The Rise of China from a Network Perspective

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Hans J. Morgenthau, one of the founders of classical realism, captured the essence of international politics in the words, "As long as the world is politically organized into nations, the national interest is indeed the last word in world politics." He also believed that national interest could be realized through military and economic power, these being the most influential sources of power seen from a realistic perspective.

Joseph Nye, on the other hand, defines power as the ability to influence the behavior of others to realize the outcomes one desires, classifying the ways in which such influence is exercised into two categories: Command Power and Co-optive Power. Command Power is the ability to change what others do, which includes military and economic power, i.e. those valued from a realistic perspective. These forms of power are defined as Hard Power. Meanwhile, Co-optive Power is the ability to shape what others want, referring to non-material resources such as culture, ideology, and the ability to create an inter-national system. These are defined as Soft Power. Based on this definition of Hard Power and Soft Power, Nye claimed a shift was taking place in international politics from Hard Power to Soft Power.

Nye has recently gone further to propose concepts such as Smart Power and Sharp Power. Smart Power refers to the ability to combine hard and soft power, depending on whether hard or soft power would be more effective in a given situation. And Sharp Power is the use of manipulative diplomatic policies by one country to influence and undermine the political system of a target country, which has also been utilized as a means of criticism against China.

The existing debate on power is significant in that it provides a concise and easy explanation for power shifts in international politics. However, current discourse lacks a proper understanding of the concept of power within the newly changing international politics of the 21st century. Thus, new ideas are needed to supplement the limitations of existing concepts of power, one of which is the idea of Network Power. Network Power refers to the power exercised by some social actors over others through rules of inclusion and coordination within networks, which can also be divided into Collective Power at the actors' level, Positional Power at the structure level, and Programming Power at the level of processes.

Now let us look at the rise of China based on these concepts of power. China overtook Japan in terms of GDP in 2010, and on a purchasing power basis its economy grew to 18.3 percent of the world's GDP in 2017. Meanwhile, following the launch of its first aircraft carrier Liaoning (遼寧) in 2012, the nation is currently conducting trial operations for its second aircraft carrier, showing rapid growth in its military capabilities. Also, as of 2018, there are 525 Confucius Institutes in 146 countries around the world, serving as bases for spreading Chinese culture. In this way, China is showing remarkable growth in its Soft Power through cultural means, as well as its Hard Power represented by economic and military power.

However, seen from the perspective of Network Power, the rise of China is even more dynamic and significant. Since Chinese President Xi Jinping first proposed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, it has been vigorously pushed forward as a national strategy project for expanding economic and trade cooperation between China and neighboring countries. As a result, as of 2018, 122 countries and 29 international organizations from over the world have joined hands with China under the vision of building BRI. In addition, 93 countries or organizations have joined as official members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which was established by China to push for the BRI.

Meanwhile, in September last year, China held the 2018 Beijing Summit Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which was held as a large-scale international event with the participation of top officials from fifty-three African countries. In addition, China worked to forge closer economic relations with the world economy by hosting the first China Interna-

tional Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai in November last year, and held the Global Media Summit in Chongqing in October to establish closer relations with the international media as well. Also, China is holding the Boao Forum for Asia every year, an event which has come to be regarded as the Davos Forum of Asia, and is a leading member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which plays an important security role in the region. In addition, China newly established diplomatic relations with Panama in 2017, followed by the Dominican Republic and El Salvador in Central America and Burkina Faso in Africa in 2018. In the process, China stressed the "One China principle" and induced the countries to sever ties with Taiwan.

As such, China is building a global network, creating more and more new platforms at the global level. This can be seen as the process of developing Collective Power and Programming Power by increasing the size of the existing network that China belongs to and creating new networks. In addition, China is trying to improve its Positional Power by occupying a central position in the diverse networks already existing, such as by actively hosting various international events and increasing the ratio of its contributions to international organizations.

On the other hand, the United States, which is considered the world's superpower, is removing itself from its existing networks one by one, unlike China. The Trump administration withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the agreement of the Paris COP 21 and the UNESCO in 2017. The U.S. also officially declared last year that it would withdraw from the U.N. Human Rights Council and terminate the United States' participation in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran. This diplomacy of withdrawal by the Trump administration is without doubt based on a calculation of U.S. interests, including domestic political circumstances, but from a network perspective they signify a weakening of the United States' global network power.

Of course, seen from the concept of "stock," China's network power still lags greatly behind the United States as its might in military and economic terms. From the concept of "flow," however, China's network power seems to be worthy of notice and an important driver of China's rise. Recently, the Malaysian government canceled its plans to build an eastern coastal railway with China in Malaysia, which was one of the important projects of the BRI. This setback indicates the difficulties associated with China's strategy to establish a global network. However, China is expected to continue executing a variety of policies that will lead to the strengthening of its network power in 2019 as well. Therefore, it is time to start thinking seriously about how China's Network Power will affect our society and how we should respond to this. **KIEP**