



Reflections on the Theory of Regional Soft Power Problems

YAN Yan^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Management, University of Ji'nan, Ji'nan, China.
 *Corresponding author.

Received 1 December 2013; accepted 10 March 2014
 Published online 22 March 2014

Abstract

This article includes the concept and the elements of regional soft power, then includes the mechanism of the regional soft power. On the basis of this, from regional characteristic culture, government public service ability, human quality and the image of regional point, this paper analyses the way to promote regional soft power, perfect regional soft power theory and promote the long-term development of the region.

Key words: Regional soft power; Constituent elements; Mechanism

YAN Yan (2014). Reflections on the Theory of Regional Soft Power Problems. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 10(2), 57-61. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/4330>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/4330>

INTRODUCTION

In the early 90s of the last century, the famous Harvard scholar put forward the concept of “soft power”, which triggered the soft power research from global scholars. With the development of economy, the contacts between regions are getting closer. While the hard power of various regions strengthening, the importance of “soft power” is increasingly reflected. As the core of regional development and the creation of survival value, the concept of regional soft power also caused extensive discussions of academic circle. Therefore, this article has a reflection on several basic questions about regional soft power, and strives to strengthen the understanding of the subject area of regional soft power, and finds the way to strengthen the regional soft power on this basis.

1. THE CONNOTATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGIONAL SOFT POWER

1.1 The Concept and Content of Regional Soft Power

With the regional competition increasing annually, the theory of soft power has been extended and expanded, the soft power of past scholars study stay in the level of country, from a macro point of view to analyze the various aspects of soft power, but this respect of research has been unable to meet the rapid economic development global economic integration and the competitiveness of practical needs, which asked theorists of soft power to deepen and innovate, therefore, the concept of soft power in the region came into being. Regional soft power means “in the regional competition, the establishment of the credibility of regional social cohesion, special cultural charisma, the residents of creativity and attractiveness of the area outside forces on the regional culture, government public service, the regional government human qualities and other non-material elements. Such ‘soft’ power can attract production and consumption factors outside the region, to coordinate the operation of the regional socio-economic system, to enhance the region’s social, political, economic and cultural development of taste, create a good image of the region, to improve regional competitiveness, provide strong support for the harmonious, healthy and bouncing development of regional economy and society.”

As can be seen from the concept, the soft power refers to the capacity of integrating and reasonable configuring a region of non-material resources effectively. Besides cultural resources, this non-material resources also include attractive and innovative force in the region. It’s a diversified resource system. In addition, compared with the country’s soft power, the concept of regional soft power is more specific and micro, the guiding role for

development the regional is also stronger. Area can be as large as the entire country and also as small as a city or a town, therefore, the concept of regional soft power applies to a wider range, and more flexible, the research also seemed quite necessary. thus, to enhance the regional soft power is the basis of hard power, the two complements are indispensable to each other, and jointly promote the rapid development of the region.

1.2 The Characteristics of the Regional Soft Power

There is not a uniform standard understanding of regional regional soft power, therefore, to understand the concept of regional soft power we can also combined its characteristics to a further understanding, it has the following characteristics: First, non-political area of regional soft power. It excludes the political factors of contry's soft power, but stressed the realization of economic, social and cultural target. Second, the objectivity of regional soft power, unlike the hard power, the soft power can be directly quantitative analysis, but it is also as a subtle way of objective existing and can be directly perceived, playing a very important role in regional economic development. Third, the regional soft power sources are diverse and multilevel. In view of the source, it is derived from the region-specific cultures, values, credibility of the government, the quality of manpower and so on.

2. THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF THE REGIONAL SOFT POWER

Currently the regional elements of regional soft power can be seen as a constitution and an in-depth study of J's research on soft power: Zhou Xiaohong (2007) by building regional soft power of the evaluation system to comb the area of regional soft power, he believes the regional's Soft power should include the regional culture, public services and human qualities; Wu Guangyun (2009) enriched its content, adding the elements of the credibility of the government; Jiang Yuncang (2010) from the regional respect image to deepen the theoretical connotation. Throughout these scholars' study on elements of soft power, the components centering on the culture can be summed as the core of regional soft power, also include government public services, human quality and image of the region.

Culture is the core of regional cultural soft power. Due to the differences in location and living environment, cultures of different regions also show their own characteristics, form the most distinctive and competitive part in the regional soft power. Regional culture can be thought outward as institution, the two complements jointly promote the development of regional cultural soft power; performance inward human values, values are that

the regional cultures are solidified in the consciousness, but also guide the formation of a new regional culture.

Government public services in areas of regional soft power is mainly focused on the construction of public facilities, the emphasis is the service capacity. Good public services are irreplaceable in satisfying the residents life at most, living and development needs, and the promotion of citizens to achieve self-worth and social environment.

Human qualities refers to the people's moral level, intellectual, and many other exhibits comprehensive level within a certain period of time, which determines the level of innovation of human resources, and restricts the regional soft power to play a fundamental role.

Regional image refers to the overall image of the landscape and the development of regional image, such as the scope of the residents. The main factor for the external aspects, covering the area of regional external influence and compelling content, are the constituent elements of regional soft power. They belong to the dominant part of soft power. Image of the region directly affect local investment and development prospects of other sectors, its visual effects cannot be discounted.

3. THE MECHANISM OF REGIONAL SOFT POWER

The subject of regional is just to get a potential regional soft power through the occupation and access to resources; only through the use of this ability can convert the potential into reality soft power. This conversion process is affected by the spread of a variety of ideas and behaviors, then gets the value identity, and ultimately achieves the expected behavior.

3.1 The Mechanism of Potential Regional Soft Power Turns Into a Dominant Regional Soft Power

Elements of regional culture, the government's public service capacity, quality of manpower, regional image and other elements of regional soft power are parts of regional soft power, if there is no impact on the behavior and the concept, this resource cannot develop its merits. To convert the recessive regional soft power into a dominant regional soft power, on the one hand, the subject of region must enhance the awareness of potential soft power and the ability to grasp and fully tap the advantages of natural resources, to extract the core of the regional cultural characteristics and institutional spirit etc. On the other hand, through interacting with internal and external stakeholders, spreading the idea of regional soft power, sharing resources and increasing the recognition of the subject of regional soft power, subject guide them to achieve the desired behavior, in order to achieve the potential soft power to the dominant soft power's conversion.

3.2 The Mechanism Of Dominant Regional Soft Power

First, the area of regional soft power and hard power complement each other: hard power is the foundation of soft power, the ascension of soft power has a promoting effect on the development of hard power.

Soft power and hard power are the two aspects constitute the overall strength of the region, with homogeneity. Hard power stems from tangible physical force, and soft power focuses on the cultural and institutional factors, both of which also have differences. But both support each other, and mutually convert. Hard power is the foundation of soft power, strictly speaking, a pure soft power does not exist, it requires a certain carrier to play its role; But soft power can obviously complement, enhance and convert the effectiveness of hard power and to some extent, determines the path of hard power. Therefore, to further enhance the level of regional soft power, we must grasp the relationship between characteristics of soft power and hard power, promote the coordinated development of regional soft power and hard power to achieve both mutual support and complement the excellent state of complementary development.

Second, the regional body system communication and the interaction between the regional external object, is an effective way to play a role in the area of regional soft power.

Government is the main body of regional soft power the initiator of information dissemination. How to give the area a good ecological and social environment in which the interests of stakeholders outside the region have a positive evaluation of regional development, the regional body to produce the expected behavior, so as to promote healthy and sustainable development of the

region, depends on the main body of region understanding the law of information processing. The body formed the identity of regional value, and made conducive behavior when conditions are ripe through system planning and shaping, dissemination of information to the public area of people, and then based on the awareness and understading of the stakeholder. Thus system spread contributed to and strengthen regional soft power.

Third, effects of regional soft power is the essence of the value identity.

From the definition of the concept of soft power put forward by Joseph Nye, soft power is implemented by directing others to believe or act an behaviour, provided other people's agree certain ideas and behaviors. This is actually a recognition of the value. This value identity is the individual adjustment or remodel of their own values and can also be seen as the exchange and sharing of values between different subjects. Therefore, the role of regional soft power is essentially the process of regional identity this process gose to the regional body acting on the object and the occurrence of positive interaction with the object by affecting the performance and the spread of ideas. The object of the actors reacted by adjusting their values and reshaping the body in response to systemic dissemination, and thus achieve a certain kind of values or a certain type of identity process (Figure 1). From the figure it can be concluded that the process of obtaining the value of the external object that is inseparable from the demands of stakeholders, the value of the object with its own identity demands will eventually reach a point of balance, the stakeholders in the balance point is considered as already get the value of the identity, the role of regional soft power has been fully exploited.

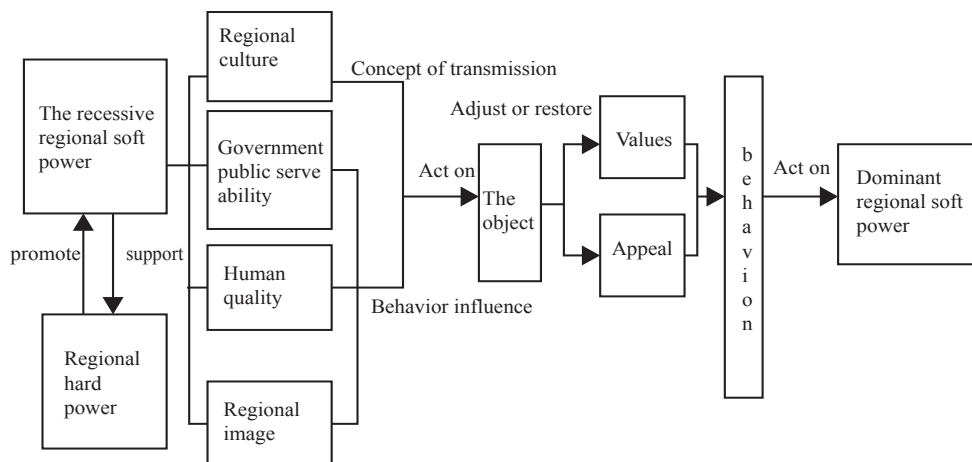


Figure 1
Effects of Regional Soft Power

4. APPROACHES TO ENHANCE THE REGIONAL SOFT POWER

Unlike the country's soft power, soft power of different organizations, the coverage area of regional soft power

is wider, to some extent, it is similar to the broad concept of soft power. With the development of economic integration and diversification, traditional hard power cannot support the long-term development of a region, only by putting full attention to the development of

regional soft power can promote the upgrading of the overall strength of the region.

4.1 The Development of Regional Cultural Characteristics and Open Culture

Regional culture is as a core area of regional soft power, which embodies the features and advantages of a region. Regional cultures include entrepreneurship, innovation, liquidity preference, credit concept, sense of cooperation, open mind and so on, for highlighting the characteristics of the region, forming characteristics competitiveness plays an irreplaceable role. Regional culture characteristics and human values are closely linked, being the root of the formation of values, and the values rooted in the consciousness of people having a subtle influence people's behavior, after the formation of a unique regional culture, it has relative stability and assimilation effects, as members of the region to accept and identify with the heart, to form a fixed pattern, and consciously abide by and safeguard and promote the region's members to enhance cohesion and solidarity, and thus the overall strength of the region's development and lay a solid foundation.

Good regional culture should not only highlight the characteristics of this region, it should advance with the times, inclusive, absorb other areas of outstanding cultural characteristics, which is called the openness and inclusiveness. The current trend of economic globalization, become gradual strengthening, the culture as a fermentation product, its trend of globalization has started to emerge. Therefore, to promote the development of culture in the region of the development of economy, should be both open and inclusive, change the cultural characteristics into a competitive force, and promote the integration of the region to adapt to trends and build a reasonable cultural system.

4.2 Strengthen the Government's Public Service Capacity and Increase the Public Service Delivery

After the concept of service-oriented government proposed, although the Chinese government has made great strides in the providing of public services, but the content and methods need further improvement. First, the government should further improve the efficiency of public services, using modern means to achieve the goal of efficiency of office, while expanding the content and channels of public services, and enhance the government's ability to provide public services. Second, improve the ability of leading cadres, by expanding the training of Government officials to enhance the professionalism of government services.

One of the significant indicators of the development of the government's public service is the expand of the supply of public services, including infrastructure, construction of roads railways and airports, communications,

radio and television building and the construction of disaster prevention facilities, etc., to provide residents with a good ecological environment and social environment which is more conducive to attracting investment to promote economic development in the region, and can also enhance and promote the residents' happiness index.

4.3 Carry out the Full Implementation of Human Resources Strategies to Improve the Quality of Manpower

An important element of the region's soft power is the quality of manpower, it can be divided into improving the quality of training and the moral qualities of the residents, residents not only an important aspect of the quality of manpower, but also the image of the region in the area of human qualities, good moral qualities will promote the formation harmony and healthy society, and lay a solid foundation for the development of regional soft power. First, carry out the full implementation of human resources strategy to increase investment in education, cultivating inter-disciplinary talent, while adjusting the structure of educational investment, increase investment in vocational education, improve worker skills and ability to adapt to the requirements of the market economy. Second, the region should also create a good environment, we can build the talent exchange platform, personnel services team and other ways to attract and gather talent, to promote the creation of a talent, and knowledgeable atmosphere. Third, to promote the rational flow of regional talent, optimizing the personnel structure, build a talent exchange market, improve human resources information network database, establish and improve the agency of personnel exchanges, improve the personnel system.

4.4 Establish a Good Image of the Region

Image of the region covers a wide range, either manifested by spiritual culture and residents image, or can be demonstrated by the external image through the material level, therefore, ways to enhance the image of the region has diversity and wide-ranging features. Improve human quality, enhance government capacity and public services, develop cultural characteristics of the region will help to improve the image of the country and even of the global sides.

4.5 Accelerate the Pace of Economic Development and Create a Solid Material Foundation for the Development of Regional Soft Power

Economic base determines the superstructure, development is the key to solve the contradiction while going ahead. The enhance of regional soft power is inseparable from the strong support of the hard power, hard power is also from the construction of the economic, therefore, a region should give full play to the original economic advantages, continue to strengthen its economic

strength, to maximize limited external policy guidance on the role of regional mechanisms transformation, creating a vast region of space to enhance the soft power.

REFERENCES

- Hong, X. N., & Guo, L. L. (2010). Dialectical relationship between the state of hard power and soft power development to explore. *Cultural Studies Journal*, (11), 13-17.
- Jiang (2010). Concept of regional soft power elements and evaluation system. *Guihai Research*, (3).
- Wu, G. Y., & Tang, B. (2009). Forces on the whole area of influence of regional economic development. *Modern Economic Research*, (6).
- Zheng, Z. G. (2002). *Joseph Nye • American hegemony confused: Why the United States cannot act arbitrarily*. Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing House.
- Zhou, X. H., & Wang, X. Y. (2007). Regional soft power and comprehensive evaluation system. *Techno-Economic*, (6).
- Zhu, K. L., & Qi, Q. L. (2011). Reflections on the theoretical framework of regional soft power system. *Jinan University (Social Science)*, (6).