

# THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT SOFT POWER

## THE CASE OF THE PRC UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP

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article  
abstract

THIS PAPER PRESENTS THE SOURCES, CHARACTERISTICS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PRC'S SOFT POWER. IT ALSO TRIES TO ANSWER THE QUESTION WHAT WILL BE THE FUTURE ROLE OF SOFT POWER IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE FIFTH GENERATION OF CHINESE LEADERS. THE PAPER PUTS THE EMPHASIS ON THE FACT THAT SOFT POWER IN THE PRC IS LINKED WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS. THIS MEANS THAT THE RICH CHINESE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE MOTIVATIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF BEIJING'S POLICIES.

THE PRC PROMOTES TERMS SUCH AS "HARMONIOUS WORLD" AND "PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT" AS CORE PARTS OF ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS AND TRIES TO AVOID "ZERO-SUM GAME" WITH WESTERN POWERS. IN THE PAPER IT IS ALSO UNDERLINED THAT CHINESE SOFT

POWER DEPENDS ON THE INTERNAL CONDITION OF CHINA, AND NOT ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. NEXT, THE PAPER BRIEFLY DISCUSSES THE PRC'S ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA, SOUTH ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA. IT IS STRESSED THAT MOST OF THESE COUNTRIES ARE INTERDEPENDENT AND COUPLED WITH CHINESE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. AT THE END, DESPITE THE EXISTING LIMITATIONS OF CHINESE SOFT POWER, THE AUTHOR CONSIDERS THE PRC'S SOFT POWER AS OF GREAT POTENTIAL DUE TO THE FACT THAT IT PERFECTLY MATCHES CHINA'S NEEDS.

PRC, CHINA, SOFT POWER,  
PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT,  
NORM DIFFUSION.

keywords

Decision-makers and opinion leaders in China have given an enormous amount of attention to their nation's soft power. Even closer attention has been paid by analysts and journalists around the world in the last few years. Soft power has started to serve as an all-purpose concept to explain various aspects of Chinese behavior in international relations. Furthermore, due to the word "power" in the term, a lot of anxiety arose among foreigners, which is why a proper understanding of the concept soft power is essential. The upcoming years will be a time of hard learning for the new leaders of the People's Republic of China and, most probably, a final compromise with the spirit of Mao Zedong in strategic thinking. This paper aims to present the sources and limitations of PRC's soft power. It also tries to answer the question what future role is put away for soft power within PRC's foreign policy with the fifth generation of Chinese leaders at the wheel.

WHAT SOFT POWER IS AND A PINCH OF  
CHINESE SPICES

The term soft power is usually confronted with hard power. In this comparison, the former means mainly culture, while the latter encompasses

the army, economy, diplomacy, etc. According to the fundamental works of Joseph Nye, the distinction between both lies in their mode of action. Soft power is demonstrated in attraction, persuasion, appeal, and co-optation, whereas hard power is evident in practices of threat, coercion, sanction, payment, and inducement.<sup>1</sup> But the point is not to treat soft power as a resource, as is often the case with hard power. Soft power is constituted by the way of using available resources of every kind (soft use of power), which can never be quantified. For example, the army is a core source of hard power, but the use of US aircraft carrier strike force to aid the victims of tsunami in East Asia in 2004 was very positively perceived among Asian nations and cannot be seen as a use of hard power. On the contrary, the aggressive cultural offensive during the Mao Zedong regime in the 1950s and early 60s in South and South-East Asia surely cannot be called soft power as it put a strain on the existing international relations. In the words of Joseph Nye, soft power is “the ability to win the hearts and minds of others.”

Another issue that needs a strong emphasis is the social context that either engenders or hampers the growth of soft power. Many argue that the “Chinese model,” its multilateralism, economic diplomacy, and a “good neighbor” policy<sup>2</sup> have been so successful because their appeal to many developing countries, while at the same time it has had a negative effect on relations with most Western powers due to its, among others, undemocratic rule and lack of respect for human rights.<sup>3</sup> This observation should remind us that every use of soft power has to be considered in a proper context and, in almost every case, is directed at a specific region or group of people.

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While analyzing soft power in the PRC, the first observation is that China is at the beginning of a years-long period of growth. Beijing has just

1 Nye 2004: 8.

2 Li Mingjiang 2009: 6.

3 Li Mingjiang 2009: 6.

started to remind itself how to take advantage of soft power after many years of limited resources and focusing on hard power. The core resources of China, i.e. a strong economy, army and an attractive modern culture, are still developing and it has to take time to learn how to use them in a more sophisticated way, as soft power is handled. It is apparent that the PRC’s influences in East Asia are based on well-educated elites and entrepreneurs. This situation occurs due to the historic model in East Asia, in which the Chinese nation controls the regional trade and shipping, and, according to many, was responsible for today’s unprecedented economic successes of the so-called four Asian Tigers.<sup>4</sup> From Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand<sup>5</sup> to the Chinese states of Singapore and Taiwan, the data prove that regional business is still to a large extent controlled by Chinese. Although Beijing also benefits from this situation through mutual trade, etc., their entrepreneurship adds to China’s global image despite the lack of direct control on overseas Chinese by the PRC.

The strongest sources of soft power, which are an attractive lifestyle, mass-culture and original consumer goods, are still to be created. All of them always follow the rise of a large middle class in the society, which has already taken place in China. Supposedly, we are on the brink of recognizing Chinese mass culture, lifestyle and original consumer goods worldwide.

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## INTELLIGENCE IS ENDOWED, BUT WISDOM IS LEARNED

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Foreign Policy of the PRC’s leaders is strongly embedded in the historic, ancient basis that has been evolving for thousands of years. Firstly, it refers to the historic *pax sinica*, which is known as a thousand-years-long time of peace in East Asia maintained by Chinese hegemony and civilizational superiority over the region. Indeed, to become the greatest Asian power, which would eventually lead to achieving the status of a global power is a fundamental and constant goal of Beijing. As the first and most important aim is to dominate the eastern Asian region, another ancient Chinese idea has been adopted: the *three concentric circles*.<sup>6</sup>

4 Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. For more about the role of Chinese diasporas in East Asia I recommend Wang Gungwu 2003.

5 It is worth noting that the incumbent and former prime ministers of Thailand, Yingluck Shinawatra and Abhisit Vejjajiva, are also the representatives of Sino-Thai diaspora. More about the Chinese share in regional business: Gacek 2011: 449.

6 Rowiński 2011: 432.

This idea, which stands for one of the pillars of foreign policy of Empire of China, assumes that the first and internal circle is China itself (the Celestial Empire, 天朝); the second circle is the historic land of barbarians, who were far less civilized, but very often maintained some form of tributary relationship or were directly ruled by the Chinese Emperor (this circle included, among others, today's Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan or Myanmar). This circle encompasses a zone of friendly or neutral states vis-à-vis the Emperor and insulated China from external threats. The last circle constitutes the other so-called barbarians' lands and indicates the global aspirations of the Empire,<sup>7</sup> which finds its confirmation in today's PRC's policy towards Africa or South America.

The current doctrine of PRC's foreign policy since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has been called *China's Peaceful Development* (中国和平发展) or *China's Peaceful Rise* (中国和平崛起). This doctrine underlines that what is most important for China is economic development and improvement of life standards, while confrontation with other powers might be harmful for this aim and should be avoided. In effect, China has to focus on the development of its soft power rather than hard power, which most probably would lead to the confrontation. In that context, a particular emphasis has been put on ancient Chinese culture, i.e. the thought of Sun Tzu. As Joseph Nye pointed out, Sun Tzu concluded that the highest excellence never has to fight, and a battle signifies political failure.<sup>8</sup> The same idea might be the source of Hu Jintao's statement in 2007: "We must enhance culture as a part of the soft power of our country (...) Culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition for overall national strength."<sup>9</sup> It is also the Confucian Doctrine of the Mean (中庸), which numerous experts indicate as an important value which should defuse the anxieties felt by many. The guiding principle is that one should never act in excess, but to be restraint, calm and harmonious. If China bases its international strategies on that idea, as Beijing is currently doing, it will be able to maintain rather than revise the international status quo.<sup>10</sup>

The second term is the *harmonious society* that has been promoted since 2004, firstly by President Hu Jintao.<sup>11</sup> The initial aim of it was to smooth internal economic, class, and regional disparities that arise due to the booming economic growth. These disparities are indicated as one of

7 Rowiński 2011: 433.

8 Nye 2008: 11.

9 Xinhua 2013.

10 Chen Jianfeng 2009: 84.

11 Literally the name of the office is state chairman, 主席.

the main threats to China's internal stability and, in effect, for the political system. Later, the term *harmonious society* started to merge with the philosophy of Confucius, as well as the ideas of *harmonious international relations* or *harmony between the human and nature* appeared.<sup>12</sup> The idea of *harmony* and Confucian traditions are respected and widespread in other Asian countries, which makes them attractive and clearly understandable.

The terms *harmony* and *Peaceful Development* were both used in the Chinese *White Book* published in 2011, where the doctrine to lead the PRC in international relations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was presented.<sup>13</sup> A few issues in this doctrine, essential for the Chinese soft power, should be highlighted here. Primarily, it explains China's role in international relations. According to the *White Book*, the *Peaceful Development* is to be understood as a sustaining development of the PRC in the peaceful world, and by this development, China is to make a growing contribution to maintain world peace. It has to stay open for beneficial solutions and ideas from other countries, and puts emphasis on win-win relations as conditions for economic globalization. This attitude is regularly presented in contacts with other countries, especially developing ones, as recently by Xi Jinping during his trip to Africa in March 2013.<sup>14</sup>



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Secondly, there is Chinese solicitude for a peaceful image and a good reputation, which effects are enforced by the propaganda of success, the so-called *charm offensive*. It is based mainly on the success of the Chinese developmental model, which in 30 years placed the PRC as the second biggest economy in the world. China is considered the one who knows how to recover its economy quickly and how to implement reforms that will push it forward. For China, this is a great asset in contacts with developing countries in Asia and Africa, often merged with partly undemocratic political models, which easily conduct the deep, economic reorganization. China's emergence as a part of the modern world gives hope to many people in other developing and newly-industrializing countries.<sup>15</sup>

12 Dziak, Gawlikowski, Ławacz 2012: 336.

13 China's Peaceful Development 2011.

14 Xinhua 2013.

15 Pang Zhongying 2009: 125.

Another part of the propaganda focuses straight on building a positive, favorable image of China in the world. An example of that is the quickly expanding number of Confucius Institutes around the globe. Such Institutes, similarly to German *Goethe Institutes* or Spanish *Cervantes Institutes*, are non-profit public institutions aligned with the Chinese government, which aim to promote Chinese language and culture and facilitate the exchange of people. By the end of 2010, just 6 years from launching this program, there were 322 Confucius Institutes and 369 Confucius Classrooms established in 96 countries. In addition, some 250 institutions from over 50 countries expressed their will to establish new Confucius Institutes/Classrooms.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, the ambitious *China's Bridge Programme* has been activated, under which umbrella 162 thousand foreign students were allowed to the PRC in 2006. The main beneficiaries (74,3 %) are from Asian neighboring countries.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the Chinese *charm offensive* could be observed on various occasions, such as organizing Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 or the Asian Games in Guangzhou and Expo Exhibition in Shanghai in 2010. These and many other events are used as a confirmation of Chinese peaceful rise and intentions. The Chinese intentionally follow the thought of Joseph Nye: that success depends not only on whose army wins, but also on whose story wins.<sup>18</sup>



ANOTHER PART OF THE PROPAGANDA FOCUSES STRAIGHT ON BUILDING A POSITIVE, FAVORABLE IMAGE OF CHINA IN THE WORLD

Last but not least, another two more significant issues from Chinese *White Book* ought to be underlined. The first term is *scientific development*. It literally means “following the laws governing the development of economy, society and nature and focusing on developing the productive forces.” But in fact, it unavoidably leads to a match with the boosting development of Chinese science. In 2012, more than half a million people in China started PhD studies, and every year there are approximately 400 thousand graduates of technical and medical faculties.<sup>19</sup> Although the quality of Chinese universities varies and only few of them attain global top levels, a far more visible progress has been made regarding the Research and Development sector (R&D). China wants to move from the “Made in

16 Hanban 2013.

17 Rowiński 2011: 444.

18 Nye 2005.

19 Sarek 2013: 71.

China” stage to “Designed in China.” This process is starting as the Chinese company ZTE was ranked first in 2012 regarding international patent applications for the second consecutive year, followed by Huawei on the fourth.<sup>20</sup>

The second issue mentioned is the emphasis on growing international activity, also on the forum of multilateral organizations, by which the PRC wants to promote a peaceful and plural international environment, starting with Asia. Beijing's attitude towards the Asian financial crisis in 1997/1998, when it decided to help, among others, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand, could be seen as an opening of this policy. After that came such decisions as participation in the peace process in Cambodia, mediations with North Korea or conciliation in solving several border disputes with its neighbors. What is also easy to observe, is growing involvement in international institutions. It is not only the matter of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRIC/BRICS summits, but also, just to mention a few, ASEAN + 3 forum, FOCAC, its observatory status in OAS and SAARC,<sup>21</sup> and a growing number of signed Free Trade Agreements around the world. As stated at the end of the *White Book*, the ultimate assumption and goal is that a “prosperous and developing China, a democratic, harmonious and stable country under the rule of law, will make a better contribution to the world.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, soft power could even be seen as an integral part of Chinese strategy, as it has been mentioned since the times of Sun Tzu.

KEEP A COOL HEAD AND MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE<sup>23</sup>

Every new generation of Chinese leaders brought a new scope of international relations and started new trends in foreign policy. Regarding that, the current fifth generation, with Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang at the top, will not be exceptional. But the foreign policy, probably the first global policy of the PRC, adopted by them, could be treated as exceptional. Undoubtedly, this policy will be peaceful and based on the soft, not hard, power. The sources of this assumption lie not only in analysis of the official doctrine and rhetoric used by Chinese representatives, but primarily in

20 WIPO 2013: 26-03-2013.

21 FOCAC – Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, OAS – Organization of American States, SAARC – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

22 China's Peaceful Development 2011.

23 Deng Xiaoping's quote.

their needs. The foundations of this global policy had been already created by Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao.

The main areas where soft power of the PRC focuses today are East and South Asia, Africa and Latin America. Xi Jinping has already shown that he has no intentions of changing that, when he chose Africa and the BRICS summit as parts of his first foreign tour in March 2013.<sup>24</sup> Each possible engagement in East Asia has already been explained as natural for Beijing and sustained from the very beginning by the Chinese Empire. The engagement in Africa, Latin America and, partly, South Asia has slightly different reasons. Most of them are interdependent and coupled with Chinese economic development. Firstly, there is Chinese greed for natural resources, especially minerals, hydrocarbons and metals. This is often supposed to be the main reason of close ties with countries like Chile (copper exporter), Peru (copper, gold, iron ore) or Brazil (iron ore, agricultural products) in Latin America, Angola (oil), Nigeria (oil, natural gas), Burkina Faso and Mali (cotton) in Africa, and Pakistan (cotton) and Burma (gas) in South Asia. Due to growing import of natural resources by China and boosting export of Chinese machinery and consumer goods, the trade with partners from these regions has become significant. The PRC is already the biggest trading partner for Africa with a volume of nearly 200 bln USD in 2012<sup>25</sup> and the second biggest, after the European Union, trading partner for South Asia with 93 bln USD in 2011.<sup>26</sup>

What is more, growing labor costs in the PRC and a shift from basic production to high-tech goods have pushed Beijing to seek cheaper laborers abroad. Such case is clearly visible in South Asia, where Chinese manufacturers are moving their production to. South Asian countries have an attractive location, close to the maritime trading routes, their enormous manpower is cheap and used for hard work in hierarchical structures. For example, China invests in Bangladesh in ready-made garments business, while in Sri Lanka China is interested in such export manufacturing sectors as agriculture, fishing, car production, and even special economic zones intended only for Chinese companies.<sup>27</sup> These new ties with developing countries are being strengthened by mass investments in infrastructure, which is supposed to enhance the competitiveness of these beneficiaries in the near future, but at the beginning it mainly provides work to Chinese companies and creates debts of gratitude to the PRC.

24 The first foreign visit of Xi Jinping as president was to Russia.

25 ChinaDaily 2013.

26 SAARC-EU 2013.

27 Colombo Telegraph 2012.

Last but not least, taking care of close friendly relations with numerous developing countries increases visibly their support for policies conducted by China in international relations. This is particularly the case of the *One China policy* and a campaign to delegitimize Taiwan. While in 1994 as many as 13 African countries recognized Taipei, today there are only four. Lastly, it is Malawi who broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 2008 and agreed for Beijing's offer of 6 bln USD in aid.<sup>28</sup> The support for Chinese positions on human rights in the United Nations jumped from 50 % in 2000 to 74 % in 2008, and Beijing has already put together an African-Latin American coalition which is large enough to torpedo the very specific rules it opposes.<sup>29</sup> China is also engaged in creating smaller international organizations that exclude the US and the EU, like the East Asia Summit, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. If (developing) countries do not toe the PRC line or do not abstain when asked, their economic projects are at risk.

In this context, it is worth noticing that China's intentions go far beyond simply becoming an economic superpower and wanting to counter the US overall, including cultural domination. According to Zhao Qizheng, former Director of the State Council Information Office, only "when China has cultural security (...) we discuss the security of our value orientation and the security of our ideology."<sup>30</sup> Accusations towards Beijing for violating human rights, intellectual property rights and trade rules, reflect, in opinion of the majority of Chinese, the domination of Western culture and their policy of containment towards the PRC in global power aspirations. Furthermore, they notice a lack of understanding for the Chinese achievements and cultural heritage among foreigners. That mindset influences the policy conducted towards Africa and Latin America. In case of the former, as Deng and Zhang stated, limited economic resources of African countries determine which cultural products they can get from China. Due to it, China's efforts today focus on two major areas: training future generations of African leaders and cross-cultural promotion.<sup>31</sup> Beijing tries to achieve that by a huge students exchanges and by organizing numerous events that ought to promote Chinese culture, not only through Confucius Institutes, but e.g. by sending Chinese performing art troupes to Africa. Xi Jinping made an official visit to Latin America as far back as in 2009, as the vice-president. China's attractiveness for these regions lies in its developmental model, characterized by a tightly held

28 New York Times 2008.

29 Halper 2010.

30 Deng Xiaogang, Zheng Lening 2009: 145.

31 Deng Xiaogang, Zheng Lening 2009: 154.

state intervention in the economy, preoccupation with political stability instead of individual freedom, massive media control, and a greater reliance on a strong government to guide the developmental process.<sup>32</sup> These principles come upon a breeding ground in Latin America, where the disappointment caused by enforcing the Washington Consensus is visible and leftist sympathies are strong. In effect, despite the great distance and all the disparities between both regions, Beijing often serves as a model, and Chinese Confucius Institutes are increasingly popular.

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### SOFT POWER OR SOFT CHINA? THE LIMITS OF THE CHINESE "CHARM OFFENSIVE"

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China has taken up the concept of soft power not only because it is compatible with many aspects of Chinese traditional and strategic thinking, but, more importantly, because it offers a ready solution to ease the anxieties around the world towards China's rise. The sensitivity of the West towards the PRC is reflected in their fears which arise even as a result of China's soft power, which shall grow partly at the expense of Western influences. But Chinese soft power should not be overestimated. It suffers from many structural problems, which are not easily overcome.

Undoubtedly, nowadays Chinese soft power is limited primarily to developing countries, which can be explained by its source of power. These sources ought to be found in Chinese successful economy development, accompanied by huge poverty reduction. Furthermore, China has been successful in its effort to develop its economy by separating free market economics and democracy.<sup>33</sup> To some extent, it attracts so many developing countries, because the West stubbornly wants them to simultaneously reform their economies and political systems. But this is not easy and political regimes in developing countries usually do not want to take the risk of political instability for the sake of democratic values, not always simply applicable in countries of different cultural background. In addition, China's view on the world order consists either of the old Sinocentric hierarchy or of the realist tradition with emphasis on absolute national sovereignty. It is hardly compatible with evolving transnational norms and attracts mainly authoritarian states. For the rest, China has few political values to offer and is still undergoing a fundamental political, social and economic transition. The PRC's soft power suffers also due to lack of

<sup>32</sup> Li He 2007: 833-862.

<sup>33</sup> Wibowo Ignatius 2009: 208.

popular mass-culture, which could be purchased abroad. In Europe, the best-known Chinese artists are dissidents, like Ai Weiwei or Liu Xiaobo, with the first exception in 2012 when the Nobel Prize was granted to Mo Yan. Moreover, Chinese censorship, internet cuts, its undemocratic system and disparities in understanding of human rights are strongly discouraging for many countries. All these issues are most probably transitional, but nobody knows how much time Beijing needs to solve them.

The second significant limitation is the distrust towards the PRC among many countries. Above all, this problem occurs in the Asian neighborhood of China, where countries like Japan, Korea, Vietnam, India or Nepal have a strong, historically determined prejudice against Beijing and its aims. Surprisingly, the distrust appeared and took significant position in the relations with e.g. African countries. Although many of them are benefiting from the Chinese soft power and seek to emulate China's model of development, the growing PRC's presence in Africa in the last decade caused grave concerns among civil society, trade unions, and some political leaders in Africa. These concerns increase along with Beijing sustaining the relations with oppressive regimes in Sudan and Zimbabwe, and the fact that Chinese companies take up a substantial stake in resource extraction from Africa.<sup>34</sup> China still has a very positive image in Africa, but in time cannot avoid comparisons to European colonial empires or accusations of exploitation and exacerbation of corruption. A similar scenario evolves in Latin America.

The third limitation, and one of the major domestic issues of the PRC, is the growing, aggressive nationalism among the people. This attitude arose after three decades of booming economy and is caused by several factors, which are among others, increasing income inequality; migration and related social problems; and a changing perception of the national power. Although nationalism as such is nothing bad and the government has taken advantage of it many times, its offensive, xenophobic sort is damaging to the international image of the PRC, especially the one that is directed against specified "enemies," e.g. anti-Japan demonstrations in 2012 or long-lasting disputes over Senkaku/Diaoyu, Spratly and Paracel Islands. These unresolved disputes feed suspicions towards China's peaceful intentions and indicate that even within the Chinese government disparities and different ideas on the future exist. The outbreak of offensive nationalism in China would be destructive for both domestic and foreign policies and as such has to be deterred by the new leadership under Xi and Li. This is one of the most significant consequences of the changes

<sup>34</sup> Manji, Marks 2007: 50.

that have taken place in the PRC since the times of Deng Xiaoping, and need proper attention to be addressed in order to prolong Chinese rise and development.

Lastly, it has to be underlined that the transition of generations of Chinese will bring even a bigger change than a change of leadership. The main problem that the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of political leaders is facing is the huge generation gap, which is responsible for the majority of challenges in the domestic situation. The gap between today's 20-30-year-old Chinese and their parents, who remember the times of Mao Zedong, is striking, and the way of coping with this will decide about China's next decades.

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## CONCLUSION

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The People's Republic of China is a country of stable, long-term policies, pragmatism and unprecedented growth, which brings rapid changes in almost every part of human everyday life. The new leadership under president Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang, in all likelihood will not change this image, not because of the way of succession, but because of state interests. But due to the changing potential, opportunities and needs, their foreign policy is probably the first one with fully global ambitions. Behind this term we should see the shift from a developing but backward biggest global manufacturer to a great power, which is able to manage international problems, invent new technologies, and appeal to others by its modern and future-oriented character.

The question of foreign policy adopted by Beijing remains open, which decides about the directions and extent of use of the soft power. Pu Xiaoyu indicates three key issues that determine the answer: would the PRC like to maintain the international status quo or strive to revive it? How will this socialist country join the global system? What opinion regarding this problem is widespread among Chinese scientists and policy-makers?<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, all of them could be examined on the example of Chinese relations with the United States. Usually, experts mention three ideal models: *Chinese New Order*, *Liberal model* and *Consultative model*.<sup>36</sup> The first one is based on the idea that Chinese values are far better than any other, that the PRC should promote them and, by doing so, struggle to reorganize the world. The US has no right to maintain its global domination.

35 Dziak, Gawlikowski, Ławacz 2012: 69.

36 Dziak, Gawlikowski, Ławacz 2012: 71.

The *Liberal Model* is quite the opposite. It assumes that democracy and free-market economy have to be fully implemented by Beijing, and by doing so China will gain international respect and adjust to sustaining American hegemony. The *Consultative model* could be seen as a kind of compromise, in which China has to adjust to and use the existing system, promote a multilateral world and accept democracy and free market only to a preferred extent. Although the former seems to be the most probable nowadays, Chinese soft power will eventually be the main tool of Beijing anyway. The use of hard power is not an option, as in the next decade the PRC will still depend on international links. Due to the same reason the rapid turn into self-sufficiency and isolation will not be an option, as before. A significant difference between hard and soft power is that while the US has both of them, but much stronger, the use of soft power does not create real threats to Beijing. On the one hand China's soft power is so attractive, but as it is inextricably bound to domestic issues like rise of the economy and societal harmony the PRC will still need stable international relations and a harmonious domestic context, even if some provocative events, such as the demonstrations of the power of their navy, suggested something different.

The growth of China's soft power can hardly be explained by the existing theoretical framework: the global profile of China's culture, ideology, values, and ability to shape international institutions has simply not increased enough.<sup>37</sup> But China's need of harmony and a stable neighborhood, its aspirations to become a global power and cultivated philosophy of neo-Confucianism assure that soft power will be the most desirable way of making foreign policy. An alternative policy could be based on strong nationalism, projection of power and emotions, which will probably dismantle the majority of Deng Xiaoping achievements; this kind of turns in Chinese policy do not happen, and even if they do, they are unpredictable.

To sum up, the question if soft power of the PRC is likely to grow in the nearest future should be answered "yes." Undoubtedly, it perfectly matches China's needs and has a great potential. China sought to demonstrate its good intentions in international relations to sustain the state's growth and proper conditions for the development. As stressed by Dominik Mierzejewski, this is why Beijing promotes the terms of "harmonious world" and "peaceful development" as the core parts of its soft power in international relations.<sup>38</sup> In other words, soft power is a way

37 Li Mingjang: 9.

38 Mierzejewski 2012: 77.

of achieving all major Chinese goals and further pursue to the status of a global power in a way that avoids zero-sum games with Western powers. The current Chinese model, or the so-called Beijing Consensus, is in its initial, transitional phase, and will be examined in the upcoming years. But, as Singapore state leader Lee Kuan Yew wrote, “Although the Chinese did not coin the phrase soft power, they have exercised it with consummate skill!”

Concluding this article on the PRC’s soft power, I would like to emphasize that it will bear Chinese characteristics. China’s soft power is still restrained by a number of limitations, all of which have deep, domestic determinants. There are doubts regarding the effectiveness of Chinese soft power too, which constitute the main challenge nowadays. But what is interesting in this case of soft power, is that usually it is much more effective when not intentional, but arises as a kind of “side-effect” of internal success. The main sources of Chinese or American soft power are not planned, targeted policies. Soft power lies rather in their economic unprecedented success, which has led them to become a role model in many fields. In effect, in order to evaluate soft power of the PRC in the several upcoming years, it is necessary not to focus on the foreign policy conducted for purposes of taking advantage of the currently existing soft power, like the growing number of Confucius Institutes. That is the easiest option, but in general it turns the things upside down. Beijing benefits from Confucius Institutes, but this program came to reality thanks to previous internal achievements, which seemed to be attractive abroad. So what Chinese soft power depends on, are the internal conditions of China and the way of solving its contemporary challenges. Above all, when considering Chinese soft power, the Doctrine of the Mean seems to be the best option. To recall the words of Deng Xiaoping, the cat that catches mice for Beijing, is usually grey.

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