

# **U.S. Internet Diplomacy on China**

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## **Abstract**

The Emergence of Internet has changed our way of life, bringing about revolutionary influence to the nation states and even the entire world. The states are all facing new environment, which calling for new solutions. Internet diplomacy becomes an active diplomatic mode in the modern society and plays an increasingly important role. The United States is the hometown of the Internet. Having mastered the most advanced network technology, the United States first realized the importance of Internet diplomacy and quickly put it into practice. In recent years, there were many conflicts between the United States and China in cyberspace. As shown by Secretary of State Clinton's "Internet Freedom" speeches, "Blog Briefing" and Google's withdrawal from China's market, one can easily draw the conclusion that the Internet has already grown up to an important strategic space for the United States to implement diplomatic strategy. Internet diplomacy became a significant approach to supplement the traditional diplomatic modes in the process of the US diplomacy on China.

This thesis starts with the emergence and development of the Internet technology, and including definition of diplomacy, public diplomacy and Internet diplomacy. Following that, it extends to elaborate on the basic assumptions of the theories, which could be used to analyze the impact of the Internet of diplomacy. The theory of Soft power and Neoliberalism appropriately analyzes the methods and contents of US Internet diplomacy on China and could better illustrate US responses to the rise of China theoretically compared with the other main theories, realism and constructivism.

The third session focuses on the strategic intention and the concrete strategy of the US Internet diplomacy on China. It first describes the development of the Internet both in the United States and in China. Based on the theory of Soft Power, the US government explores the Internet communication platforms such as blogs and



microblogs that play an increasingly important role in US diplomacy; As for the theory of Neoliberalism, it analyzes the U.S. government's efforts and non-state support to promote Internet freedom.

In case study, the issues in cyberspace happened between the US and China, or around the world will be summarized and discussed according to the two theories, so as to demonstrate the development of US Internet diplomacy to China. In the last part, it evaluates the impact of the Internet on US diplomacy to China according to the above analysis.

Key words: Internet diplomacy; Internet freedom; Sino-US relations



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## 1. Introduction

The Emergence of Internet has changed our way of life, bringing about revolutionary influence to the nation states and even the entire world. Internet, as an important carrier of information, has penetrating into diversified fields of politics, economics, diplomacy, military affairs, technology, culture and education among most countries and regions around the world. “Information technology is changing our lives, our society, our institutions and our culture.”<sup>1</sup>

American scholar Alvin Toffler summarized the development of civil society into three waves of change: the First Wave of change occurred because of the prevalence of agricultural revolution thousands of years ago. “It crept slowly across the planet spreading villages, settlements, cultivated land, and a new way of life.”<sup>2</sup> The Second Wave happened in Europe due to the rise of Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century. It replaced the ways of life in agricultural-based society with the invention of steam engines. Today, the world is at the stage of the Third Wave of change. It signifies the success of the information revolution with the rapid development of electronic computers, multi-media technology and the Information Highway.<sup>3</sup> Walter B. Wriston also considered that the “marriage of computers and telecommunications has ushered in the Information Age, which is different from the Industrial Age as that period was from Agricultural Age.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Burt and Olin Robison, “Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age”, Center for Strategic & International Studies(CSIS), October 9, 1998, p.17.

<sup>2</sup> Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*, Bantam Books, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan University Press, 1989, p.17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>4</sup> Walter B. Wriston, “Bits, bytes, and diplomacy”, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1997, p .172.



## 1.1 Enter the Age of the Internet

In 1940s, the world's first computer came into being, laying a foundation for the rise of internet technology and information revolution. In the late 1960s, the US government funded a research called ARPANET("Advanced Research Projects Agency Network"). It evolved into today's Internet technology and a global interconnected network.<sup>5</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s, the Internet aimed at achieving the goals of military security. After entering the 1990s, the Internet began coming into daily use and worked as a new kind of media after the prevalence of newspaper, radio and television. It was during the period of time named the era of Web 1.0 that the tools of electronic email (e-mail), online forums and the World Wide Web tended to play an important role in cultural and commercial communications.<sup>6</sup>

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the rapid development of Internet communication technology brought about new tools such as blogs, video sharing websites and social network websites. It signified that the world had ushered in the era of Web2.0. These new interactive platforms not only stimulated the enthusiasm of people's participation in connecting the world, but also increased the speed and the efficiency of disseminating information. Around the world, over 2.4 billion people have access to the Internet, accounting for 34.3 percent of the world's population.<sup>7</sup> In continent such as North America, the internet penetration rate reach up to 78.6 percent, representing the widely use of Internet around the world.<sup>8</sup> In recent years, the new development of the Internet lies in the sprung up of social networking websites. For instance, the users of Facebook and Twitter rose at a rapid rate and the information flow increased at a geometric rate. By September 2012, the Facebook subscribers in the world have

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<sup>5</sup> Mike Ronser, *The Internet: Trends and Standards*, Working Paper, CSAI Department, University of Malta, January 2002.

<sup>6</sup> CRS Report for Congress, "U.S. Initiatives to Promote Global Internet Freedom: Issues, Policy, and Technology", Congressional Research Service (CRS), January 3, 2011, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Internet World Stats, Available at <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm> [2013-5-10]

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



reached up to 900 million with the penetration rate of 12.1 percent across all the continents.<sup>9</sup> Most of them use internet tools to conduct daily activities—such as making communications with families and friends, shopping on the Internet, and in some circumstances, expressing political opinion through social network websites.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the continuous development of information technology also had a significant impact on the exchanges and interaction between states. All states are facing remarkable changes in the international relations. Some great powers, especially the United State begin to regard the Internet technology as a predominate tool to carry out their national strategies.

Today, the world has witnessed profound changes in power shift. The 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001, the global financial crisis in 2008 and the increasing influence of economic emerging countries have formed new world order. And the new ways in distribution of power have made it clear that the traditional diplomacy is more difficult to obtain national interests. “Internet has become the most distinct mark of the post-cold war period”.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, recent issues such as Wikileak and the uprising of “Arab Spring” arouse more attention on how the Internet could influence international relations. In terms of diplomatic interaction, the rise of information and communication technology provides a new platform of diplomatic conduct to supplement the traditional one.

## 1.2 Problem Formulation

When it comes to world politics, there seems no bilateral relationship as significant as that between the United States and China could influence the trends of world order

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> CRS Report for Congress, *Promoting Global Internet Freedom: Policy and Technology*, Congressional Research Service (CRS), April 23, 2013, p.5.

<sup>11</sup> Chintan Vaishnav, Nazli Choucri and David Clark, *Cyber International Relations as an Integrated System*, Working Paper No. 2012-16, Political Science Department Massachusetts Institute of Technology, p.1.



tremendously. The United States is the world largest economy and dominates the rules in the fields of economics, politics and military affairs. China is the world second largest economy and is catching up with the development of United States. Both are the important permanent members of UN Security Council and both have a great say in coping with international affairs. Just as the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton mentioned, “the United States and China may not be able to solve all the problems, but any important agreements cannot be reached without the cooperation between the US and China.”<sup>12</sup>

The United States and China need to strengthen communication and enhance cooperation in global issues such as financial crisis, food security and climate change. Nonetheless, there are still many conflicts existed in bilateral interaction due to different traditional cultures and national interests. The United States and China still lack mutual trust in the area of economic, politic and military issues. The demand for searching for a new diplomatic mode to supplement the traditional one becomes increasingly higher.<sup>13</sup> In 1971, the United States table tennis delegation visited China and successfully unlocked the exchanges between two sides. This event was named “Table Tennis Diplomacy”, for it achieved the goals of establishing diplomatic relations that the traditional diplomacy did not. It laid a good foundation for exploring the new ways of diplomacy to supplement the traditional one.

In recent years, with the prevalence of internet technology, their communications in cyberspace gained more attention in a very short time. The United States is the hometown of the Internet. Having mastered the most advanced network technology, the United States first realized the importance of diplomatic methods by using internet communication tools and quickly put it into practice. United States would like to

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<sup>12</sup> Yucheng Le, “Four Things to Be Done to Promote Future China-U.S. Relations”(in Chinese), *China International Studies*, No.37, November/December 2012, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



control the future of the cyber world by regulating it. China has the world's largest number of Internet users and has experienced the rapid development of Internet application unprecedentedly. As shown by Secretary Clinton's "Internet Freedom" speeches, "Blog Briefing" and Google's withdrawal from China's market, one can easily notice that the Internet has already grown up to an important strategic space for the United States to implement diplomacy on China.

The above factors motivate the main problems of this thesis: ***How the emergence of Internet communication technology influences the US diplomacy on China?***

Following that, three related sub-questions could better explain the main question:

1. What is Internet Diplomacy and what's the difference among the traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy and Internet diplomacy?
2. How the Internet influences the methods of the US diplomacy on China?
3. How the Internet influences the content of the US diplomacy on China?



## **2. Methodology**

Before analyzing the problem formulation about the impact of Internet on US public diplomacy to China, it first needs to have a clear understanding of the related conceptions. In order to narrow the sphere of this thesis, it concentrates on two main actors, the United States and China with regard to US Internet diplomacy. When it comes to the diplomatic subject, the United States, it primarily refers to the US states governments, and other key organizations or corporations. As for the diplomatic object, China, it includes both Chinese government and individuals. In addition, it is important to distinguish what kind of internet communication technology will be used in Internet diplomacy. This thesis mainly analyze the impact of newer communication tools such as blogs, social networking websites and video-sharing websites in the era of Web 2.0 rather than the emails and static websites that are prevalent in the era of Web1.0.

### **2.1 Definition of the Key Concept**

In this part, the key concepts that are employed throughout the thesis will be explained respectively, including, diplomacy, public diplomacy, Internet diplomacy and internet freedom. When it comes to the new diplomatic methods in cyber space, many terminologies such as “cyber diplomacy”, “Internet diplomacy”, “digital diplomacy” and “e-diplomacy” are created and in some relevant academic researches. In this thesis, the term “Internet Diplomacy” will be adopted, which is more closed to the problem formulation. It is first important to identify the background and development of traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy in order to have a clear understanding of Internet diplomacy. To classify the similarity and the differences among the core concepts of diplomacy, public diplomacy and cyber diplomacy will help lay good foundation on analyzing the US Internet diplomacy towards China in the theoretical and analytical chapters.



### 2.1.1 Diplomacy

Diplomacy can be primarily defined as “the art of advancing national interests through the sustained exchange of information among nations and peoples. Its purpose is to change attitudes and behavior. It is the practice of state-to-state persuasion.”<sup>14</sup> In today’s world politics, the term diplomacy refers to traditional diplomacy, which is mainly based on government-to- government exchange and is often implemented behind closed doors.<sup>15</sup> The main methods of traditional diplomacy include face-to-face negotiation, official visits, signing an agreement and communications. The functions of traditional diplomacy have increasingly been challenged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “Today, there are more and new types of actors to deal with, more and novel channels of communication and more issues to be negotiated and integrated into a coherent diplomacy.”<sup>16</sup>

### 2.1.2 Public Diplomacy

There are several definitions of public diplomacy. Earlier statement on public diplomacy was centered on the diplomatic actors. Malone described public diplomacy as “direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments”.<sup>17</sup> In 1987, the US Department of State defined the public diplomacy official as “government-sponsored programs intended to inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments

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<sup>14</sup> This definition is partly illustrated from Chas. W. Freeman, Jr., *The Diplomat’s Dictionary*, Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Burt and Olin Robison (1998), op.cit.,p.55.

<sup>16</sup> “Diplomacy in the 21st century is network diplomacy”,

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Diplomacy+in+the+21st+century+is+network+diplomacy.-a0316796858> [2013-5-14]

<sup>17</sup> Gifford Malone, “Managing public diplomacy”, *Washington Quarterly*, Vol.8 No.3 1985, p.199.



are publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio and television.”<sup>18</sup> Later, the scope of definition extended to the intention and content. Tuch defined the goals of public diplomacy as to promote national’s ideas and ideals and Frederick broadened the specific content to the field of information, education and culture.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Mark Leonard summarized the main activities of public diplomacy in his book *Public Diplomacy*. It included international conference, forums, media exchange, training and educational exchanges, leaders around the world to keep long-term relations built by all channels.<sup>20</sup>

### 2.1.3 Internet diplomacy

Internet Diplomacy is a specific branch of public diplomacy. When talking about Internet diplomacy, several scholars put forwards specific definition about it from different perspective. The first focuses on the influence of Internet technology. Jamie F. Metzl stated that “the network is flexible and agile, constantly able to reconfigure itself to address new challenges. And it lower cost of collective action, making large and disparate groups better able to organize and influence events than ever before.”<sup>21</sup> Elloit Zunpick elaborated on methods of coping with foreign affair and international relations through the tools of internet, information communication technology.<sup>22</sup> Joseph S. Nye pointed out that the Internet creates a system in which power over information is much more widely distributed compared with radio, television and

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Dictionary of International Relations Terms*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State Publication, 1987.

<sup>19</sup> Eytan Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy”, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, March 2008, p.57.

<sup>20</sup> Henry H. Sun, “International political marketing: a case study of United States soft power and public diplomacy”, *Journal of Public Affairs*, No.8, 2008, pp.173-174.

<sup>21</sup> Jamie F. Metz, “Network Diplomacy”, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Winter/Spring 2001, p.85.

<sup>22</sup> Elliot Zunpick, *Digital Diplomacy: U.S.Foreign Policy in the Information Age*, Oxford: Westview Press, 1999, pp.8-11.



newspapers.<sup>23</sup> The other is from the diplomatic perspective. Walter B. Wriston defined that the Internet “It is new breakthrough of public diplomacy in the Information Age.”<sup>24</sup> Internet diplomacy intends to visualize the traditional mode of diplomacy such as diplomatic resources, identity representatives, face –to-face persuasion and negotiation by using information communication technology (ICT).

In this thesis, the definition of Internet diplomacy proposed by Chinese scholar Tang Xiaosong will be widely used. It means “ how a state is engaged in international exchanges, public relations and outreach activities by using the Internet technology and other information networks to protect and promote its own interests in the era of information.”<sup>25</sup> It is characterized by convenience, high efficiency, low cost and great impact; it has become a new important diplomatic tool for all states.<sup>26</sup> More specifically, the actors of Internet diplomacy include not only state governments but also international organization, transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations and individuals. The intention of Internet diplomacy is to keep and promote its political, economic, military and cultural interest. And its diplomatic mode is to conduct international exchanges and communications by using the internet technology.

#### **2.1.4 The Comparison of Key Concepts**

Internet diplomacy is a new branch of public diplomacy. Both are functioned as the supplementation of the traditional mode of diplomacy. Although the Internet diplomacy and public diplomacy possess new characteristics in terms of actors, channels and intentions, they are in the framework of diplomacy with the same items.

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., “The Information Revolution and American Soft Power”, *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol.9 No.1, 2002, p.61.

<sup>24</sup> Walter B. Wriston(1997), op.cit., p.172.

<sup>25</sup> Xiaosong Tang and Yanshe Liu, “Analyzing the Obama Administration’s Internet Diplomacy”, *China International Studies*, March/April 2011, p.45.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.46.



	<b>Traditional Diplomacy</b>	<b>Public Diplomacy</b>	<b>Internet Diplomacy</b>
Actors	State governments	State governments and non-state entities (international organization, transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations and individuals.)	State governments and non-state entities (international organization, transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations and individuals.)
Channels	Diplomatic officials interactions	Diplomatic officials interaction and media exchange(radios, televisions and newspapers), training and educational exchanges	Diplomatic officials interactions and information exchanges by the application of information communication technology
Intentions	Protect national interests	Protect national interest, promote national's culture and ideals and influence public opinion	Protect national interest, promote national's culture and ideals and influence public opinion
Modes	Face-to-face persuasions and negotiations	persuasions and negotiations by the platform media	persuasions and negotiations by the platform of Internet



## 2.2 Empirical Data

In this thesis, it both uses qualitative and quantitative data in order to achieve a deeper understanding of Internet diplomacy. Within the research paper, it exclusively uses secondary sources, including some materials in Chinese version as relevant as possible ranging from books, journals, research reports to academic papers. As the topic of this thesis is about the Internet, online resource is also a good channel to explore useful information. Not only the data from the official websites are authoritative, some essays and articles written by academic scholars and reporters are also very helpful to obtain the updated materials. The reliability of this project will critically be examined by the usage of numerous sources.

The main resources in this project include books, journals, government reports, academic papers and online resources both in English and in Chinese. In the theoretical chapter, a number of books and academic journals are mostly cited to illustrate the main assumptions of theories. For example, Keohane's and Nye's *Power and Interdependence*, Keohane's *Neorealism and Its Critics*, Nye's *Soft Power – the means to success in world politics* and Chinese scholar Shixiong Ni's work on *The Contemporary Western Theories of International Relations* are useful works to help readers have a deep understanding of the Soft Power theory and Neoliberalism theory.

As for the analytical part, government institutions, such as the US Congressional Research Service (CRS) and China Internet Network Information Center published a series of valuable reports and statistics. As for the academic journals and online resources, the articles of "The Information Revolution and American Soft Power", "Analyzing the Obama Administration's Internet Diplomacy" and some websites such as the portal of U.S. Department of States, the websites of New York Times, Guardian and Global Times, etc. are used in connection with the US Internet diplomacy on China.



## 2.3 Structure

This part describes how the main problem is analyzed – including which theories are used, what role they play in the thesis and which data are used in the analytical approach. All of these are considered as crucial components of a successful research aiming at a thorough understanding of the logic and the outline to this thesis.

The thesis begins by defining diplomacy, public diplomacy and Internet diplomacy, comparing the similarity and differences among these concepts and examines the impact of the Internet on diplomacy from two perspectives, the methods of diplomacy and the content of diplomacy.

The theories that are used to analyze the problem formulation are problem-solving theories in the academic field of international relations. In order to have a better understanding of the methods and content of Internet diplomacy, soft power and neoliberalism are adopted in the theoretical chapter. The main assumptions of soft power stress the existence and importance of other power factors than military and economic might. The basic statements of neoliberalism emphasize the anarchic world order and the multiplicity of actors beyond state governments. It appropriately analyzes the motivation and action of US Internet diplomacy on China and could better illustrate US responses to the rise of China theoretically compared with the other main theories, realism and constructivism.

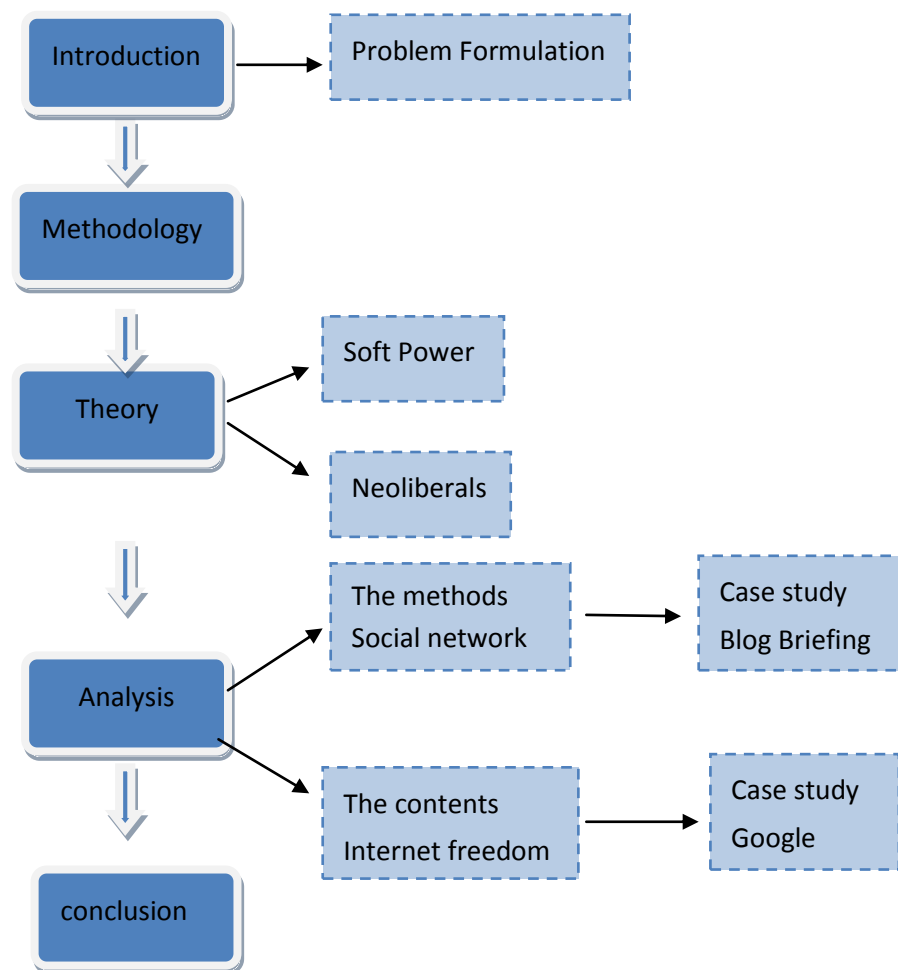
In the analytical chapter, it first describes the development of the Internet both in the United States and in China. With regard to the methods of Internet diplomacy, it explores the Internet communication platforms such as blogs and microblogs that play an increasingly important role in US diplomacy. To be more specific, the case of “Blog Briefing” is discussed in details by combining the theory of soft power. In terms of content of Internet diplomacy, it concentrates on the Internet freedom strategy by examining why the United States is committed to promoting Internet freedom in China. Then it explores the U.S. government’s efforts and non-state



support to promote Internet freedom. Moreover, the case of “Google’s withdrawal from China’s market” is analyzed from the neoliberalist perspective.

Finally, in the conclusion chapter, it evaluates the impact of the Internet on US diplomacy to China according to the above analysis. The basic structure of this thesis could be illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure.1 Structure of the Thesis





### 3. Theory

#### 3.1 Soft Power

##### 3.1.1 The Development of Soft Power

The term “soft power”, was originally conceived and introduced by Harvard Professor Joseph Nye, Jr. in his 1990 book: *Bound to Lead: the Changing Nature of American Power* and his two articles “The Transformation of World Power” and “Soft Power”.<sup>27</sup> After the cold war, the changes in world politics were mainly manifested in “the transformation of power.” In the past, it was the military might that could demonstrate one nation’s ability. As the economic and cultural factors are playing an increasingly important role in the international relations, the power that could extend and supplement the influence of military power becomes inevitable. According to Nye, soft power just referred to the ability to affect the behaviors of other countries by attracting and persuading others rather than military deterrence to achieve one’s goals.<sup>28</sup> Since then, soft power has become a central analytic term in the field of international relations.

In 1996, Nye and another noted professor Robert Keohane developed and broadened the definition of soft power in the article of “Power and Interdependence in the Information Age”. They stated that “hard power is the ability to get others to do what they otherwise would not do through threats of punishment or promise of rewards”<sup>29</sup>; By contrast, soft power is “the ability to achieve desired outcomes because others want what you want; it is the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international

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<sup>27</sup> See Joseph Nye, *Bound to lead: the Changing nature of American Power*, Basic Bookers, Harper Collions Publishers, 1990; “The Transformation of World Power”, *Dialogue*, No.4, 1990; “Soft Power”, *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1990.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power – the means to success in world politics* (1<sup>st</sup> edition), New York: Public Affairs, 2004, p.5.

<sup>29</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004, p.220.



affairs through attraction rather than coercion”.<sup>30</sup> In 2004, Nye expanded greatly on this concept in his book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, partly he gave a more completed definition of soft power, namely “A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries - admiring values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it”.<sup>31</sup> In this book, Nye discussed the relation between the concept of hard power and soft power and analyzed the application of soft power and the resource of hard power and soft power. According to Nye, soft power is significantly important in today’s international politics and is crucially more than just the focus on culture aspects.

He argued that soft power can be best explained when it was contrasted against the counterpart– hard power, which was describe primarily as military and economic might; while soft power lies in its ideology, cultural and political values and the ability to form international norms and institutions.<sup>32</sup> In academic researches, it is the neorealist approaches that emphasize the importance of hard power, while liberal scholars focus on the basic strategy of soft power. In terms of resources, Nye classified the soft power into three ways of resource: the standard of value, especially freedom, democracy and human rights; market economy, the free market economic regime; western culture, namely the influence of culture and religion.<sup>33</sup>

After having dealt with the development of the concept of soft power and what sources soft power actually stems from, yet is has to discuss and what direct tools can be conducive to the growth of soft power for a state.

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<sup>30</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Power and Interdependence in the Information Age”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.77 No.5 1998, p.86.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (2004), p.175.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.xi.

<sup>33</sup> Shixiong Ni, *The Contemporary Western Theories of International Relations* (in Chinese), Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2001, p.393.



One of the seemingly most effective tools to increase soft power is to implement public diplomacy. Here the role of public diplomacy is to attract focus on the positive sides of a country, not through mere propaganda which is hopelessly obsolete but rather through dialogue.

### 3.1.2 New Development of Soft Power

After the attack on 9/11, the unilateral action that was advocated by the Bush administration damaged the national image of the United States severely. This presented a number of challenges for the US decisionmakers. As a result, the US needs to implement a new diplomatic strategy by integrating multiple powers in order to enhance US reputation around the world. The US should renew its policies to tackle with current world order and help find a way to accommodate emerging powers that may hold different principles and values.

In 2004, American scholar Suzanne Nossel first employed the term “smart power” in her article “Smart Power” published in *Foreign Affairs*. She clarifies that smart power is neither hard power nor soft power; it is the combination of both.<sup>34</sup> The proposer of the soft power concept Joseph Nye also mentioned in 2006 that it was inaccurate to rely on hard power or soft power alone when formulating diplomatic strategy, and to combine the two powers together effectively could be considered as smart power.<sup>35</sup> In 2007, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) launched a report named “CSIS Commission on Smart Power”, which provided a strategic insight on a new diplomatic framework to decisionmakers in government. This report elaborates that Smart power means developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to achieve American objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power. It is an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily

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<sup>34</sup> Suzanne Nossel, “Smart Power”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.83 No.2, 2004, p.131.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Think Again: Soft Power”, *Foreign Policy*, February 23 2006. Available at [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2006/02/22/think\\_again\\_soft\\_power](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2006/02/22/think_again_soft_power). [2013-5-23]



in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels to expand American influence and establish the legitimacy of American action.<sup>36</sup>

As mentioned above, smart power is the effective combination of hard power and soft power. This means on the one hand, it emphasizes the importance and necessity of the economic and military might; on the other hand, it focuses on the roles that the alliance, strategic partners and international regime play in the world order.<sup>37</sup> The ultimate goal to apply the smart power strategy is to legitimize US diplomatic behavior and to maintain its dominance around the world.

The advocate of soft power has a deep impact on Obama administration's diplomatic strategy. It first attempts to provide global good to the states governments and people around the world based on what they want and what they cannot achieve without the help of US government.<sup>38</sup> Then it puts heavy emphasis on exporting optimism instead of fear. The wars on anti-terrorism embark fear across the world and even US allies also questioned that whether the culture and value that the US transmit comply with their own interest. As a result, the US should continue to attract allies by pluralism to achieve its ultimate goal. Just as Nye stated "today's challenges require new types of institutions to extend American influence. We need a multilateral pluralism for the twenty-first century".<sup>39</sup>

### 3.1.3 Soft Power in Internet diplomacy

In the age of the Internet, information is regarded as a kind of power, which is penetrating into the fields of politics, economics and culture. The emergence and prevalence of Internet presents a number of changes for foreign policies.

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<sup>36</sup> Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: a smarter, more secure America*, The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2007, p. 7..

<sup>37</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr.(2004), p.29.

<sup>38</sup> Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr.(2007), p.5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.11.



Before the Internet is globally accepted, much of any country's soft power resources are dominantly from main mass media (e.g. magazine, radio and televisions, etc.) famous elites (e.g. reputed scholars or influential writers), and well known brands (e.g. Coke Cola and McDonalds, etc.). The Internet enables the new transnational networks that are increasingly easy to access, transparent and cheap. The predominance in receiving and transmitting information via the Internet channel could enhance one country's soft power in a more effective way.

As Nye stated in his article "America's Information Edge" that "The one country that can best lead the information revolution will be more powerful than any other."<sup>40</sup> According to Nye, information edge mainly refers to the ability to dominate important communications and information processing technologies—"space based surveillance, direct broadcasting, and high-speed computers".<sup>41</sup> While, in the age of the Internet, the dominance of soft power mainly relies on the overwhelming advantages in internet technology and the ability of obtaining and disseminating information through the network channels. As the world becomes more interconnected in the age of the Internet, the importance of international image is a heightened concern.

Spreading culture and values in the Internet space has an impact on public opinion around the globe. The internet enables information senders to influence the people regardless of how far apart geographically they are from one another at a low cost. As a result, the Internet has gradually increased its importance to states struggle for soft power in formulating diplomatic strategy. The effective way of promoting soft power is to carry out public diplomacy or Internet diplomacy in the Information Age.

#### **3.1.4 The Critics of Soft Power**

When one state applies the strategy of soft power to diplomacy, the recourse and effect has a great influence on the success of diplomatic methods in the

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph S. Nye and William A. Owens, "America's Information Edge", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.75 No.2 1996, p.20

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



decision-making process. Compared with the means of hard power, soft power seems to take longer time to be effective. It forms the limitation of soft power.

In the two main actors of hard power – military sticks and economic carrot –has a very large direct impact on the development of power resources through diversified foreign policies. As the government can use military threat or launch a war to gain its ends and government could also use its economic power to achieve its political goal by aid or sanction. These military methods by launching war against hostile states and terrorist organizations or developing weapons of mass destruction are tremendously deterrent and highly effective to realize the national's interests. The economic measures by providing economic aid to less developed countries and regions or imposing financial sanction on certain countries or corporations take relatively longer time to play a role.

As for the term of soft power, it is not as straightforward as hard power that could achieve fixed goals by setting time table of launching a war or freezing one country's bank account. These concepts tend to be intangible and are difficult to measure. When evaluating the effect of one diplomatic strategy that is closely related to the application of soft power, there is no widely accepted way to judge the strategy is right or wrong, for it takes decades and even generations to spread culture and value across the globe. Thus, the application of soft power is much more complicated and takes a much longer time to take effect.

## **3.2 Neoliberalism**

### **3.2.1 The Development of Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism is a systemic theory which focuses on international relations between states at the process level. It primarily appeared under the debate with the advocates of Neorealism. In the 1970s, the researches on international relations were mainly centered on the traditional theories of realism. Until the late 1970s, faced with the influence of economic crisis, the failure in Vietnam War and the loss of nuclear



advantages to the Soviet Union, the US government realized the need for adjusting its diplomatic policies based on new amended international relations theories. The representative of neorealism, Kenneth Waltz put forward a new structural theory with the basic advocates of realism at that period of time, which threw light on the structure of international system while analyzing national interests.<sup>42</sup> This aroused many critics from liberalist scholars, mainly including Joseph Nye, Robert Keohane and David Baldwin, etc. In 1986, Robert Keohane criticized that the effect and value of neorealism was limited and it need to be revised in the book of *Neorealism and Its Critics*.<sup>43</sup> Later, in an article published in *World Politics*, Joseph Nye wrote a book review on the Robert Keohane's *Neorealism and Its Critics* and Richard Rosecrance's *The Rise of the Trading State*, which “ provide a good opportunity to look at the latest turns in the classic dialectic between Realism and Liberalism.”<sup>44</sup>

After the cold war, some approaches that attempted to highlight the characteristics of neoliberalism were introduced more systemically. In 1993, Columbia University professor David Baldwin published a book named *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: the Contemporary Debate*, which was regarded as the continuation of Keohane's *Neorealism and Its Critics*. Baldwin compared the advocate of neoliberalism with that of neorealism in different aspects to identify the new approaches of neoliberalism systemically and comprehensively. He classified the debate fields into six key points, including the anarchy of international system, international cooperation, relative gain and absolute gain, state's priority, state's intention and the role of international mechanism.<sup>45</sup> In 1995, Kenneth Booth and Steve Smith launched a book of

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<sup>42</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Neorealism and Neoliberalism”, *World Politics*, Vol.40, No.2 1988, p.241

<sup>43</sup> Robert Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p.322.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr.(1988),op.cit., p.240.

<sup>45</sup> Ni Shixiong (2001), op.cit., p.132.



*International Relation Today*, in which they also summarized different argument between neorealism and neoliberalism according to the similar aspects.

### 3.2.2 Basic Assumptions of Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism holds the view that rather than brute force, institutions and norms in the international politics could influence relations among nation-states and thus make the international system more pluralized and diversified.<sup>46</sup> As a result, for neoliberalism, “the structure of a state’s domestic government, along with the values and opinions of its citizens, impacts a state’s approach to international affairs.”<sup>47</sup> The basic assumptions of Neoliberal theory that are related to the thesis can be summarized as the following classifications.

The first assumption is that the ordering principle of international system is anarchy. Anarchy that is opposite to hierarchy can be found in both domestic and international politics. It refers to the situation that no centralized authority or ultimate power stands above nation-states. Neoliberal theorists agree with the neorealist’s claim that “in international politics, the ordering principle is anarchy, interpreted as the absence of a higher government above states.”<sup>48</sup> But they have different opinions on the nature, effect and consequence of anarchy. Neoliberal theorists conceive of the positive interaction of independent nation-states rather than insecurity in the anarchy of international system. Neoliberalism is based on epistemological premise and regards states as rational actors striving to maximize national interests under environment of anarchy.<sup>49</sup> The goal of a state’s policy is to achieve greatest possible gains to enhance national security. However, the neoliberal theorists see the self-interest of states served by compliance with norms and regimes instead of military power.

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<sup>46</sup> Shah M. Tarzi, “Neorealism, Neoliberalism and the International System”, *International Studies*, Vol,41 No.1 2004, p.120.

<sup>47</sup> Allison S. Greene, *US Diplomacy in the Age of the Internet*, working papers, Old Dominion University, 2003, p.163.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr.(1988),op.cit., p.241.

<sup>49</sup> Shah M. Tarzi (2004),op.cit., p.125.



The second assumption is that neoliberalism puts heavy emphasis on the influence of non-state actors. Neoliberal theorists acknowledge the importance of states as central actors in international politics. Whereas, in addition to state actors, they emphasize that the non-state actors, such as transnational corporations and international organizations are playing increasingly significant roles in international relations.<sup>50</sup> By contrast, the state-centric model in the world system tends to lose predominance. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye first “challenge the classical paradigm for ignoring transnational processes and non-state actors.”<sup>51</sup>

Neoliberalism highlights systematic structure, which determined the behavior of nation-states and international society. This means the structure controls actors. In recent years, the multi-polarization of world politics and world economy enables more actors play a part in the international stage. Jessica Mathews pointed out that “The most striking change in diplomacy’s theatre of operation, the international landscape, is the rise of non-state actors in the public realm.”<sup>52</sup> The emergence of wide range of non-state actors such as international organizations (IOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), transnational corporations, civil society organizations, religious communities and individuals help shape and influence states’ action and practices in international affairs. These non-state actors “can offer professional expertise, information resources, and political influence to the foreign policy process.”<sup>53</sup>

After the Second World War, a large number of international organizations sprung up and expanded increasingly, such as European Community<sup>54</sup>, International Monetary

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<sup>50</sup> Johan Eriksson and Giampiero Giacomello, “The Information Revolution, Security, and International Relations: (IR)relevant Theory?”, *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 27 No. 3 2006, p.230

<sup>51</sup> Shah M. Tarzi (2004), op.cit., p.115.

<sup>52</sup> Jessica Mathews, “Power Shift”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.76 No.1 1997, pp.50-60.

<sup>53</sup> Wilson Dizard, Jr., “Digital diplomats”, *iMP magazine*, The Center for Information Strategy and Policy, Science Applications International Corporation, July 2001, p. 1. Available at [http://www.cisp.org/imp/july\\_2001/07\\_01dizard.htm](http://www.cisp.org/imp/july_2001/07_01dizard.htm). [2013-4-30]

<sup>54</sup> It evolved into European Union (EU) in 1993.



Fund (IMF), and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). They influenced the acknowledgement of national interest and altered the original international system in the state of anarchy. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the new groups of organizations such Group 20 (G20) and BRICS<sup>55</sup> get involved in international affairs. When one state implement its diplomatic strategy, the involvement of non-state organizations helps shape the rules and regimes that enable the nation-states to efficiently achieve ultimate goals. They act as a buffer zone that could ease contradictions and enhance common interest in the exchange among states. Today, many significant agendas in international relations with regard to diplomacy would not be reached without the active participation of IOs, NGOs, transnational corporation and other non-state entities.

### 3.2.3 Neoliberalism in Internet Diplomacy

The internet space is anarchic global commons. There are no clear boundaries among states in the Internet space, and no independent nation-state could impose efficient management in this global inter-connected system. In other words, the Internet is a public space that opens to millions of internet users. It runs automatically and lacks the presence of government. Just as neoliberalism mentioned, there is no centralized control in the anarchic world order, and in the Internet space, there is no completed international mechanism in order to function. Furthermore, the rise of the internet breaks the state-centred hierarchies and reduces the barriers in the aspect of state sovereignty.

With respect to Internet governance, there are multiple institutional actors, including international organizations, nation states, transnational actors, civil society, Internet-based corporations and Internet elites. The nation-state is the dominant actor in pursuing its national interest and achieving its ultimate goal. Whereas, neoliberal theorists also point out that the non-state actors are playing increasingly significant

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<sup>55</sup> It includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.



roles in the world arena. Especially in cyberspace, the NGOs or the transnational corporations can be influential in diplomatic negotiations. The Internet technology provided a low-cost platform for disseminating information and exchanging resources, organizing activities based on the common interests and influencing the government decision-making process. “International politics is characterized by close working relationships among governments and numerous non-state actors who are cooperating effectively to solve urgent global issues.”<sup>56</sup>

When the international interaction was largely among states and the speed of communication was comparatively low, the diplomatic mode was more of traditional exchanges at states level. However, with the rapid development of the numerous non-state actors will help shape the prevalence of Internet diplomacy.<sup>57</sup>

#### **3.2.4 The Critics of Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism put a heavy emphasis on the influence of non-state actor in world political issues. This presented some limitations when applying this theory to the analysis of Internet diplomacy. According to the neoliberalism, one state’s ultimate goal is to obtain absolute gains. In other words, it means that the state government adhere to the principle of achieving national interest through various actors. From policymakers’ perspective, the national interest could be divided into military security, economic prosperity and political humanity. All the diplomatic strategies are made to serve the comprehensive national interest. Therefore, the state government are flexible in setting diplomatic agenda, for it aims to maximize the interests and obtain the greatest possible gains by coordinating all the states departments.

As for the non-state actors, their interests are directly originated from single motivation. For example, the corporations’ interests are mainly centred on economic profit. NGOs that aim at responding to the issue of global warming tend to pay more

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<sup>56</sup> Richard Burt and Olin Robison (1998), p.31.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.30.



attention to emissions reduction. Unlike state government, the non-states actors have no need to adjust its interest so as to obtain the absolute gain. This raises concern on the role of non-state actors in supporting national strategy.

If there is conflict of fundamental interests among the state government and non-state actors, will the non-state actor continue to follow state's diplomatic mode, or stick to protect its own interest? Therefore, the non-states actors have limited influence in the process of carrying out diplomatic task.



## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Internet Development

#### 4.1.1 Internet Development in US

The United States is the hometown of the Internet, and also the center of information globalization. It possesses the most advanced Internet information technology. 90 % of the information that circulate via Internet is the language of English, which provide a fundamental platform for the US to transmit Internet information.<sup>58</sup> In terms of computer and Internet technology, the US also occupies the absolute advantage. In the global information industry, the US Central Processing Unit (CPU) output accounts for 92% of the world, the system software production occupies 86% of total, and 70% of around 3000 global large database are located in the United States.<sup>59</sup>

The United State is also both the generator and distributor of online resources. Currently, 75% of the world total volume of electronic commerce is originated from the US, and the number of commercial websites that established in the US account for 90% of the global total.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, 10 out of 13 root servers<sup>61</sup> that work as the core of the Internet technology are placed in the United States.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of Internet users, according to the statistics offered by Internet World Stats, until June 2012, there are about 245 million Internet users in US, which account for

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<sup>58</sup> Minghai Yi, *Information globalization and International Relations* (in Chinese ), Beijing: Communication University of China Press, 2005, p.38.( 仪名海主编:《信息全球化与国际关系》, 北京: 中国传媒大学出版社, 2006 年 1 月版, 第 38 页。)

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Xiao Song Tang and Zhong Huang, "A Study on the Status quo of China's Internet Diplomacy and Some Suggestions" (in Chinese), *China International Studies*, No.4 2009, p.8.

<sup>61</sup> The root server system is the way that an authoritative master list of all top-level domain names (such as com, net, org, and individual country codes) is maintained and made available to all routers.

<sup>62</sup> "Root Server System", available at

<http://searchnetworking.techtarget.com/definition/root-server-system>. [2013-5-14]



78.1% of the total domestic population.<sup>63</sup> After entering the era of Web 2.0, the social network websites and application draws more attention from Internet user, which provide a more convenient way to communicate with one another and to share information. The data also presents that until September 2012, more than 166 million Internet Users in the United States subscribe Facebook (the world biggest social network websites).

All the data above demonstrate that the US play a dominant role in the fields of Internet information technology and Internet users, which enables the US to implement its foreign policies by controlling the Internet technology and spreading culture and values through Internet platform.

#### 4.1.2 Internet Development in China

China first got access to the Internet in 1994.<sup>64</sup> In the past few years, China has witnessed rapid development of Internet market, with a rise in the population of internet users, as well as a variety of commercial websites and governmental portals. According the statistics offered by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), China has possessed 564 million internet users by December 2012, ranking the world's number one and accounting for 17% of the total internet users around the globe.<sup>65</sup> Based on the total amount of China's population, the overall penetration rate is 42.1%, doubling in ten years (as shown in Figure.2).<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> "Internet World Stats", available at <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats2.htm>. [2013-5-12]

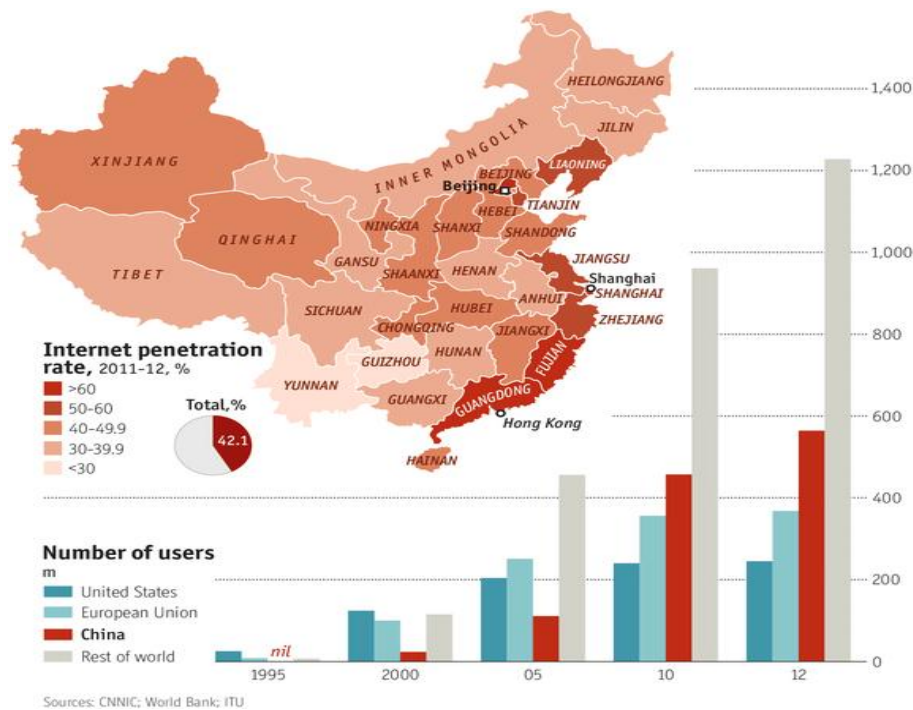
<sup>64</sup> Zixue Tai, *The Internet in China : cyberspace and civil society*, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group 2006, p.119.

<sup>65</sup> China Internet Network Information Center(CNNIC), *The 31<sup>st</sup> Statistic Report on China Internet Network Development*(In Chinese), CNNIC, January 2013, p.11.( 中国互联网络信息中心, 《第 31 次中国互联网络发展状况统计报告》, 2013 年 1 月, 第 11 页。)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.



Figure.2 China and the Internet<sup>67</sup>



In recent years, new developments primarily include the rapid expansion of social network websites subscribers. As the Twitter and Facebook were blocked in China, the microblogs and social network services grew exponentially in the Chinese market. In 2012, the users of Weibo, a kind of twitter-like microblogging service, reached up to 309 million increased 23.5%, accounting for more than half of total internet users.<sup>68</sup> The prevalence of Weibo changed people's daily life in China. It primarily changed the ways of obtaining news and expressing views that were not previously possible, penetrating almost every place that could access to the Internet in China.

<sup>67</sup> "China and the Internet", *Economics*, April 6, 2013, p.2. Available at <http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21574628-internet-was-expected-help-democratis-e-china-instead-it-has-enabled>. [2013-5-17]

<sup>68</sup> CNNIC (2013), op.cit., p.35.



## 4.2 The Methods of Internet Diplomacy

“I kid my good friend, Henry Kissinger. Can you imagine, in a world of Twitter, being able to sneak out of Pakistan and fly to China and do secret negotiations? It’s just an entirely different 24/7 public environment that you are living in.”

—Hillary Clinton, March 2012<sup>69</sup>

When asked about the impact of the Internet on diplomacy, it first lied in changing the diplomatic methods.

In traditional diplomacy, the diplomatic methods are mainly confined to the face-to-face diplomatic interaction among government officials, diplomats or influential scholars and social elites that are able to impact the foreign policies, whereas it is difficult for group of general public to participate in the process of diplomatic decision-making by using channels. In terms of setting diplomatic agenda, traditional diplomacy tends to focus on military and economic issues that are related to the advocate of hard power.

In public diplomacy, the mass media channels such as newspaper, radio and television shorten the distance between the public and the government in a limited way, in which the public is still the passive receiver of foreign policies and has no direct ways to express their ideas and to influence the foreign policies. It is first public diplomacy that intends to promote soft power effectively. Soft power is the ability to obtain the ideal results and to achieve the interests through attraction. In other words, if the audience admires one country’s values, political regimes and ways of life that are transmitted by public diplomacy, they will have the desire to follow them. Therefore, the

In Internet diplomacy, the diplomatic participants cross the restriction of race, occupation, location and hierarchy and are able to deliver information and exchange

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<sup>69</sup> Fergus Hanson, “Baked In and Wired: eDiplomacy@State”, Foreign Policy at Brookings, 25 October 2012, p.8.



comments. The public may even communicate with the government directly through the Internet to express the public opinion and thus put pressure on decisionmakers. Online public opinion is becoming a kind of social force that can impact the diplomatic strategy in the age of the Internet. As a result, the networked and connected people can become important players in international relations. This requires the world to expand the concept of diplomacy to a wider range of areas. Moreover, the Internet is characterized by convenience, high efficiency, low cost and great impact. Internet has become an effective tool to strengthen the soft power as well, aimed at establishing a US- dominated world order.

#### **4.2.1 Social Network Platforms**

With the rapid development of network communication technology such as emails, online forums and blogs, especially with the emergence of social network websites such as Facebook (public social networking websites), Youtube (video sharing websites) and Twitter (micro-blogging websites), the world has become more connected. Each country and even individual could grasp any details of one country's foreign policies and diplomatic methods by choosing one of the network communication tools.

The United States government first noticed this trend and searched for a more effective way to influence the public perception of US and thus achieve its diplomatic goals. Just as the State Department's senior innovation adviser Alec Ross stated "In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, diplomacy isn't just white guys in suits with red ties sipping tea over a mahogany table, talking about what the relations between their governments should be."<sup>70</sup> In the traditional way of diplomacy, the efficiency of tackling with disputes and reaching consensus is too low that the traditional diplomacy is waning. The foreign affairs in the age of the Internet will go "beyond government-to-government

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<sup>70</sup> "P2P2G: The rise of e-diplomacy", *Politico*, available at <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0609/23310.html>. [2013-5-20]



diplomacy to innovative efforts for government-to-people, people-to-government and, ultimately, people-to-people-to-government communication.”<sup>71</sup>

The United States has the absolute advantages in both hard power and soft power in world politics. As mentioned earlier, US also has a dominant role in the Internet space. In order to improve US soft power and to enhance the efficiency of diplomacy, “the foreign affairs community must be, and perceived to be, representative of an engaged public.”<sup>72</sup>

After Obama took office, Internet diplomacy plays a unique role that other diplomatic tools cannot perform in advancing broader foreign policy goals for world domination. The Obama Administration has improved US relations with other countries and somewhat restored America’s international image which was tarnished under President G.W. Bush.

Chinese Internet users are able to get access to unprecedented amounts of information via utilizing the Web as a vital communications tool. In recent years, social network websites has surged, resulting in dramatic cases of cultural communication and public comment on political, economic and social issues.

The US government is looking for a more effective way to update government websites, to add social network links such as Facebook, Twitter and Myspace and to popularize internet information technology when implementing Internet diplomacy. It could influence the public perception of the US national images among the public.

#### ***4.2.1.1 Blog***

In 2009, US State government opened a Chinese blog named “Wugu Feihong” (Foggy Bottom Feihong) at the websites of Bureau of International Information [www.america.gov](http://www.america.gov). The US State Department is located in Foggy Bottom, while the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Burt and Olin Robison(1998), op.cit., p.48.



term of “Feihong” refers to a kind of wild goose that used to send a letter from apart in ancient China. As a result, the blog cited this name to express the intention on enhancing mutual understanding and strengthening the friendship between the two countries through the interaction between the bloggers who have lived in the United States for ages and China’s internet users.<sup>73</sup> It is updated every day and the contents could be classified into history, culture, social life, politics, education and emigration, etc. It provides a platform where Internet users can obtain more information with regard to the US culture and values in a more effective way.

#### 4.2.1.2 Weibo

In the addition to blogs, Twitter, the micro-blogging sites, seems to provide an ideal platform for influencing foreign public opinions. After president Obama took office, the white house established an account in the websites of Twitter, Facebook and Myspace. The State Department websites also added the links to Twitter, Youtube and Facebook.<sup>74</sup> In this way, the internet users could follow the visit route of government officials and get a clear understanding of US foreign policies.

In China, several social network websites including Facebook and Twitter are blocked. In recent years, Weibo, similar to Twitter has become the most prominent platform for expressing views and the most important source of obtaining news.<sup>75</sup> The 140 characters of post in weibo are quick to share and spread information. As mentioned earlier, there are reportedly 307 million weibo users on the major Chinese internet

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<sup>73</sup> “Wugu Feihong” (Foggy Bottom Feihong), available at <http://blogs.america.gov/mgck/>. [2013-5-10]

<sup>74</sup> “Obama's White House creates profiles on Facebook, Twitter, MySpace”, available at <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2009/05/white-house-myspace.html>. [2013-5-18]

<sup>75</sup> “China’s Tweeting Cops Blog to Keep Peace,” *Financial Times*, available at <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001042115/en> [2013-5-10];

“In China, Microblogging Sites become Free-Speech Platform”, *Washington Post*, available at [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-03-27/world/35260490\\_1\\_weibo-free-speech-posts](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-03-27/world/35260490_1_weibo-free-speech-posts). [2013-5-10]



websites such as Sina and Tencent.<sup>76</sup> Weibo has become so popular that Chinese governments, social elites, traditional mass media and others have opened weibo accounts to release information and understand public opinions.

The US embassy also seized the opportunity to open weibo account in Sina and Tencent. By May 2013, the US embassy has already attracted more than 670,000 subscribers in Sina weibo. It is an ideal platform to connect the US government with Chinese ordinary people. It released information mostly with regard to the aspects of culture, social activities and education situation in the United States, which are closely related to people's daily life.

#### **4.2.2 Case Study: Blog Briefing**

In November 2009, new elected US president Obama had his first state visit to China. Different from the previous presidents' visit, the Obama administration paid more attention to Chinese public concern and was committed to collecting relevant information through diversified network channels. Before Obama's departure, the state department established a government portal named CO.NX. It was designed to gather the questions regarding to Sino-US relation that most Chinese internet users are concerned. People could directly participate in online discussion and online investigation by visiting CO.NX website homepage. After that, the US embassy in Beijing summarized what Chinese internet users concerned most about the US, and then presented proposals on Obama's public speech topic while he was visiting China.

Furthermore, on November 11<sup>th</sup> 2009, the US embassy held a "Blog Briefing", bringing Chinese influential bloggers, US diplomatic officials and the White House staff together in the embassy's meeting room. <sup>77</sup>When they discussed the topic of Obama's state visit to China, bloggers from the city of Guangzhou and Shanghai

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<sup>76</sup> CNNIC (2013),op.cit., p.35.

<sup>77</sup> "Blog Briefing and Obama's Townhall", (in Chinese) "中国博客吹风会和奥巴马的 Town Hall", [http://opinion.nfdaily.cn/content/2009-11/13/content\\_6305997.htm](http://opinion.nfdaily.cn/content/2009-11/13/content_6305997.htm) [2013-5-15]



could also be involved by the internet connection. Unlike other press briefings that generally the journalists were invited, this briefing only asked the bloggers to make a live broadcast on weibo. As a result, Chinese internet users were able to follow the discussion and express their opinions directly via the Internet. The “Blog Briefing” aimed at implementing diplomacy among Chinese public by drawing public attention on Obama’s visit to China. It is an effective diplomatic mode to supplement the traditional diplomatic approach that only includes interactions between bilateral governments.

Following that, the US embassy in Beijing continued to promote events that were similar to the event of “Blog Briefing”. In January 2010, a group of bloggers from Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou were invited to the embassy again before Chinese President Hu left for his visit to the United States.<sup>78</sup> They talked about the opportunities and challenges on Sino-US relations and the impact of President Hu’s visit to US by internet video connection. It succeeded in attracting Chinese public attention on the interaction between states leaders. It also settled a good model of implementing diplomacy to the common people.

## **4.3 The Content of Internet Diplomacy**

### **4.3.1 The Issue of Internet Freedom**

In recent years, Internet freedom has become a main content of US diplomatic strategy. It was Secretary of State Hilary Clinton that first employed the term Internet freedom in her public speech in 2009. In the following years, she extended the claim of internet freedom to national strategic level and made it the mainstream of US foreign policy.

Internet freedom can be literally defined as the freedom in cyberspace. The concept of freedom mainly refers to freedoms of expression. In order to maintain the dominance

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.



in international politics, the United States has a long history of advocating democracy and freedom around the world. Every presidential administration regarded right of freedom as key US national interest. It is the value of freedom that could best illustrate the advantage in one country's cultural attraction and political ideals. The pursuit of freedom in all fields corresponds to the US diplomatic strategy and so as to the theory of soft power. As Nye stated that "The information edge is equally important as a force multiplier of American diplomacy, including "soft power"—the attraction of American democracy and free markets."<sup>79</sup> As a result, the freedom on the online world is of equal importance to US policymakers.

The cyberspace is anarchy, according to neoliberalism, for it is open to the globe without clear boundary lines and no single state could supervise the common Internet rules effectively. Like high seas and outer space, the cyberspace is anarchic Global Commons. It is characterized as transparency, free access and widely engagement beyond different nations, genders and classes. In the theory of neoliberalism, no centralized authority is available to control all the other nation states. The state that can keep the dominance in the internet technology and set rules in cyberspace will be much more powerful than any other. Therefore, from neoliberal theorists' point of view, supporting internet freedom could promote democracy. It is imperative to advocate agenda and formulate standards in cyberspace.

#### *4.3.1.1 Assailment on China's Internet Censorship*

As mentioned earlier, China has the world's largest number of internet users. At the same time, it has one of the most restricted internet censorship systems, which is contrary to US claims of internet freedom. The widely use of internet and the tighten control of internet content draws the US government attention. In 2009, Freedom House released a report about assessment on internet freedom in 15 countries. Among the 15 countries, China ranked the third of "not free countries" with the lowest level of

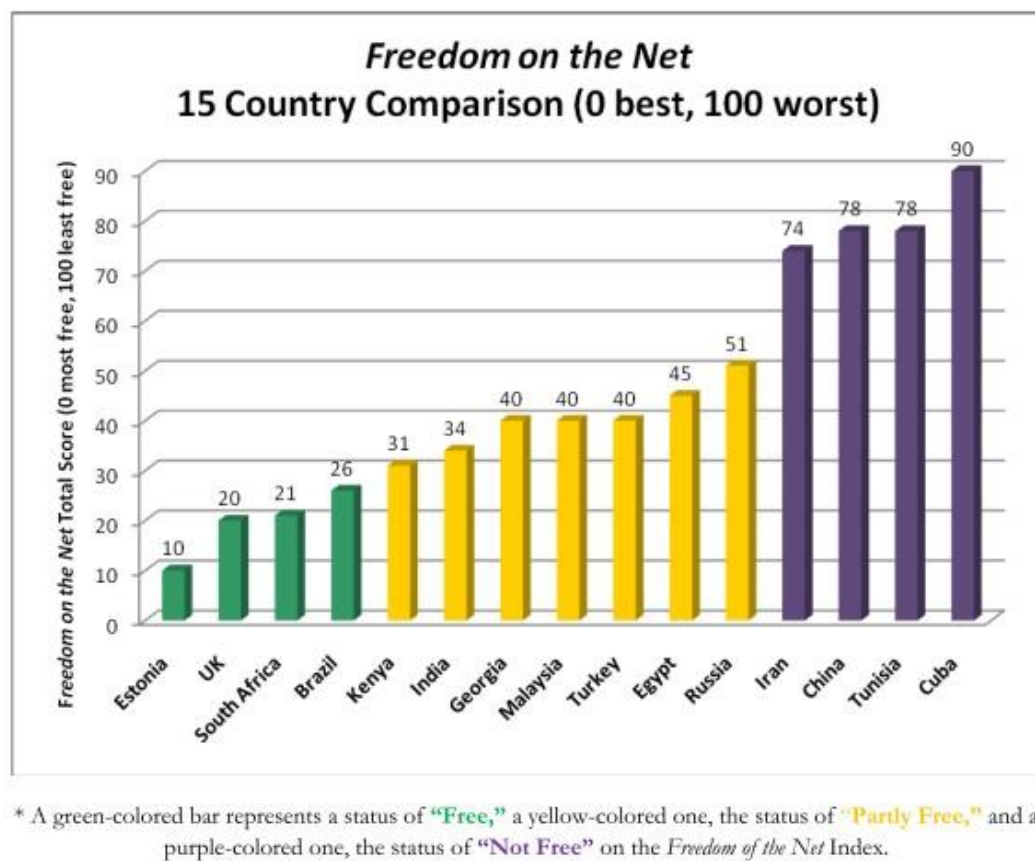
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<sup>79</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., and William A. Owens(1996), p.20



internet freedom after Iran and Tunisia(as shown in Figure.3).<sup>80</sup> As China emerges as a potential threat to the United States, the US-China relationship has become a key factor that affects the dynamics of the international system. Meanwhile, in the age of the Internet, the interaction between US and China influences the major issues of information revolution. According to neoliberalism, the motivation of a state's foreign policy is to protect national interests, and the goal of that is to achieve the greatest gains. This assumption could also be applied to the field of cyberspace.

Figure.3 Freedom on the Net, 15country comparison (0 best,10 worst)<sup>81</sup>



In January 2010, US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton gave a speech concerning internet freedom. She elaborated on how a free and open global internet is an essential

<sup>80</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom on The Net: A Global Assessment of Internet and Digital Media*, April 1, 2009, p.20.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



prerequisite for freedom and democracy in the twenty-first century. She criticized China for oversight over Internet information and enlisted China among countries that “restrict internet freedom.”<sup>82</sup> She mentioned that the Internet had already enabled tremendous progress in obtaining resources in China and there were many Internet users. But “countries that restrict free access to information or violate the basic rights of Internet users risk walling themselves off from the progress of the next century.”<sup>83</sup> She stated her support for the freedom to connect of US’s Internet corporations and declined to accept the censorship regime in some countries including China and even cited the term “iron curtain” to describe the Internet status quo in these countries. This is the first time that Internet freedom is added into US diplomatic strategy explicitly in a state leader’s official statement. Furthermore, for the first time, the Internet freedom is opposed to traditional four freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear, which are proposed by former UK Prime Minister Churchill.<sup>84</sup>

In 2011, Clinton gave another speech about the Internet freedom. She pointed out the situation that the Chinese government censored content and redirects search requests to error pages. She said that the restrictions on Internet freedom would have long-term costs that threaten and restrains economic growth and development, which resulted in “Dictator’s Dilemma”.<sup>85</sup> After the speech of Internet freedom was elaborated, the US media reported the news about China’s reaction in succession. The Times covered that China’s Internet censors had deleted US Embassy posts in promoting Secretary of

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<sup>82</sup> “Remark on Internet freedom”, *U.S. Department of State*, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135519.htm>. [2013-5-8]

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> “Internet Rights and Wrongs: Choices & Challenges in a Networked World”, *U.S. Department of State*, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/02/156619.htm> [2013-5-10]



State Hillary Clinton's speech on Internet freedom from Weibo (microblogs).<sup>86</sup> New York Times assailed that China was one of a few countries that place limit on the free exchanges on Internet information, which blocked twitter, along with facebook, youtube and other websites that are popular abroad.<sup>87</sup>

#### ***4.3.1.2 Initiatives to Promote Internet freedom in China***

The US efforts to promote the value of internet freedom can be divided into two aspects, the states government initiatives and non-state actors such as NGOs and internet technology corporations. According to neoliberalism, both actors play important roles in implementing US diplomatic strategy in cyberspace. In terms of the state conduct, it puts an emphasis on circumventing censorship technologies. As for the function of non-state actors, it worked as supporting the United States government to promote internet freedom.

#### **States actors**

The United States government has tried to promote Internet freedom in China for decades. In 2006, the Bush Administration set up the Global Internet Freedom Task Force (GIFT), which was named NetFreedom Task Force after president Obama took office.<sup>88</sup> It took efforts to support the State Department action on monitoring Internet freedom in restricted countries and through Internet diplomacy.<sup>89</sup> In May 2010, the US government launched out a plan on "National Security Strategy". It stated that "the emergence of technologies such as the Internet, wireless networks...have created

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<sup>86</sup> "China Censors US Posts On Internet Freedom", *Times*, available at [http://www.timeslive.co.za/scitech/article921360.ece/China-censors-US-posts-on-Internet-freedom\[2015-5-10\]](http://www.timeslive.co.za/scitech/article921360.ece/China-censors-US-posts-on-Internet-freedom[2015-5-10])

<sup>87</sup> "China Assails New U.S. Policy on Internet", *New York Times*, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/world/asia/18beijing.html> [2013-5-10]

<sup>88</sup> CRS Report for Congress, *China, Internet Freedom, and U.S. Policy*, CRS Report for Congress, July13, 2012, p.11.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.



powerful new opportunities to advance democracy and human rights.”<sup>90</sup> It also suggested to better utilize these technologies to promote the freedom of speech and the free flow of information. In May 2011, the State Department released a report on *International Strategy for Cyberspace: Prosperity, Security, and Openness in a Networked World*.<sup>91</sup> It contained one chapter with respect to internet freedom, which implied that the importance of promoting internet freedom had risen to the level of national strategy. In order to achieve the vision of internet freedom in China, the US government intended to “build and sustain an environment in which norms of responsible behavior guide states’ actions, sustain partnerships, and support the rule of law.”<sup>92</sup>

In order to promote the Internet freedom, the United States policymakers paid attention to support censorship circumvention technologies and their use in China. “The acquisition of new technologies must be geared to supporting the key priorities of diplomacy.”<sup>93</sup>

In June 2009, the US government raised objection on the application of a special software named “Green Dam Youth Escort”. It was initially designed by the Chinese government to block harmful information for Chinese internet users, especially for children.<sup>94</sup> The US authority regarded it as a tool to hinder the free flow of internet information and put pressure on China and provided 1.5 million to Global Internet Freedom Consortium (GIFC) to develop software that could penetrate firewalls in

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<sup>90</sup> U.S. State Department, “National Security Strategy”, available at <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/May/20100527164705ptellivremos0.1913568.html> [2013-4-24]

<sup>91</sup> U.S. State Department, “International Strategy for Cyberspace, Prosperity, Security, and Openness in a Networked World,” May 2011, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> “Launching the U.S. International Strategy for Cyberspace”, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/05/16/launching-us-international-strategy-cyberspace> [2013-4-24]

<sup>93</sup> Richard Burt and Olin Robison (1998), op.cit., p.61.

<sup>94</sup> CRS Report for Congress (2012), op.cit., p.4.



China. GIFIC is anti-censorship organization and it aims to promote global Internet freedom by collecting funds and making exchanges around the globe. In response to “Green Dam Youth Escort”, GIFIC developed a kind of software named “Green Tsunami”. It was able to cease and delete the application of “Green Dam” software and it was free for all Chinese internet users. Furthermore, the US government provided financial support to some network technology corporations to access blocked websites. “Freegate and Ultrasurf, for example, were also aimed to circumvent China’s Great Firewall”.<sup>95</sup>

### **Non-State Actors**

When the US policymakers make the internet freedom agenda, non-state actors also play an important role. From the neoliberalist’s perspective, the actors in international relations have been extended to transnational corporations, business associations, labour unions, religious communities, etc. neoliberal theorists agree that states are central actors in world politics, which determined the policy-making process and had the final say about what kind of diplomatic strategy should be implemented. As for other actors, they are more likely to play the role of supporting the state’s diplomatic strategy. It means that foreign policy will not only be related to the state governments. Both individuals and private organizations will play a part as well.

During the process of enforcing diplomatic policies in international relations, nonstate actors such as transnational companies could help shape and influence state governments’ action and practices. This action also broadened the issues in world politics from military competition and political exchanges to the social, economic and environmental agenda. In the age of the Internet, corporations that provide internet technology service and the NGOs that advocate human rights and freedom of speech are the main non-state players on Internet freedom.

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<sup>95</sup> Richard Fontaine and Will Rogers, *Internet Freedom- A Foreign Policy Imperative in the Digital Age*, Center for new American Security, June 2011, p.19.



The most recent version of the bill in the 113th Congress, The Global Online Freedom Act of 2013 (H.R. 491), aimed to “prevent United States businesses from cooperating with repressive governments in transforming the Internet into a tool of censorship and surveillance, to fulfill the responsibility of the United States Government to promote freedom of expression on the Internet....”<sup>96</sup>

In October 2008, the Global Network Initiative (GNI) was founded to protect freedom of expression in the Internet space around the world. The members of GNI mainly include Internet and communication technology corporations such as Google, Yahoo and Microsoft, some human rights NGOs such as Human Rights in China and academic institutions. They intend to “collaborate in the advancement of user rights to freedom of expression and privacy.”<sup>97</sup>

#### **4.3.4 Case Study: Google’s Withdrawal from China’s Market**

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Google, the US search engine company announced that it would no longer censor its search engine in China and would cease to run google.cn. The withdrawal of Google from Chinese market caused great concern in the US political authority. Afterwards, The Secretary of State Clinton declared that “We look to the Chinese government for an explanation.”<sup>98</sup> A few days later, she expressed her support on Google’s decision and condemned China’s censorship on Internet information.

Google, as the world’s largest search engine corporation, entered Chinese market in 2006. It initially believed that the benefits of its presence in China outweighed the downside of being forced to censor some search results there, as it would provide

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<sup>96</sup> CRS Report for Congress, *Human Rights in China and U.S. Policy: Issues for the 113th Congress*, Congressional Research Service, May 6, 2013, p.31.

<sup>97</sup> “Principles - Freedom of Expression,” *Global Network Initiative*, available at <http://www.globalnetworkinitiative.org/principles/index.php#18>. [2013-5-18]

<sup>98</sup> “US asks China to explain Google hacking claims”, *Guardian*, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2010/jan/13/china-google-hacking-attack-us> [2013-5-24]



more information and openness to Chinese citizen.<sup>99</sup> However, when it comes to the issue of Internet freedom, the search engine giant and Chinese governments clashed over censorship and other problems.<sup>100</sup> The company asserted that, in December 2009, Chinese hackers had attacked its Gmail service and corporate network as well as the computer systems of many other large U.S. corporations in China. In March 2010, Google re-routed its servers from mainland China to its uncensored Hong Kong region—automatically changed its Domain Name System (DSN from “Google.cn” to “Google.com.hk”.

Google’s withdrawal from China’s market is not an accidental event. Although the US government denied its involvement in Google’s decision, it can be concluded from the government reactions before and after this event that non-state actors such as the transnational corporations were playing a significant role in carrying out US Internet diplomatic strategy. For example, Erec Schmit ,the CEO of Google also held a position in the chairman of New American Foundation, a think tank funded by the US government.

On January 7 2010, The Obama Administration hosted a dinner in honor of some leaders of high-tech and Internet companies including Erec Schmit(Chairman of Google), Jack Dozer( founder of Twitter), James Ephad (Mobile Accord CEO), and James Eberhard (Microsoft CSO)<sup>101</sup> with a view to figuring out the most effective means to leverage Internet technology tools to promote diplomacy around the world.<sup>102</sup> During the reception, the Secretary of State Clinton claimed that “if U.S.

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<sup>99</sup> “Google, Citing Cyber Attack, Threatens to Exit China”, *New York Times*, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/13/world/asia/13beijing.html?ref=global-home> [2013-5-18]

<sup>100</sup> CRS Report for Congress, *China, Internet Freedom, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service, July 13 2012, p.8.

<sup>101</sup> Jason Liebman, “Facebook, Twitter and YouTube Are Tools For Diplomacy”, *the Huffington Post*, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jason-liebman/perspective-on-digital-di\\_b\\_416876.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jason-liebman/perspective-on-digital-di_b_416876.html) [2013-5-18]

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.



diplomatic policy was going to encourage civil society development, and fight violence and oppression, 21st-century tools like Twitter, Google, and YouTube are going to be the key”.<sup>103</sup> Five days later, Google made an announcement that it ceased its business in China’s market. Then on January 21<sup>st</sup> 2010, Hilary elaborated on a speech, as mentioned in the earlier part, which criticized China’s limitation on free flow of Internet information and called on the campaign for Internet freedom. What’s more, this event also urged the progress of passing Global Online Freedom Act (GOFA), which is intended to protect human rights and free expression online.<sup>104</sup>

Although “Google Event” has come to an end several years ago, it raised new thinking on the relations between state actors and non-state actors. China possesses the largest number of Internet users and has enjoyed a rapid development in the Internet technology market. When Google entered China in 2006, it soon grew up to the second most widely used information-gathering service after Baidu, the largest Chinese search engine. Since it made the decision to withdraw from China rather than continue to comply with China’s government regulation, Google has been losing share from 30% in 2009 to 16% in 2012 after shifting its service from the mainland to Hong Kong, while Baidu’s share has grown from 58% to over 78% during the same period.<sup>105</sup> It also raise a questions for the US policy makers and corporation executives that how much part should the non-state actors play in supplementing diplomatic strategy.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> “Global Online Freedom Act 2012 Is An Important Step Forward”, *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, available at <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2012/04/global-online-freedom-act> [2013-5-19]

<sup>105</sup> “China Search Engine Market: Google Still Declining”, *Them Pro*, available at <http://www.them.pro/China-Search-Engine-Market-Google-Still-Declining> [2013-5-19]



## 5. Conclusion

In this thesis, the final conclusion will be sought for the problem formulation: *How the emergence of Internet communication technology influences the US diplomacy on China?* It will be done through a critique of the previous analytical chapters which took their basis on neoliberalism and soft power. Two aspects are adopted in this thesis as the empirical data as well to support this problem- formulation. One is the application of social network websites with the event of “Blog briefing” as a case study; and the other is the transmission of freedom value via the Internet approach with the event of “Google’s withdrawal from China’s market” as a case study. After putting theories of soft power and neoliberalism into practice, this thesis finally answers the problem.

In relation to the theory and analytical chapter of basic statements of neoliberalism to search for the conclusion, they agrees with the anarchic world order and the importance of nonstate actors in international relations. These assumptions enable the Internet media, such as social network and the Internet companies, such as Google play a role in US diplomacy theoretically.

With regards to the theory of soft power and its analytical approach to the present problems, it clearly points out the necessity of imposing US soft power, namely attracting other countries to follow it. The Internet that is characterized as speedy, influential and convenient platform is regarded as an effective tool to spread US values, such as democracy and freedom in China.

With the development of Internet communication technology, “The internet and other information technologies are no longer a peripheral force in the conduct of world affairs but a powerful engine for change.”<sup>106</sup> It enables the emergence of new diplomatic methods to shape good national image and to protect national interests.

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<sup>106</sup> David Bollier, *The Rise of Netpolitik: How the Internet Is Changing International Politics and Diplomacy*, The Aspen Institute, 2003, p.38.



“Moreover, these changes are not just occurring within the boundaries of nation states but in all sorts of unpredictable transnational communications.”<sup>107</sup>

First, a variety of entities are more engaged in the US Internet diplomacy on China. In traditional diplomacy, the main actors are concentrated on the interaction among diplomatic officials. It is difficult for the public to express political opinion and to impact the government decisions. The Internet is characterized as promptness and transparency. It provides a smooth communication channel to connect the world and to share the same information for different cultural exchange. It means when one country is carrying out the foreign policy, it could be followed and shared through the Internet timely. The diplomacy is no longer the privacy that only open to government officials. The public tends to get more involved in the process of diplomacy. Before the internet was used in US diplomacy strategy on China, the bilateral relations between the United States and China was mostly decided by the policymakers. The perception of the public had little impact on it. In order to enhance the US soft power around the world, and especially increase its attraction among the public, the US government explores new methods of transmitting cultural values and political ideas. It is a good example that the US government establishes the blogs and weibo account in Chinese portals, which provide a transparent platform to uncover the information concerning the US culture development such as social life, education regime and emigration history, etc. It directly connects the US government and Chinese public and thus shortens the distance between them, enabling Chinese to have a better perception of US foreign policy. The practice of “blog Briefing” also focuses on Chinese public opinion on Sino-US relations, which helps the US government to shape good national image and enhance soft power.

Second, the Internet helps promote the value of democracy and freedom in a new arena. The United States has a long history in advocating democracy and freedom, for

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



it regards the democratic political regime and the freedom of speech as the best cultural value. As a result, it should also apply to the norms and rules in cyberspace. The Internet space is anarchic world and it is characterized as transparency, free access and widely engagement across different countries, genders and hierarchies. According to neoliberalism, no centralized authority is available to surpass all the states. The country that can keep an edge in the Internet technology and set rules and norms in cyberspace will be more powerful than other countries. Based on neoliberalism, the US government intends to set the norms of internet freedom as a world widely accepted value. When talking about the impact of the Internet on US diplomacy to China, it keeps the same as the content of traditional diplomacy and extends the actor of traditional diplomacy. In the analytical part, the NGOs such as Global Internet Freedom Consortium, and the multinational corporations such as Google, Microsoft and Yahoo help support the US government strategy in promoting Internet freedom.

Moreover, the Internet diplomacy has no intention to replace traditional diplomacy. As mentioned in the analytical part, there are some limitations on the approach of Internet diplomacy based on the advocates of soft power and neoliberalism. The influence of soft power takes longer time to be effective. The traditional exchanges in the fields of military and economic affairs still dominate today's diplomatic issues. And the impact of state actors on diplomacy still surpasses that of non-state actors. Thus, the combination of Internet and diplomacy approach emerges as a new trend in today's world politics. It has already got attention from US government by adopting a series of measures in dealing with Sino-US relations and it will continue to supplement the traditional diplomacy effectively in the foreseeable future.



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