“Soft power” is a relatively new concept in Chinese discourse. Drawn largely from the works of Joseph Nye, it has quickly caught on among China’s policy circles. As the editor of the current volume points out in the introduction, “perhaps nowhere else has the idea of ‘soft power’ been as widely discussed, embraced and appropriated as in China.” The Chinese may find “soft power” naturally appealing because it is compatible with Chinese traditions going back to Sun Zī and Mencius, which emphasize the psychological and moral elements of power. The Chinese Communist Party has paid particular attention to these elements of its influence at home and abroad. Indeed, from “people’s diplomacy (minjian waijiao)” during the Mao Zedong era to President Hu Jintao’s call for “inspirational power (ganzhaoli)” of today, China’s foreign policy has always had a strong public diplomacy component. That policy has included projecting favorable images of China to the world.

In this chapter, I examine China’s image projection abroad over the last several decades. What images has the Chinese government tried to project, including China’s roles in the world and its visions of world order? What are some new trends in China’s projection of its international images? Have China’s efforts succeeded? In the following pages, I attempt to provide some preliminary answers to these questions.

**China’s Projected Images**

In this section, I explore the images of China projected by the Chinese government from the communist regime’s early years to the present by
examining several platforms of communications—The *Peking Review*, the Government Work Reports, and Chinese leaders’ major foreign policy statements.

The Chinese government launched the *Peking Review* (later renamed *Beijing Review*) on March 5, 1958. It was the first and, for many years, the main weekly newsmagazine directed at foreign readers. Its purpose is for “foreigners to know about China’s policies and study China’s political situation and development trends.”

For more than four decades, it was published in English, French, Japanese, German, and Spanish. More recently, the magazine has changed format. It is now published in print only in English and online in Chinese, English, French, German, and Japanese. Between 1958 and 2006, more than 2,000 issues of *Peking Review* were published. I randomly selected one issue from each year for analysis. Because my focus is on China's image abroad in the context of public diplomacy, I coded only articles that have at least one paragraph regarding China’s foreign relations.

Government Work Reports are delivered regularly to China’s legislative body, the National People’s Congress (NPC), by the premier. These reports, delivered at each meeting of each NPC, are widely publicized inside and outside China by the government. They are directed at both the domestic and the international audience. Between 1954 and 2008, there were eleven NPCs. I analyzed the foreign policy content of the Government Work Report at the first meeting of each congress.

These two series of documents are not the only platforms used by the Chinese government to build China’s images abroad. I have chosen to study them because they often set the tone for other public diplomacy venues (e.g., other publications, Radio Beijing, and cultural exhibitions abroad), and they are the most consistently used platforms over the last few decades (in contrast to TV and the Internet, which are relatively new venues). I first analyze both sets of documents to delineate China’s portrayal of its roles in the world. Then I analyze the Government Work Reports and important speeches by Chinese leaders that show how the regime envisions the world order.

**China’s Roles in the World**

How has China’s portrayal of its roles in the world changed over the years? To explore this question, I conducted a quantitative content analysis of the *Peking Review* and the Government Work Reports. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 summarize the results. As these graphs show, the *Peking Review* and the Government Work Reports have presented