bullied. October 1, 1949 is a brand new symbol. The People's Republic of China solemnly declared to the whole world that Chinese people have stood up ever since. Over the past 60 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, especially in the past 40 years of reform and opening up, China's socialist modernization cause has been booming, and its comprehensive national strength, including hard and soft power, has been significantly strengthened. It has made a series of remarkable achievements and laid a realistic material foundation for the implementation of China's smart power strategy.

V. THE NECESSITY OF CHINA TO IMPLEMENT SMART POWER STRATEGY IN THE NEW ERA

Contemporary China has both historical opportunities and realistic basis for smart power, and from a higher level, it is quite inevitable for China to implement smart power strategy. First of all, we should take the initiative to adapt to the US smart power strategy and make an inevitable response. As the saying goes, "defenses enemies with soldiers, stops water with earth." After the end of the cold war, the United States became the only superpower in the world. Every action of the United States often has the effect of touching the whole body, and will have a certain impact on other countries. Shall we be dragged by the American strategy of smart power and tired of passive coping, or be flexible and take an initiative of eye for eye? This is undoubtedly an important issue facing all countries. Moreover, the current bilateral relations between the United States and China are in a very sensitive and tense period. The United States is trying to suppress China's peaceful rise in an all-round way and provoke trade disputes through constant provocations. In the face of this grim reality, we must

confront each other head to head and deal with the United States' so-called smart power with obvious unilateralism and hegemonism calmly with our own smart power.

Secondly, it is an inevitable strategic choice for the peaceful rise of contemporary China. Forty years of reform and opening up have been a glorious forty years. Although there have been some detours and twists during this period, overall speaking, and achievements are the main ones and merits are the main ones. It is an indisputable fact that, after 40 years of pioneering and advancing in reform and opening up, contemporary China has risen into the world's National Forest and become an important force that cannot be ignored on the world stage. It says "the lush trees in the forest must be attacked by the wind." At present, China's economic and military strength has increased significantly, and its hard power has increased significantly. When a country is in the stage of rising, it often causes panic in its neighbors and other countries may unite to curb the rise of the country. In this case, if the rising country has both soft power and can skillfully balance the use of both hard and soft power, namely smart power, it can make itself affinitive and attractive, thus greatly reducing the fear of other countries and the possibility of curbing its rise. For this reason, China has always shown to the outside world that China's rise is a peaceful rise, and that China's rise does not pose a threat to any country. Therefore, how to implement the strategy of smart power has become an inevitable choice for the peaceful rise of contemporary China.

VI. TO USE OUR SMART POWER TO COPE WITH VARIOUS CHANGES OF THE WORLD IN THE NEW ERA

With China's peaceful rise, the image of a responsible and big country has been established. Facts have proved that contemporary China has our own smart power. It manifests in that we can not only export hard power such as capital and technology, but also export soft power such as responsibility and morality. More importantly, we can combine the two well and play a smart power combination card with great weight. Here are some examples:

First, on the eve of the G20 Summit in 2009, Zhou Xiaochuan, the former governor of the Central Bank of China, proposed to replace the current "single international reserve currency" with "super-sovereign international reserve currency". This initiative shocked the world and was widely regarded as a blatant embarrassment to the international status of the US dollar, fully demonstrating that China was taking an unusual initiative in reshaping the international financial mechanism. Although the strong position of dollar is still irreplaceable and the initiative is not very operational, China's proposal was more like a strategic warning to the United States. The purpose was to get the drop on and fix the focus of the Summit to the error of US financial regulatory failures and prevent the topic of RMB exchange rate from being focused. Through this tactical offensive, the United States did agree at the summit to expand China's share of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and raise China's international financial status. Obviously, China played a combination card of smart power wisely and successfully. Since October 1, 2016, the RMB has been formally

incorporated into the new currency basket of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with Special Drawing Rights (SDR), thus gaining the status of the major international currencies [10].

Second, no matter in China first putting forward the idea of "building a harmonious world together" in 2005, or in the keynote speech, delivered by President Xi Jinping in 2017 at the Palace of Nations in Geneva, Building a Community of Shared Future for Mankind, and speeches about the development of "the Belt and Road" construction with international partners, for many times we have expounded that China has always adhered to its independent foreign policy, the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the road of peaceful development, the open strategy of mutual benefit and win-win outcome, the development of diplomatic relations and economic and cultural exchanges with other countries, the promotion of the construction of a community of share future for mankind, and would write "the promotion of the construction of a community of share future for mankind" into our Constitution. All of that reflects Chinese people's great national style of "trustworthiness in words and results in deeds", reflects China's lofty goal of making greater contributions to world peace and development, and demonstrates China's new vision and new responsibilities in the new era[16]. The new idea of "building a harmonious world" and the new goal of "constructing a community of share future for mankind" are to establish a democratic, just and equal international political and economic order and to achieve lasting peace and common prosperity of the world. The ideal harmonious world should be a pluralistic world, a democratic world, a just world and a tolerant world, a world of integrity and cooperation, and a world of mutual assistance and sustainable development. "Constructing a Harmonious World and jointly Building a Community of Share Future for Mankind" can be regarded as a typical masterpiece of successful use of smart power in contemporary China. In this harmonious world, aggressive hard power has ceased to play the leading role, and the soft power characterized by value output has retired to the secondary position. From the perspective of smart power, the significance of the theory of insisting on peace and building a harmonious world and the new goal of "building a community of shared future for mankind" lies in that the rising contemporary China skillfully reconciles and integrates the boundaries between national hard power and soft power, and for the first time discusses our own systematic views and theoretical framework about international relations, war and peace, and the future and destiny of mankind and other important theoretical issues, to the world. It was from a bigger, longer and higher global vision, and a comprehensive reflection on human destiny and future.

Third, in the face of complex and changeable world, especially in the face of a series of "withdrawing from group" behaviors of the United States, China timely proposed "the Belt and Road" initiative and made it benefits people of various countries along the route. It has become a major strategic plan to save the economic crisis and globalization, and has been recognized by almost all

countries in the world. In addition, it has greatly promoted China to become the world's largest trading partner. Although the Sino-US trade war initiated unilaterally by the United States does not conform to China's interests, nor does it conform to the initiative of China and the United States to form a new type of cooperation among big powers, it breaks the old system and establishes a new system. And it has coincided with our vigorous promoting and deepening the interconnection partnership of "policy communication, facility connection, trade smoothness, capital financing and people communication", optimizing Asia-Pacific regional cooperation and building a community of shared future for mankind and other world changes.

Reality has proved that China can occupy an advantageous position in the process of building a new system and changing the world with its current economic strength and influence, as long as we respond appropriately and positively scheme. Especially facing the Trump-style White House, not following the common template, breaking words, bringing a lot of troubles to others and bothering the politicians of various countries, it also helps us see the essence of American imperialism clearly. Neither "human rights" nor "climate" and "peace" shall make way for the interest of the United States at a crucial time. The strong military power and "dollar hegemony" doctrine of the U.S. has made us understand that on the road to the rise of great power and national rejuvenation, we are bound to have a smart power war with the U.S. Facing "the unilateral trade war" launched by the United States, the Chinese government and people have become very sober. Money doesn't grow on trees. Only by strengthening ourselves can we have strength to defense enemy. Only by uniting our people against the external enemies and insisting on the smart power strategy, can we ensure that Chinese nation is invincible in this new type of war, which has no smoke of gunpowder but is extremely cruel. Actions speak louder than words. At present, China has played a series of infectious and attractive Chinese-style "smart power" combination boxing:

- Trump said: from today on, only the United States is the first. Chinese leaders said: the world is good, China can be good; China is good, the world is better.
- Trump said that a country exists to serve its citizens, buy American goods and employ Americans, while Chinese leaders said that China hopes to prosper with the world and welcomes other countries to take "express" and "free ride" of China's development.
- The United States provoked China's sovereignty over the South China Sea under the guise of "free navigation"; Chinese Foreign Ministry and the State Security Department immediately responded with a domineering attitude: "friends come with good wine, enemies come with shotguns. China does not cause trouble, but China is not afraid of trouble."

They are both tests and opportunities for the world to see today's China. We are a responsible country rather a lamb to be slaughtered. Soros, a financial magnate, said: "the series of practices of the Trump-style White House will greatly help China to be accepted as a leading member of the

international community, and it even plays a more important role than Chinese themselves. [17]"

VII. IMPLEMENTING THE SMART POWER STRATEGY IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA FOR A LONG TERM

Any international game is a long-term game process. Those who do not plan for the future will find trouble at his doorstep, so does the country. At present, it is the most intense time for the global game. The game among China, the United States and Russia is just like a "New Three Kingdoms" happening around us.

At present, China's comprehensive strength is becoming stronger and stronger, and its geopolitical influence is becoming more and more prominent. It has absolute strength to guard against various risks and to pacify the surrounding areas with good-neighborliness and friendship. Based on this, the United States must consider that China's growing strength has threatened its absolute control and monopoly of the market, so it will suppress China by all means.

As the saying goes: relationship of people is thin, and things in life like chess games are unpredictable. Political struggle is extremely cruel, the world situation is changing, and strategic thinking needs to keep pace with the times. When necessary, China will display the strategic card of "hard power + soft power = smart power", which will not only help us adapt to and lead the new situation of globalization, but also reflect our self-confidence, responsibility, flexibility and wisdom after we grow strong.

Deng Zhonghong, an authoritative expert on China's soft power, said: soft power gets rid of competition, while smart power faces competition directly; soft power talks about "way", smart power emphasizes "strategy"; soft power seeks long term with value, while smart power solves problems with wisdom.

Therefore, while China is making full use of its hard and soft power, it should examine details from far to near, focus on competition, cultivate smart power and take the initiative in the game.

To sum up, for contemporary China, smart power is not a fashionable slogan that comes from one place at a time and one's own will. Instead, it should be promoted to the height of a national strategy as it has been attached great importance to soft power in the past. It should be carried out for a long time, applied consciously, benefited permanently and remain invincible. Moreover, the 10-year struggle among countries is about the ability and charm of leaders; the 50-year struggle is about the national strategy; the 100-year struggle is about the national character and spirit. Therefore, when developing China's hard and soft power, the rising China should have more specific "smart power" strategies and tactics to deal with all kinds of pressures and containment from the world, keep pace with the times, take advantage of the situation, lose no time and be firm and resolute, combine hard power with soft power, construct smart power strategy with Chinese characteristics, and enhance the comprehensive strength of the country.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Looking back on the past 40 years of reform and opening up, China has made brilliant achievements. China has one fifth of the world's population and has become the world's second largest economy, accounting for 16% of the global total. Looking ahead, some scholars boldly predict that in another 30 years, China's GDP is expected to reach 20% to 25% of the world's GDP and become the most powerful economic entity in the world. Hard power is like this, and soft power is not inferior. With such hard power and soft power as backing, the strategy of smart power should be achieved with extra efforts, natural, well worth doing and worthy of anticipation. In my opinion, what role and contribution China will play and make on the world stage in the future depends to a large extent on whether contemporary China has a clear understanding, flexible application and long implementation of smart power strategy.

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