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**Spreading the Chinese Dream: A
Study on Chinese Soft Power
Strategy**

散播中國夢—中國軟實力策略之研究

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Abstract

In recent years, China has made great efforts and advancements in increasing its soft power. It has done this by making massive investments in its mass media network and by enhancing its communication capacity. This thesis studies how the Chinese interpretation of soft power is closely built on Nye's original concept, yet serves has additional purposes such as nation building and enhancing national cohesion. It reviews the respective strategies and efforts of the Chinese government apparatus, the Confucius Institute and Chinese state media in increasing China's soft power. This dissertation concludes with observing China's strengths and weaknesses in its quest for soft power.

摘要

近年來，中國不斷地投入龐大的資金及人力，以增強軟實力。我們可以從中國對大眾傳媒之大量投資，以增加其媒體影響力，發現端倪。在這篇文章中，針對中國關於自身之軟實力詮釋，與約瑟夫·奈爾所提出的原始軟實力概念做出比較，探討了兩者的相似與相異之處，另外也對國家建構和增強民族凝聚力兩大主題進行討論。本文也個別檢視了中國為增加其軟實力，所運用的兩項具體策略及投注之心力：設置孔子學院、以及對官方媒體的經營。最後，以觀察中國在追求增加軟實力這方面上，所擁有的優勢與劣勢歸納出結論。

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Motivation and Purpose

In 2016, the United States spent approximately 661.186 billion USD or 3.29% of its total GDP on military expenditure. It far outranks the world's second largest military spender, China, who allocated an estimated 215.176 billion USD or 1.92% of its GDP to its defense budget. In fact, the United States spent more on its military than the next 9 countries put together and accounts for 36% of the world's total military spending. This is called 'hard power': the use of military or economic coercion to pressure a country into doing what you want.

According to Joseph Nye, one of the most influential figures in contemporary political science, hard power is "the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will".¹ The statistics above prove that the United States, undoubtedly, has the strongest military capabilities in the world and consequently the most hard power. China, which boasts the largest army in the world with its 2,183,000 head strong People's Liberation Army, also possesses a considerable amount of hard power.²

Waging wars, however, is extremely expensive: not just financially but also in terms of lives. While scientific and technological progress has made warfare more advanced and deadlier than ever, it has also greatly increased the cost of it. Today, armed conflict is accompanied with an enormous political and social price. For example, while China's actual number of nuclear warheads is officially a state secret, SIPRI estimates that the PRC has 270

¹ Joseph S Nye, "Propaganda Isn't the Way: Soft Power," *The International Herald Tribune* (2003): 10.

² The International Institute For Strategic Studies, "Chapter Six: Asia," *The Military Balance* 117, no. 1 (2017).

units in its arsenal. China could easily wipe off entire nations with its nuclear weapons in order to achieve its goals, however, the political consequences would be disastrous.³ In addition, countries today face many problems that cannot be solved by military action or economic sanctions. Non-state actors and NGOs, for instance, have the ability to influence the course of international affairs and hold extensive power and influence. Consequently, states must look elsewhere for solutions in addition to hard power.

This is where Nye's concept of 'soft power' comes into play. Describing it as the "second face of power", Nye explains that soft-power in essence means that a country is so attractive and successful, that other countries would not just want to emulate you but also get them to follow your desired outcomes without having to coerce them, as opposed to hard power. In other words, soft power is the "ability to shape others' preferences".⁴

While governments from authoritarian regimes can use hard power and coercion at their will, democratic governments need to answer for their politics and are held accountable by their electorate, meaning they cannot simply start wars or coerce other nations. They can, however, use a strategy of soft power to achieve their desired outcome. Furthermore, if they can create or influence an environment to conform their values, then their actions will be regarded as reasonable. Soft power comes primarily from three resources: a country's culture, its political values, and its foreign policy. However, while hard power is completely in control of governments, soft power is not so much.

Ever since the inception of soft power, many countries have embarked on a journey to increase and develop their influence. Soft power is a tool, and perhaps the most important

³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Global Nuclear Weapons: Modernization Remains the Priority," Accessed January 4, 2018. <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2017/global-nuclear-weapons-modernization-remains-priority>.

⁴ Joseph S Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public affairs, 2004), 5.

one, that allows countries to draw from their cultural and institutional resources in order to spread their values and attract audiences.

Realizing this enormous potential, the government of the People's Republic of China has made massive efforts in recent years in order to join the race for soft power. As an emerging world power, China sees the need to improve its reputation and increase its influence abroad. It has made colossal investments, opened its own media outlets along with hundreds of Confucius Institutes all over the world.

Under Xi Jinping, China has produced a great number of buzzwords and slogans like “One Belt, One Road,” “Three Stricts and Three Honests,” “Four Comprehensives,” and the famous “Chinese Dream”, which served as inspiration for the title of this work and is a core concept in the Xi Jinping thought. The Chinese Dream, while still a vague concept, entails the “Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation” (中華民族偉大復興) after what China regards as a century of humiliation. This rejuvenation does not only encompass the revival of the Chinese economy but also its political power, its culture and its values, which China is so eager to export.

Yet, while Chinese authorities eagerly embrace the idea of soft power, they do not necessarily conform Nye's definition. Much has been written about Chinese soft power, however, during my research I found that much of the academic literature on the topic was outdated (since China has taken different approaches to its foreign policy since the past ten years) and very few works provided a comprehensive overview of how China attempts to obtain soft power. In this thesis, I endeavor to contribute to a better understanding in the field by studying China's interpretation of soft power, its efforts in the domain and the instruments it uses in the process.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 The Chinese Idea of Soft Power

Much has been written on how China interprets the concept of soft power. Li Mingjiang, for example, states that while the core values are in line with Nye's definition- getting one's desired outcome through attraction rather than through coercion- the Chinese understanding deviates slightly on some issues.⁵

Nye identified three main factors of soft power: culture, political values and a country's foreign policy. For China, traditional culture is its most precious source of soft power: it is an ancient civilization with a long history and a myriad of traditions and symbols. Having influenced the Asian continent for thousands of years, it long considered itself the center of the world (中國 or *middle kingdom*). Arguably, China's ancient tributary system which perpetuated this sinocentric world view was also based on soft power.

However, there are some dissenting voices which claim that while Chinese traditional culture is an important source of soft power, it is not necessarily the most important one. The author notes that scholars such as Yu Xintian believe that the domestic cultural revitalization China went through is the reason for China's cultural soft power. China's development model is also cited as a source of soft power; the so-called Beijing-consensus as opposed to the Washington Consensus. However, Li argues that this is not a stable approach since China has not yet established itself as a developed nation.

A first important point in the Chinese understanding of soft power is the emphasis placed on communication and mass media. While Nye states that major media outlets can help

⁵ Mingjiang Li, "China Debates Soft Power," *The Chinese journal of international politics* 2, no. 2 (2008).

clarify government positions on certain issues (and thus increase transparency), he also states that they do not necessarily translate into soft power in the countries they're based in. China believes that the reason why the world is such strongly influenced by Western values is because of the dominance Western countries have in media and mass communications. If China reaches the same communication capacity, it will be able to make its voice heard and compete with these values.

Secondly, Chinese authorities view soft power as a tool of national cohesion and nation-building. The Chinese Communist Party is worried of a weakened Chinese identity if Western liberal ideology is allowed to gradually sneak into society as this could result in a 'peaceful revolution' and thus undermine the authority of the party. In other words: soft power also has a defensive purpose in the Chinese mindset.

Lastly, soft power is considered as an indicator of a nation's prestige and its influence. A hegemon needs to possess the power to enjoy flexibility on the international scene. It should also be the heart of civilization whose beliefs, values and ideas attract people from other countries, otherwise the status of world power is not sustainable in the long term. For China, it is essential to combat the so-called 'China Threat' theory by cultivating a better image and creating an environment that allows it to fully develop itself. It is therefore necessary to have the means to show a Chinese perspective.

One reason why the Chinese Communist Party so eagerly embraces the idea of soft power is because it already builds on a longstanding tradition of propaganda and that the current interpretation of the concept leans more towards the party's existing framework of foreign propaganda than to Nye's concept.

Nye developed his theory as a strategy of what the United States government can do to support, instead of undermine, soft power originating from its cultural products and

political values. The Chinese idea of soft power entails countering Western influence, both domestically and internationally, and is of a more defensive nature; it does not consider soft power as a means that can alter the currently existing structures in international relations.

As opposed to the United States, which is already an established superpower and can simply focus on expanding its sphere of influence through soft power, China is still a developing nation and needs to take into account both international influence and domestic development. This marks the second departure from Nye's traditional theory: the use of soft power for the purpose of nation-building. This is especially the case for the cultural aspect of the matter.

Building on Li's argument, Kingsley Edney argues that the Chinese government attributes three qualities in respect to the importance of increasing cultural soft power: an increasing demand by the Chinese public for cultural products, an increased and stronger role in the international power scramble but above all, it plays an important role in increasing national cohesion and unity.⁶ Cultural construction, along with social, political and economic construction are the four components which make up the "Socialism With Chinese Characteristics" program of the Chinese Communist Party. National cohesion and unity are two essential conditions for the CCP to maintain its political power. So soft power in China has a dual purpose: one is to polish China's reputation and aim for better understanding and the other is to reinforce stability and cement the Party's political standing.

While Li's article is very clear and elaborate, it does not discuss why China's cultural focus is mostly on traditional culture instead of modern contemporary culture. Edney's work is perfectly complementary to Li's publishing in this aspect. Edney indicates that all

⁶ Kingsley Edney, "Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 78 (2012).

cultural products, whether for domestic consumption or export, must be sanctioned by the Chinese Communist Party. In other words: all cultural products must uphold and promote social values that are in line with the Party's agenda. These works might reach a considerable audience in the Chinese domestic market where the government has a monopoly on cultural output, however, in international context they must still compete with other products that do not have to meet certain government requirements and are not subject to censorship and sensitivity when reporting on controversial topics.

Edney contradicts Li's theorem that the Chinese development model is a source of soft power. He states that while others may consider it as such, Chinese authorities themselves have mostly avoided linking soft power to political values. China has focused exclusively on culture, making the two almost synonymous in the Chinese understanding of the concept. This greatly deviates from Nye's theory in which culture is only one of the three components of soft power, along with foreign policy and political values. Edney concludes that China's soft power ambitions are merely an extension of the government's propaganda efforts. Chinese soft power should not only be researched in an international context but also with the domestic situation in mind.

While China has very recently started its massive push for soft power, the Chinese Communist Party has always been sensitive to foreign perceptions. Ever since its rise to power, the Party has endeavored to create a desirable image of itself. However, this image has changed consistently over time: change of leadership brought with it a change of image. In her publication, Wang Hongying has analyzed two publications from the Chinese authorities over the course of over 50 years: the Beijing Review, a weekly news magazine with the purpose to inform foreign readers of China's political and economic development and the Government

Works Reports, which the premier of the country presents to the National People's Congress.⁷ Wang found that there were four images that were promoted throughout the Communist Party's leadership: China as a peace-loving country, China as an antihegemony, China as a developing nation and China as a victim of foreign aggression. These images have served for both identity building but also as influential factors in Chinese foreign policy. For example: China's image as a developing country used to be a defining feature in Sino-Japanese relations and Chinese officials protested heavily to internal discussions about reduction of Japanese Official Development Aid.

Furthermore, after an analysis of American public opinion, Wang found that the general public did not always perceive China the way that authorities intend it to. While they agreed with some projections such as China being a socialist country as well as a developing country and a major power, Americans have never seen China as a peaceful-loving country. On the contrary, many see China as the opposite of an antihegemony and perceive some of its actions towards neighboring countries as bullying; they do not see China as an international cooperator but rather as an impeding element. Moreover, the public holds views that are not desired by authorities: that of China being an authoritarian state.⁸

Wang's work was published in 2003, the year in which Jiang Zemin stepped down in favor of his successor Hu Jintao. Consequently, Wang's analysis does not include Hu's leadership and Xi's leadership from 2012. Furthermore, the sample taken for public opinion was only based on American points of view and did not extend to Europe, Asia or any other continents.

⁷ Hongying Wang, "National Image Building and Chinese Foreign Policy," *China: An International Journal* 1, no. 01 (2003).

⁸ Ingrid d'Hooghe, "Public Diplomacy in the People's Republic of China," in *The New Public Diplomacy* (Springer, 2005).

However, the article is extremely important in showing that the defining features of Chinese soft power ambitions have been continuously shifting over time, depending on the Party leadership, the international political situation and period of time. It also shows that the intended target group of China's soft power push, foreign audiences, don't necessarily perceive China positively.

1.2.2 Instruments and Institutions of Soft Power

1.2.2.1 Institutional Structure

China mostly uses traditional public diplomacy instruments to enhance its soft power such as media, internet, large-scale events, projects and so on. Roger Creemers' work does an excellent job in dissecting the bodies responsible for China's public diplomacy.⁹

In fact, there is no single institution in charge of public diplomacy in the Chinese government. Instead, the responsibility is shared in a structure of Byzantine complexity between the Central Leading Group for Propaganda and Ideology, the agency of the CCP's Politburo in charge of nationwide propaganda and information, and the State Council Information Office (SCIO), an organization under direct control of the State Council (the chief administrative authority of the People's Republic of China), as the two main bodies.

The SCIO has four main purposes: to disseminate China's perspective of matters throughout the rest of the world, to counteract against anti-Chinese propaganda, to obstruct support for the Taiwanese independence movement and to explain Chinese foreign policy to the general public abroad. It periodically publishes white papers on sensitive issues such as human rights, Tibet and Taiwan in which it clarifies the position of the Chinese government.

⁹ Rogier Creemers, "Never the Twain Shall Meet? Rethinking China's Public Diplomacy Policy," *Chinese Journal of Communication* 8, no. 3 (2015).

The SCIO is overseen by the Central Propaganda Department (CPD) and is by far the largest body of the Chinese propaganda machine. It is not just in charge of propaganda abroad but also in domestic spheres.

Public diplomacy is also an important duty of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), which has dedicated offices in Chinese missions and embassies. The MOFA has no say in decisions or policy making and is simply in charge of the work “on the ground”.¹⁰

Other official organs in charge of disseminating “foreign propaganda” are the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the Bureau for External Cultural Relations of the Ministry of Culture. While these different bodies frequently work together, Chinese public diplomacy is thus very decentralized and divided.

Agencies such as the SCIO were originally established to disseminate political propaganda. With the invention and widespread acceptance of the concept of soft power, China's public diplomacy and image-building efforts have shifted from pure politics to a strategy that also encompasses Chinese culture. Before China's economic reforms public diplomacy was only tasked with improving China's image abroad. Today, in addition to image-building, it has to justify and uphold the legitimacy of the CPC's rule over China (through national cohesion, as discussed earlier), attract foreign capital and to soothe worries about China's economic and political rise.

The author's work makes it clear that the task of public diplomacy has been allotted entirely by the Chinese bureaucratic system. This results in a top-down, state-driven approach, giving authorities full control of image-building and cultural exports but at the same time

¹⁰ Ingrid d'Hooghe, "The Expansion of China's Public Diplomacy System," in *Soft Power in China* (Springer, 2011), 21.

heavily undermining the credibility of Chinese communication. However, this is not the only challenge that China's soft power strategies face. I will discuss these in the next chapters.

1.2.2.2 Communication and Mass Media

China's spectacular growth has provided it with a very powerful tool to implement its public diplomacy goals: money. While there are no official numbers released by the Chinese authorities, it is estimated that the annual budget for external propaganda consists of approximately 10 billion USD; in comparison, the US budget for public diplomacy in 2014 amounted to a mere 666 million USD.¹¹

As Li concluded in his work: the Chinese interpretation of soft power identifies mass media outlets and a strong communication capacity as a precondition for a powerful nation. Consequently, much of this budget is allocated to the "Big Four" as Yang Jiechi the State Counsellor of China calls them: Xinhua News Agency, Central China Television (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI), and China Daily.

Sun explains the importance of China's media ambitions on the basis of three perceptions of the role of communication in contemporary society.¹² Firstly, the conception of communication as a role of symbolic power. This refers to the ability to react in favor of one's own interest and to manipulate processes to achieve a desired outcome. Here, Sun draws parallels with Li's work, who stated that China perceives the massive Western influence on the world today as a consequence of the West's media domination.

¹¹ David Shambaugh, "China's Soft-Power Push," *Foreign Aff.* 94 (2015).

¹² Wanning Sun, "Mission Impossible? Soft Power, Communication Capacity, and the Globalization of Chinese Media," *International Journal of Communication* 4 (2009).

Secondly, the perception of communication as a credibility-gaining process. Based on Daniel Hallin's Spheres Theory, Sun argues that Chinese media attain credibility in the sphere of consensus but lose this edge when deviating to other spheres. In other words: while state media retain reliability in the eyes of international audiences when reporting on noncontroversial issues, their coverage will be questioned the further they move to more contentious topics. Like Nye also stated, this is a consequence of state media being controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. This is an enormous challenge for Chinese authorities which strive to change this.

Lastly, China maintains a "transmission view" of communication, meaning it sees communication as cultural process in which it can "shape and amend" reality over a distance to control viewers. Therefore, it is crucial for China to have an extensive and far-reaching media platform to reach large audiences.

Sun sees 2008 as a watershed in the history of Chinese soft power. The 2008 Olympic Games placed China in the spotlight of Western media, resulting in extensive coverage of the country's human rights situation and domestic incidents such as the anti-government protests in Tibet. The Chinese Communist Party perceived the negative press as anti-Chinese and became aware that economic boom and newfound political power does not automatically grant it a positive perception around the world. Furthermore, Chinese authorities realized that the country cannot wait until Western media change negative attitudes towards the China and decided to make a push for a more 'correct' narrative. Consequently, it adopted an aggressive media strategy to transmit as much media content as possible to an audience as large as possible.

Typical for Chinese political coverage is that it does not cover the political process but rather the results and achievements of government policies. Similarly, domestic incidents are always reported from a positive, partisan angle. Unlike parliament-held discussions in other

countries, the Great Hall of the People is shown to flaunt harmony and unison. An image of stability and unanimity is considered extremely important for the Chinese Communist Party to maintain the one-party state. However, China needs not only to overcome a geographical distance but also a cultural and a political distance with its foreign audience. It needs to present itself as a nation whose values and ethics are similar to that of its international competitors. Rigid censorship, unwillingness to cover controversial topics and the lack of opposing voices in the country's political process heavily undermine the credibility of Chinese media.

Sun concludes that in the current climate, it might be near impossible for Chinese media to become objective and transparent institutions or even to appear as such. The catalyst for China's decision to rapidly expand its communication agency is the perception that the country's image is predominantly shaped by foreign (Western) media. However, the largest obstacle China faces is not the lack of communication capacity or the inadequacy to understand foreign audiences; it is the inability to adhere to international reporting standards which are not constrained by government or ideology. While China has ambitious plans to expand its soft power and break through Western media domination, it might still find itself unable to win favorable perceptions abroad.

The author's work does an excellent job in explaining China's media push from a communicative theory perspective, it does not discuss the extent of Chinese state media development. For exact statistics and numbers about the current extent of the networks' reach, I will have to refer to their respective homepages.

1.2.2.3 Confucius Institutes

Aggressive media expansion, however, is not the only soft-power strategy China pursues. As mentioned before, culture, and by extension language, plays a fundamental role in this and the Confucius Institute is by far the most powerful instrument at the government's

disposition. James Paradise describes the Confucius institute as a project to encourage Chinese language learning and appreciation of Chinese culture.¹³ Yet at the same time, it is part of a grand scheme to win hearts and minds for political ambitions.

The Confucius Institute is an entity within and under direct supervision of the Office of the Chinese Language Council International (漢辦 - *Hanban*). The Hanban itself consists of members from twelve different ministries and commissions, ranging from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture. Hanban is also responsible for other educational duties such as the Chinese Proficiency Exam (HSK) and teaching qualification and evaluation. It also runs a Communications Division which is in charge of international partnerships and exchange projects. Hanban pursues three main goals: Chinese language education, fostering cultural exchange and the promotion of trade and business.

While the Confucius Institute is modeled on the Alliance Française and the Goethe Institute, unlike its French and German counterparts, Confucius Institutes are generally established through partnerships between Chinese and foreign academic institutions. The Chinese government generously provides funds for the project and as a result, the Institutes are generally located on university campus ground, providing them with a unique and advantageous position compared to their competitors. This, however, is not without controversy.

Paradise points out that partnerships between institutions stipulate that the Institute must be “consistent with laws and regulations of China” and not work against the interests of the country. This leads to fears of interference with academic research and conflicts of interests.

¹³ James F Paradise, "China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power," *Asian survey* 49, no. 4 (2009).

It is for this exact reason that there is an absence of Confucius Institutes at the world's most prestigious academic institutions such as Harvard and Yale.

The author comes to the conclusion that the Confucius Institute should be seen as a type of 'impression management', attempting to create a positive image of China. However, it is not purely a soft-power project: while it is not based on coercion, it does rely on financial support from the Chinese authorities. Consequently, this provides Hanban with the ability to greatly influence language and cultural activities. Ultimately, language education alone is not enough to expand China's soft-power and Paradise points out that per Nye's definition, China's success will be based on its attractiveness as a country. Nonetheless, even if Confucius Institutes fail to help increase Chinese soft-power, they are still extremely valuable in creating networks and partnerships with foreign academic institutions.

Roger Creemers comes to the same conclusion and emphasizes that textbooks and learning materials in the Confucius Institute are all provided by the Chinese government yet notes that the project has not yet developed "an overtly political agenda."¹⁴

Gill and Huang's work, on the other hand, disputes Creemers' claim.¹⁵ One argument raised is that the Confucius Institute exclusively teaches simplified Chinese characters, which the authors see as an attempt to diminish Taiwanese international influence. In addition, maps in Hanban-published textbooks portray Taiwan as part of the People's Republic of China.

Hartig also contests the alleged impartiality of the Confucius Institutes.¹⁶ After conducting interviews with a number of executive staff members of Confucius Institutes of

¹⁴ Creemers.

¹⁵ Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of Chinese 'Soft Power'," *Survival* 48, no. 2 (2006).

¹⁶ Falk Hartig, "Communicating China to the World: Confucius Institutes and China's Strategic Narratives," *Politics* 35, no. 3-4 (2015).

several countries, the author reveals that while so far there have not been any explicit directives from Hanban to ban activities, many of the interviewees admitted that they did take in account the feelings of the Chinese. Hartig concludes that Confucius Institute staff members and Chinese Studies' faculty members consequently risk self-censorship. Moreover, Hartig argues that the Institute fabricates an untruthful and "correct" view of China by deliberately omitting sensitive issues and thus not presenting the "real China" to its audience. Moreover, China's so-called delicate issues are widely - and often critically- covered by media. This is extremely problematic from a narratological perspective: a narrative must always be in accord with events as presented to the narrator's audience. Any disconnection with the introduced narrative will affect the narrator's credibility and trustworthiness, resulting into reluctance of the audience to further engage with them in the future. The author goes even further, stating that while China wants to present a narrative of a developing but harmonious and peaceful nation, the international audience perceives it as bully and an increasingly hostile country.

So while Confucius Institutes may help disseminate Chinese language education throughout the world, they are less likely to benefit China's foreign policy goals. Here, Hartig draws a conclusion parallel to that of Paradise.

1.3 Methodology

This essay will be a qualitative study based on existing literature which I will combine with recent data from newer publications to ensure my research is up to date. I will seek to answer the following questions:

1. How does China interpret soft power?
2. How does China obtain soft power?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese soft power?

This study is entirely based on the concept of soft power. As I have mentioned earlier in this work, my first objective is to research the Chinese interpretation of soft power, which I will study using the original soft power theory as my analytical framework.

Through the literature above, I have identified several major instruments of China's soft power strategy. These are mass media outlets, the Confucius Institutes and China's host diplomacy. I will elaborately discuss each of them using existing academic literature and current reports.

Lastly, I will finish my study by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of China's soft power strategy. This will be done by looking at how China's actions are perceived in relation to their soft power strategies.

The limitations of this study, among other things, include a language barrier. My knowledge of Chinese is insufficient to process plenty Chinese language resources. Additionally, there is data that is not publicly released by Chinese authorities. While, for example, we can find numbers about the number of CCTV offices and the number of people it reaches worldwide, there are no official statistics about the actual viewership of the channels.

1.4 Outline of Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction and literature review

The first chapter of the study will serve to give some general background on the issue. Why is soft power necessary and why does it matter now in today's international politics? I will introduce the topic of this study and the main ideas. I will then continue to present and discuss the content, the methodology and the general conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2: Soft Power and the Chinese Dream

2.1 The Concept of Soft Power

2.2 The Chinese Idea of Soft Power

2.3 The Chinese Dream

What does soft power actually mean and how do nations obtain it? As my analytical framework for this question is the original theory by Joseph Nye, I will introduce this concept to the reader. Once I have done this, I can proceed to highlight the differences between what soft power means in the West and what it means in the Chinese mindset. After all, Chinese soft power varies strongly from its Western definition and does not only serve to expand Chinese influence abroad but also domestically. The accentuation of Chinese soft power on elements such as mass media is very different from the original concept.

Chapter 3: Institutional Structure, Strategy and Instruments

3.1 Institutional Structure

3.2 Mass Communication and Media

3.3 The Confucius Institute

3.4 Host Diplomacy

As opposed to the United States and other countries, cultural products from China do not have a carte blanche and Chinese authorities retain strict control over domestic creations and publications. Consequently, the brunt of the task of generating soft power lands on the shoulders of the Chinese government. How do authorities expand Chinese influence and what do they do to promote Chinese culture throughout the world? Furthermore, what does China hope to achieve with this influence? Mass communication, the Confucius Institute and host diplomacy are the major instruments of the country's soft power strategy. I will discuss them to study their role and individual importance as part of China's diplomacy.

Chapter 4: Opportunities and challenges of Chinese Soft Power

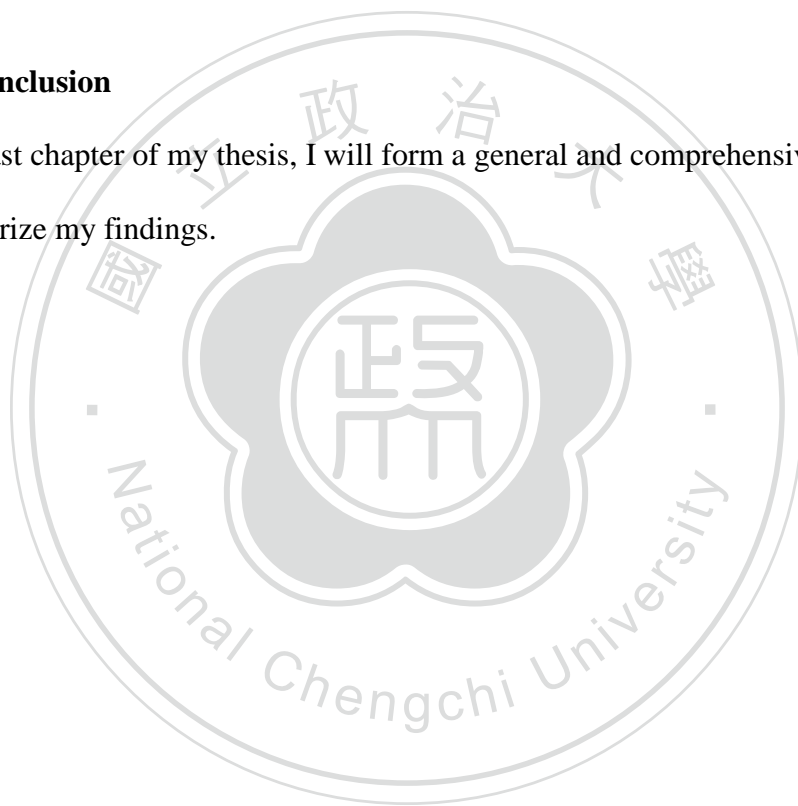
4.1 Strengths

4.2 Weaknesses

Lastly, I would like to identify what opportunities and what obstacles arise in China's pursuit of soft power. Does China's nondemocratic system of governance face the same challenges as liberal democracies when it comes to gaining soft power?

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the last chapter of my thesis, I will form a general and comprehensive conclusion in which I summarize my findings.



2. Soft Power and the Chinese Dream

The concept of soft power has found great resonance with Chinese authorities, yet through a process of adaptation and modification, the Chinese version of varies to a certain extent with Nye's original conception. As I will discuss, Chinese soft power does not only serve as an external factor but also as an internal one. Finally, I will examine the hallmark of the Xi administration: the Chinese dream before concluding the chapter with a brief summary.

2.1 The Concept of Soft Power

The now well-known term of soft-power was conceived in 1990 by political scientist Joseph Nye in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, in which he discussed how the United States, through influence, not through violence, established the post-World War II international order that still exists today.

Nye revisited and further honed his conceptualization in 2004 in his next book, *Soft Power: The means to Success in World Politics*, in which he elaborates on the multiple faces of power. The first face, hard power, relies on incentives and threats or “carrots and sticks” as Nye analogizes.¹⁷ In other words, countries can coerce compliance and obedience from other nations by threatening the use of economic duress or military action. On the other hand, the so-called second face of power, soft power, is “the ability to shape the preferences of others”.¹⁸

Complacency through soft power does not happen through coercion. Rather, it takes place through attraction and a desire to emulate said country. Or as Joseph Nye put it in his 2011 book *The Future of Power*: “Hard power is push, soft power is pull.”¹⁹ A favorable soft

¹⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power : The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs), 5.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Joseph S Nye, "The Future of Power," (2011).

power policy can replace the need for hard power, which is extremely costly both financially and politically. However, accumulation of soft power is a lengthy, costly and cautious process that involves persuasion and captivating the hearts and interests of foreign audiences. Global image and international prestige are crucial elements in this. Nonetheless, while governments often have a monopoly on hard power, soft power is less tractable by authorities. Sources of soft power exist both in the private as in the public sector.

Even companies can participate in enhancing a country's soft power. Ikea, for example, is known to benefit and enhance Sweden's nation brand among international audiences. Sweden possesses a great deal of soft power, has a very favorable image and has continuously ranked within the top ten in Portland's Soft Power 30.²⁰ Former Swedish diplomat and director-general of the Swedish Institute Olle Wästberg once said "Ikea is doing more for the image of Sweden than all governmental efforts together (...) To visit Ikea is to visit Sweden."²¹

The time-intensive nature of soft power poses a challenge for politicians but also the electorates, who wish to see fast results. Moreover, as opposed to hard power, the outcome of soft power is not under the control of governments but rather of the intended target.

Soft power originates from three tenets: a country's culture, political values and its policies, both home and abroad.²²

Culture is the pattern of social behavior, rituals and norms of a country. It can be found in many shapes: high culture, which comprises arts, literature, history, education, philosophy et cetera, or popular culture such as mass entertainment (e.g. Hollywood). A

²⁰ Jonathan McClory, "The Soft Power 30: A Global Ranking of Soft Power, 2017," *Washington: Portland* (2017).

²¹ Olle Wästberg, "The Symbiosis of Sweden & Ikea," *Public Diplomacy Magazine* 2 (2009).

²² Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 11.

country's culture can only be a soft power asset if it is attractive. A culture is more likely to attract if it encompasses values that are shared with other societies.²³ Narrow-minded cultures, on the other hand, will be less effective in generating soft power as they are less attractive to foreign audiences.

This also goes for the second pillar of soft power: political values. If a country shares universal values, it is more likely to achieve understanding and attraction abroad. The United States of America, for example, possesses values admired by countries all over the world, many of which share similar ideas such as democracy, human rights and freedom of speech. These have been extremely crucial for Washington in captivating support of the international audience for its policies.²⁴ Yet it is important to note that the exact ideas that help enhance a country's soft power in one part of the world may be loathed elsewhere in the world and result in a decrease there. Katzenstein and Keohane already argued that in traditionalist and conservative societies, American popular culture is a contributing force for anti-Americanism around the world.²⁵

Lastly, a country's foreign policy is also a source of soft power if it is perceived as fair and legitimate. Authorities often employ a strategy of Official Development Assistance (ODA) towards developing countries in an attempt to boost influence and soft power abroad. China has many assets that could serve as a source of soft power: its massive economic growth that lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty inspires much admiration in both developed and developing countries alike.²⁶

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ G John Ikenberry, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (JSTOR, 2004).

²⁵ Peter J Katzenstein and Robert Owen Keohane, *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Cornell University Press, 2007), 121.

²⁶ Asit K; Hartley Biswas, Kris, "China's Soft Power Struggles," (<http://theasiadialogue.com/2017/11/16/chinas-soft-power-struggles/>.)

Similarly, when on June 1, 2017 President Donald Trump announced the United States' withdrawal from the 2015 Paris Agreement, premier Li Keqiang reaffirmed the Chinese commitment to the agreement, capitalizing on the leadership vacuum left by the United States. Not only will this allow China to take the lead in issues regarding climate change, it will also give Beijing the power to make a wide range of decisions, ranging from international standards regarding trade and environmental laws to infrastructural projects.²⁷ A move which, without a doubt, will increase Chinese soft power and influence.²⁸

For Nye, public diplomacy is how governments can best persuade foreign audiences. In his own words, public diplomacy is “an instrument that governments use to mobilize these (soft power) resources (i.e. values, culture and policies) to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries, rather than merely their governments. Public diplomacy tries to attract by drawing attention to these potential resources through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth.”²⁹

While there is no obvious way to measure the soft power of a country, there are ways to assess the success of a country's soft power policies, such as the number of students it attracts, the scale of consumption of its media abroad and its influence and relevance on the international political stage.³⁰

Nye also stresses credibility and reputations of governments as important factors in public diplomacy. Public diplomacy efforts that are perceived as propaganda do not improve a

²⁷ David E.; Perlez Sanger, Jane, "Trump Hands the Chinese a Gift: The Chance for Global Leadership," (accessed June 29, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/us/politics/climate-accord-trump-china-global-leadership.html>.)

²⁸ Luke Kemp, "Better out Than In," *Nature Climate Change* 7, no. 7 (2017).
Carolyn Beeler, "China's Looking to the Eu for a Partner in Climate Action," (2017), (accessed June 29, 2018, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-06-02/chinas-looking-eu-partner-climate-action>.)

²⁹ Joseph S Nye Jr, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The annals of the American academy of political and social science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 105.

³⁰ *** Singh, J.P. and MacDonald S. (2017) 'Soft Power Today: Measuring the Influences and Effects'.

country's standing, on the contrary, they could erode a country's reputation and work counterproductively.³¹ Gas and Seiter also argue in their 2009 publication that in public diplomacy, the concept of credibility is extremely important but varies among culture and depends very much on context, circumstances and situations.³² Chitty et al. add that for successful evaluation and execution with foreign audiences perceptions are also very important. In addition to credibility and reputation, variables such as political and political compatibility also play a role.³³

Finally, both soft power and hard power can be combined: this is called 'smart power'. The Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, which incidentally is co-chaired by Joseph S. Nye, defines smart power as "an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships, and institutions of all levels to expand one's influence and establish legitimacy of one's action".³⁴ The United States invasion of Afghanistan under George W. Bush, for instance, was an obvious display of hard power. Soon after though, the Bush administration saw the need to implement various development programs such as basic healthcare and education, along with its peacekeeping missions to counterweigh Al-Qaeda radicalization to ensure regional stabilization.³⁵

³¹ Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 106.

³² Robert H Gass and John S Seiter, "Credibility and Public Diplomacy," *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy* (2009): 162.

³³ N. Chitty et al., *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power* (Taylor & Francis, 2016), 78.

³⁴ Richard Lee Armitage and Joseph S Nye, *Csis Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America* (CSIS, 2007), 7.

³⁵ Beth Hill Skinner, "The Need for Smart Power in Afghanistan: How Al Qaeda & the Taliban Are "Outsmarting" the Us," (accessed June 28, 2018, <http://globalsecuritystudies.com/Skinner%20Smart.pdf>)

2.2 The Chinese Idea of Soft Power

Since the start of its conception, the idea of soft power immediately found resonance with the Chinese Communist Party. With China's economic growth and its increasing presence on the political stage, authorities saw the need to counter fears about the Chinese ascendance, the so-called "China threat theory".³⁶ In the words of Ding, Chinese soft power serves to "deal with foreign challenges and create a friendly international environment."³⁷

The concept of soft power was first presented in China in 1993 in a journal publication by Wang Huning (王滄寧), one of the Chinese Communist Party's principal theorists and current member of China's Politburo Standing Committee. Since then, the idea has been immensely popular among scholars and government representatives and even made its way into the mainstream.

At the 17th Party Congress, President Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) first explicitly mentioned soft power, stating that "culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength. [The Party] must stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation, and enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests."³⁸ From there on, Chinese soft power efforts have increased immensely.

³⁶ Yiwei Wang, "Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power," *The annals of the American academy of political and social science* 616, no. 1 (2008).

³⁷ Sheng Ding, "Analyzing Rising Power from the Perspective of Soft Power: A New Look at China's Rise to the Status Quo Power," *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 64 (2010): 266.

³⁸ Jintao Hu, "Hu Jintao's Report at 17th Party Congress: Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive for New Victories in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects," (accessed June 30, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-10/25/content_6225977.htm.)

China relies heavily on public diplomacy for its soft power strategies. By no means did China start investing in public diplomacy only when the soft power was conceptualized. Indeed, the Chinese Communist party builds on a long tradition of political propaganda and has always been aware of the benefits of a positive image abroad.

In the 1930s, when it was still a guerilla army obscure to the Western world, the Party invited Edward Snow to write about their efforts against the Nationalist troops. Snow then published the book *Red Star over China*, which depicted Mao Zedong (毛澤東) as a national hero and the book rose to international fame. It was later translated to Chinese and became essential in winning over thousands of young Chinese urbanites.³⁹

After 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded, Mao selectively invited scholars and journalists to visit the country and report on their findings. In addition, the government produced foreign-language publications to inform the outside world about the evolution of the People's Republic and about the benefits of communism. Even during the country's decades-long isolation, Chinese authorities still published and distributed magazines such as *Beijing Review* and *China Reconstructs* (now titled *China Today*) all over the world.⁴⁰

Wang asserts that were four images that Chinese authorities consistently portrayed, regardless of change in leadership: China as a peace-loving country, China as an antihegemony, China as a developing nation and China as a victim of foreign aggression.⁴¹ In addition, there have been specific images tied to certain leaderships: under Mao, for example, China projected itself as a socialist country and a supporter of revolution. The reformation era left these images behind and portrayed the country as a major power and an international cooperator. Naturally,

³⁹ The New York Times, "Red Star over China," (<https://www.nytimes.com/1989/02/26/books/l-red-star-over-china-977389.html>.)

⁴⁰ Wang, 50.

⁴¹ Ibid.

many of these images are strategic and serve as cornerstones for national and international image building but they also hold authorities' self-held images of the country. Not only do these images help shape China's reputation abroad, they also influence Chinese foreign policy.⁴²

China's recent foreign policy initiatives, however, could not have been more different than under previous chairmanships. Whereas previously it always adhered to Deng Xiaoping's (鄧小平) famous dictum "hide your strength and bide your time" (韜光養晦), recently it has launched a vast array of political and economic strategies to catapult China onto the world stage. These include economic programs such as the Go Out Policy (走出去戰略) and the One Belt One Road Initiative (一帶一路) but also major charm offensives to enhance China's image abroad.

2.2.1 Differences with Nye's concept

Nye identified three main factors of soft power: culture, political values and a country's foreign policy. For China, traditional culture is its most precious source of soft power: it is an ancient civilization with a long history and a myriad of traditions and symbols.⁴³ Having influenced the Asian continent for thousands of years, it long considered itself the center of the world (中國 or middle kingdom). Arguably, China's ancient tributary system which perpetuated this sinocentric world view was also based on soft power.

Much has been written on how China interprets the concept of soft power. While the core values are in line with Nye's definition- getting one's desired outcome through

⁴² Ibid., 71.

⁴³ Joseph S Nye, "The Rise of China's Soft Power," *Wall Street Journal Asia* 29 (2005).

attraction rather than through coercion- the Chinese understanding deviates slightly on some issues.

Firstly, the Chinese idea of soft power doesn't lend itself just to nation branding but also to nation building.⁴⁴ Whereas projections of soft power are usually directed to an external audience, for China, soft power also serves domestic purposes. Hu's remarks at the 17th Party Congress reveal the versatile nature of Chinese soft power. While China indeed must enhance its reputation and elevate its standing abroad through more soft power and culture, it must also fulfill the spiritual needs of its citizens and enhance national cohesion (民族凝聚力).⁴⁵

Reinvigoration of Chinese culture is a core element in the Chinese government's approach and is part of the so-called Chinese Dream. High level officials often express the need to "restore" Chinese culture to help people cope in today's global society.⁴⁶ The Chinese government sees foreign influences, especially Western liberal ideology, as a threat as they might weaken and undermine the Party's authority or possibly even lead to a 'peaceful revolution.'⁴⁷ As such, it is important to construct and anchor a robust 'Chinese identity' in today's society to ensure stability and cultural safety (文化建設).⁴⁸ The construction of this cultural identity is part of the CCP's broader thought of "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics", of which the Chinese dream is also part of. As a result: generating soft power will not just attract foreign targets but also enhance national unity through authorities' propaganda efforts.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Li, 288.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 296.

⁴⁶ Michael Barr, "Mythe Et Réalité Du Soft Power De La Chine," *Études internationales* 41, no. 4 (2010): 510.

⁴⁷ Li Mingjiang, "China Debates Soft Power," *The Chinese journal of international politics* 2, no. 2 (2008): 302.

⁴⁸ Jukka Aukia, "The Cultural Soft Power of China: A Tool for Dualistic National Security," *Journal of China and International Relations* 2, no. 1 (2014): 82.

⁴⁹ Edney, 913.

Domestically, soft power has another defensive function: it must help to uphold the ruling Communist Party's legitimacy among its over 1.4 billion people. Edney states that the Chinese Communist Party has a legitimacy problem, based on the increasing number of protests that take place and China's domestic security spending.⁵⁰ Indeed, Chinese domestic security costs have risen exponentially, even exceeding China's military spending. Table 2.1 reveals that China's domestic security spending surpassed military spending for the first time in 2010. In 2017, however, it was estimated to have risen to 118.6% of the total number of external defense expenditures.⁵¹

Table 2.1: Spending on external and internal security in million RMB

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
External de- fense	355,491	417,876	495,110	533,337	602,791	669,192	741,062	828,950	908,784	976,584	1,046,000 (est.)
Domestic se- curity	348,616	405,976	474,409	551,770	630,427	711,159	778,593	835,723	937,996	1,103,198	1,240,000
Dom. security as share of ext. de- fense	98.1%	97.2%	95.8%	103.5%	104.6%	106.3%	105.1%	100.8%	103.2%	113.0%	118.6% (est.)

Source: Adrian Zenz. "China's Domestic Security Spending: An Analysis of Available Data." The Jamestown Foundation-China Brief 21 (2018).

Secondly, China is home to 55 ethnic minority groups in addition to the Han majority, many of which live in peripheral areas vital to China's national security.⁵² These areas include Inner Mongolia (內蒙古自治區), the Tibet Autonomous Region (西藏自治區) but also the Uyghur Autonomous Region (新疆維吾爾自治區). The latter two are areas that have proven to be problematic in the eyes of Chinese authorities and, unsurprisingly, are also the regions with the highest domestic security expenditure per capita. Table 2.2 illustrates the explosive growth, almost double the amount, in spending in Xinjiang in one year. Tibet tops the list with 3,137 RMB per capita, a figure that approximates US domestic security

⁵⁰ Kingsley Edney, "Building National Cohesion and Domestic Legitimacy: A Regime Security Approach to Soft Power in China," *Politics* 35, no. 3-4 (2015): 5.

⁵¹ Adrian Zenz, "China's Domestic Security Spending: An Analysis of Available Data," *The Jamestown Foundation-China Brief* 21 (2018): 6.

⁵² The People's Republic of China - The State Council, "Ethnic Groups in China," (accessed June 30, 2018. http://english.gov.cn/archive/china_abc/2014/08/27/content_281474983873388.htm.)

expenditures (3,220 RMB per capita), despite the lower human resource and technology costs in China. This highlights the Chinese Communist Party’s legitimacy issues, especially in areas with ethnic minorities or majorities. Thus, it is in authorities’ interest if they are able to provide the cultural capital for minorities to identify themselves as Chinese or allow them to be receptive of the Han people. As such, the Party’s goal for national cohesion is closely related to its quest for unquestionable legitimacy, which it hopes to achieve through cultural soft power.

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**Table 2.2: Domestic security spending
in RMB per capita for select regions**

Region	2016	2017	Increase
United States	3,160 (est.)	3,220 (est.)	2.0% (est.)
TAR	2,890	3,137 (est.)	9.3% (est.)
Xinjiang	1,255	2,417	92.8%
Beijing	1,651	2,191	32.7%
Russia	2,170 (est.)	2,060 (est.)	-4.8% (est.)
Sichuan Tibetan Regions	1,450		
Qinghai	1,197	1,519	26.9%
Shanghai	1,393	1,471	5.6%
Tianjin	1,136		
Guangdong	969	1,065	9.9%
Zhejiang and Hainan	928		
Inner Mongolia	882		
Chongqing	742		
Guizhou	703	753	7.0%
Average of all provinces and regions	672	763	13.5%
Yunnan	615	721	17.1%
Gansu	600	651	8.6%
Sichuan	520		
Jiangxi	499	560	12.2%
Hebei	451	497	10.4%
Henan	376		

The average of all provinces and regions excludes central level spending.

Source: Adrian Zenz. "China’s Domestic Security Spending: An Analysis of Available Data." The Jamestown Foundation-China Brief 21 (2018).

⁵³ Barr, 82.

Thirdly, Chinese understanding of soft power further lays a strong emphasis on communication capabilities and mass media. While Nye states that major media outlets can help clarify government positions on certain issues (and thus increase transparency), he also states that they do not necessarily translate into soft power in the countries they're based in.⁵⁴ China, however, considers achieving a global communication capacity a vital part of its soft power strategy. Both Chinese scholars and officials see Western 'cultural hegemony' as a result of Western domination in the media landscape.⁵⁵

Officials believe that if China is to become a hegemon, it needs a communication capacity that corresponds to the role it wants to play on the world stage. This is apparent from a 2009 quote from former propaganda director and standing member of the Politburo Liu Yunshan (劉雲山), who said "Communication capability determines the power of influence, the right of speech determines initiative, and transparency determines credibility."⁵⁶

Joshua Cooper Ramo once described China as suffering from a problem of "image sovereignty".⁵⁷ This is an opinion that is shared with Chinese authorities as well, who believe that China's negative reputation is not self-inflicted, but rather is constructed by foreign media. In 2008, the Beijing Olympics placed China in the international spotlight. Contrary to Chinese expectations, international media coverage focused on many negative aspects of the country, criticizing authorities' human rights record, their treatment of migrant workers and accusing the Chinese government of violently suppressing the protests that were taking place in Tibet at the time. Hollywood director Steven Spielberg withdrew from his position as advisor to the

⁵⁴ Nye Jr, 107.

⁵⁵ Mingjiang Li, "Soft Power in Chinese Discourse: Popularity and Prospect," (2008): 27.

⁵⁶ CNTV, "'From Down-to-Earth Journalist to Top Cpc Leadership'," (accessed March 22, 2018, <http://english.cntv.cn/special/newleaders/liyunshan02.html>.)

⁵⁷ Joshua Cooper Ramo, *Brand China* (Foreign Policy Centre, 2007), 13.

Olympics in protest of the government's support to Sudan in the Darfur conflict, causing major embarrassment to Beijing.⁵⁸ Chinese authorities perceived Western media coverage – of what was supposed to be China's prestigious event – hostile and anti-Chinese.⁵⁹

Sun describes this moment as “an important watershed for China.”⁶⁰ Chinese authorities came to the realization that the country's economic growth did not automatically translate into respect or admiration from the international community. On the contrary, it had further fueled uneasiness. Furthermore, the CCP decided it could no longer wait for Western media to change their perspectives about the country: it had to take matters in own hands and build its own platform to advance its viewpoint.⁶¹ This inspired China's massive charm offensive that was to take place over the coming years. Authorities invest massive amounts of money each year. In 2018, the Financial Times reported that the Chinese government's budget for “external propaganda” (對外宣傳) amounted to a stellar Rmb 60 billion (\$9.5 billion), double the amount of its 2011 budget (Rmb 30 billion), two years before Xi Jinping's ascent to power.⁶² In comparison, the US Department of State reports a mere \$2.03 billion allocation to public diplomacy for its 2016 fiscal year.⁶³

However, China still faces many challenges in its quest for soft power and as Raswnley points out in his 2007 work: “Cultural and economic diplomacy do not easily or necessarily translate into the realization of foreign policy objectives.”⁶⁴ How China exactly

⁵⁸ Austin Ramzy, "Beijing's Spielberg Problem," (<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1713718,00.html>).

⁵⁹ Sun, 58.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 59.

⁶¹ Ibid..

⁶² Charles; Ju Clover, Cherry Fei, "China's Diplomacy Budget Doubles under Xi Jinping," (<https://www.ft.com/content/2c750f94-2123-11e8-a895-1ba1f72c2c11>.)

⁶³ Katherine Brown, Chris Hensen, and Palak Bhandari, "Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting," *Washington, DC: Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy* (2015).

⁶⁴ Gary D. Rawnsley, "A Survey of China's Public Diplomacy," (accessed March 29, 2018, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/survey-china%E2%80%99s-public-diplomacy>.)

organizes its soft power efforts will be subject of research in the following chapters of this thesis.

2.3 The Chinese Dream

The Chinese Dream (中國夢), which serves as the title for this work, is not an entirely new concept, though it was only popularized when it became the signature slogan of the Xi presidency. At the 12th National People's Congress, during his first public speech as President of China, Xi first elaborated on his interpretation of the concept, stating that the Chinese dream means "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It embodies achieving prosperity for the country, renewal of the nation and happiness for citizens. The Chinese dream, after all, is the dream of the people."⁶⁵ In May of the same year he called upon the youth of the nation to "to dare to dream, work assiduously to fulfill the dreams and contribute to the revitalization of the nation", encouraging them to "cherish the glorious youth, strive with pioneer spirit and contribute their wisdom and energy to the realization of the Chinese dream."⁶⁶ Chinese state media stress that in contrast to the American dream, which focuses more on the individual, the Chinese dream represents wellbeing for the society as a whole (國家好, 民族好, 才會好).⁶⁷

Xi intends to realize the Chinese dream over two milestones, the so-called "Two 100-Years" (兩個一百年). The first turning point will take place in 2021, on the 100th

⁶⁵ Yinan Zhao, "Chinese Dream' Is Xi's Vision," (accessed March 30, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013npc/2013-03/18/content_16315025.htm); Xinhua, "Chinese Dream' to Shape Global Landscape: Experts," (accessed March 30, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-12/07/content_17159585.htm.)

⁶⁶ Yi Yang, "Youth Urged to Contribute to Realization of "Chinese Dream",," (accessed June 26, 2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20170611211537/http://news.xinhuanet.com:80/english/china/2013-05/04/c_132359537.htm.)

⁶⁷ 達偉, "'中國夢'的動力源 (望海樓)," (accessed June 26, 2018, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2013-02/01/content_1194725.htm.)

anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, in which year the Chinese GDP and national average wages will be double that of 2010. By this time China will be a society in which all citizens' material needs are met (全面建成小康社會). The second major step will take place in 2049, the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic of China, by which China will be a wealthy, modern and harmonious society.⁶⁸ These ambitions are not limited to the domestic context; Xi Jinping's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative aspires to create a Eurasian commercial and political network with Beijing at the heart of this structure.

While the Chinese Dream could be easily brushed off as empty propaganda talk, it would be a gross oversimplification to do so; though it is indeed part of Chinese authorities' endeavors to legitimize the party's rule and preserve national stability.⁶⁹ Xi's statements reveal two core values of the Chinese Dream: the restoration of China as a global power and the hope for a better future. The term "rejuvenation" is a heavily laden word which contains implications about the 20th century, a period in Chinese history that is domestically often referred to as the "century of humiliation." It entails a narrative that seeks to undo the historical injustice the country has suffered and reinstate China to its rightful place as the center of civilization.⁷⁰

The concept of rejuvenation is anything but new: humiliation is a fundamental part in building the Chinese national identity and, with the exception of Mao Zedong (毛澤東), every single Chinese leader from Sun Yat-Sen (孫中山) to Xi Jinping has banked on the

⁶⁸ 中華人民共和國國務院新聞辦公室, "兩個一百年奮鬥目標是中華民族偉大復興的重要里程碑," (accessed June 10, 2018. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zhzc/10/Document/1555727/1555727.htm>.)

⁶⁹ Camilla TN Sørensen, "The Significance of Xi Jinping's" Chinese Dream" for Chinese Foreign Policy: From "Tao Guang Yang Hui" to "Fen Fa You Wei"," *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015): 56.

⁷⁰ William A Callahan, "China 2035: From the China Dream to the World Dream," *Global Affairs* 2, no. 3 (2016): 5.

humiliation narrative and used the rejuvenation discourse as an instrument of legitimacy (勿忘國恥) .⁷¹

Zheng Wang argues that post-Tiananmen authorities needed to reinvent itself as realization of a communist society was no longer the goal. Consequently, the CCP under Jiang Zemin (but also Hu Jintao) switched to a nationalistic discourse with the revival of China's former splendor and prestige as its ultimate goal.⁷² To such a degree, Xi's Chinese dream is essentially an extension of Jiang's and Hu's ideology of glorifying Chinese history and culture and using patriotism as an instrument to create a united and cohesive society.

In addition, the Chinese Dream promises a better tomorrow, a goal that will coincide with the Communist Party's milestones. This, along with the "Two 100-Years", maps out the Party's vision for the future, emphasizing that only the Communist party can continue to provide superior standards of living and attain restoration of China's former glory.⁷³ This provides the CCP with an opportunity to further consolidate its power. However, the promise of a better future is also a narrative that has been consistently pushed forward by previous Party leaders: "The Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" was originally used by Jiang, while his successor Hu talked about a "Harmonious Society". Moreover, the term "Two-100 Years" was also first mentioned by Hu during his speech at the 17th National Congress.⁷⁴

While the Chinese Dream has greatly resonated with the domestic audience, it faces several difficulties on the international scene. Authorities have attempted to export the Chinese Dream, stating that while China has a dream, it stands "ready to support and help the other

⁷¹ Zheng Wang, "The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 19, no. 1 (2014): 4.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

peoples in Asia to realize their own great dreams", ⁷⁵ essentially marketing the Chinese Dream as an "Asian Dream". However, given that the concept carries such heavy implications and is drenched in historical connotations, it may be challenging for foreign audiences who are not familiar with Chinese history to fully grasp the extent of the idea. Furthermore, it also carries domestic risks: as the Chinese Dream is essentially a nationalistic discourse, the Chinese government faces mounting pressure from rising nationalism, leaving it no choice but to take a very assertive stance in international matters and foreign policy. ⁷⁶ Therefore, Chinese authorities should be cautious and ensure that domestic soft power strategies do not manifest themselves into external hard power maneuvers.

2.4 Conclusion

Soft power arms nations with the power of attraction, as opposed to coercion. The idea of soft power is simple, however, the reality of it is not. It originates from three aspects: a country's culture, its political values and its foreign policy. If others look up to a country's culture and its values, they will want to emulate it, making it easier for said country to spread its influence.

Chinese authorities, while warmly welcoming of the concept of soft power, have adapted the idea to their own needs and ambitions. For China, soft power has additional requirements and purposes; these include nation building, government legitimacy, identity construction and a heavy emphasis on mass communication. The Chinese dream is a nationalistic discourse and a product of Chinese soft power with the purpose of party legitimization and the enhancement of the country's national cohesion.

⁷⁵ Amar Diwakar, "Manufacturing the China Dream," (accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/06/china-soft-power-china-dream-170615121249811.html>.)

⁷⁶ Wang, 10.

3. Institutional Structure, Strategy and Instruments

In 685 AD, Empress Wu Zetian (武則天) gifted a pair of pandas to the Imperial court of the Japanese Emperor Tenmu (天武天皇) as a sign of goodwill. When in 2017, a giant panda cub was born in 2017 in the Tokyo Zoo, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a press conference in which it expressed its hopes that the “panda will play a bigger role in promoting the friendship between Chinese and Japanese nationals.”⁷⁷ This kind of “panda diplomacy” is part of China’s soft power strategies, which traditionally have always heavily relied on public diplomacy.

Chinese public diplomacy principally makes use of three different instruments: mass media, its worldwide network of Confucius Institutes and an approach called ‘host diplomacy’. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, China has made massive investments in every branch of its propaganda⁷⁸ machine over the years in an attempt to bolster its soft power efforts.

3.1 Institutional Structure

China’s propaganda efforts entail many aspects that attempt to regulate everyday life: censorship of elements considered inappropriate or hostile by the government is one part of this. Another important characteristic of that authorities view propaganda as a tool to shape and build Chinese society according to the Party’s vision.

⁷⁷ Kyodo News, "Giant Panda Cub Born in Tokyo Zoo for 1st Time since 2012," (accessed April 1, 2018, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2017/06/4d3c57a9f2e9-giant-panda-at-tokyo-zoo-gives-birth-to-cub-1st-since-2012.html>.)

⁷⁸ The Chinese term for propaganda (宣傳) does not contain any negative connotations as it does in English. As such, I will use the terms propaganda and public diplomacy interchangeably in this work.

In most countries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is tasked with engaging with foreign audiences. This is not the case in China. While the responsibility for Chinese public diplomacy is shared among various entities in a construction of Byzantine complexity, authorities began to differentiate between internal and external propaganda (對外宣傳) in the first half of the 1980s.

Shambaugh identifies four primary objectives of Chinese external propaganda: (1) to explain China's story, perspectives and policies to the rest of the world, in addition to popularizing Chinese culture internationally (2) to counter what it considers hostile foreign narratives (3) obstruct and counter the Taiwanese independence movement and advance the idea of unification and (4) publicize China's foreign policies.⁷⁹ Creemers argues that authorities' distrust towards what is perceived as 'hostile foreign propaganda' dates from the Tiananmen Protests Era. The CCP places much of the responsibility of the protests on foreign media, who publicly denounced the Party leadership and its management of the situation, especially Chinese-language media from Hong Kong and Taiwan.⁸⁰ Hence, one of the core missions of China's propaganda machine is to dispel all information from abroad that could pose a threat to the Party's legitimacy.

The public face of China's external propaganda is the State Council Information Office (國務院新聞辦公室), an administrative office of the State Council, the country's chief administrative authority. According to the SCIO's website, the entity's mission is to "promote the communication, understanding and trust between China and countries across the world."⁸¹ However, it does much more than that: the SCIO follows foreign media outlets'

⁷⁹ David Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," *The China Journal*, no. 57 (2007): 48.

⁸⁰ Creemers, 308.

⁸¹ The State Council Information Office, "About Scio," (accessed April 6, 2018, <http://english.scio.gov.cn/aboutscio/index.htm>.)

coverage of the country and devises public diplomacy strategies accordingly, it publishes guidelines for domestic media and is active in domestic censorship, both in traditional media as well as online.⁸² The SCIO carries out these tasks with the Communist Party's Office of External Publicity, a division of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China.

Both organizations essentially have the same function and are an example of the so-called "one institution, two plaques" system (一個機構兩塊牌子).⁸³ Given the parallel organization of the Chinese one-party state, officials may serve concurrently at both the SCIO and the CCP Publicity Department. Regarding the capacities of both entities, D'Hooghe states: "The exact division of work and mandates between the two offices is unknown, but one can safely assume that the Office of External Publicity sets the rules of the game and that it also has the final say in major decisions."⁸⁴

Part of the SCIO's public diplomacy strategy is organizing press conferences and issuing white papers explaining Chinese authorities' position on a variety of issues. These can range from matters such as domestic judicial reforms to controversial issues like China's territorial disputes with Japan, its relations with Taiwan or human rights issues in Tibet. The SCIO's publications are written not just in English but also in other major languages like Spanish, French, Arabic, etc. These are then made available in Xinhua bookstores domestically or can be downloaded from the SCIO's official website and the many other portals administered by the government, such as china.org.cn.

However, the SCIO's activities are not limited to the domestic environment. For instance, Jiang Jianguo (蔣建國), minister of the SCIO (and vice minister of the Publicity

⁸² d'Hooghe, "The Expansion of China's Public Diplomacy System," in *Soft Power in China*, 21.

⁸³ Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," 47.

⁸⁴ Ingrid d'Hooghe, "The Limits of China's Soft Power in Europe," *Beijing's Public Diplomacy Puzzle*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Hague (2010): 21.

Department of the Central Committee of the CPC), unveiled the second volume on Xi Jinping's insights titled *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* at the London Book Fair in April, 2018. The book was made available in 9 different languages at the time of the launch and is a sequel to the eponymous first volume, which according to Chinese media is available in 24 languages.

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A third actor in the field is the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Although development of public diplomacy strategies is not part of the MOFA's mission, the execution of it is.⁸⁶ The MOFA implements the policies devised by the propaganda authorities, organizes press coverage on diplomatic events and China's foreign policy, it issues visas foreign journalists and provides them with domestic stories through its International Press Centre.⁸⁷ In 2004, the MOFA set up its own Public Diplomacy Division, which was then elevated to a very own Public Diplomacy Office in 2009.⁸⁸ This provided the ministry with more flexibility to guide its public diplomacy activities and allowed it to increase its staff from 11-12 members to 16-17.⁸⁹

Contrary to expectations however, the target of this institution is not foreign audiences but mainly the domestic audience.⁹⁰ Through conferences and campaigns aimed towards the Chinese public, the MOFA attempts to overcome the distance between diplomats and citizens. An example of this is the Public Open Day, which first took place in 2003 and allows the public to visit the MOFA. The Ministry also endorses officials participation in online interviews and conferences: in December of the same year, former minister of Foreign Affairs

⁸⁵ Cecily Liu, "Book Sharing Xi Jinping's Insights Unveiled in Nine Languages," (accessed May 8, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201804/11/WS5acd71a3105cdf6517a89.html>.)

⁸⁶ d'Hooghe, "The Expansion of China's Public Diplomacy System," in *Soft Power in China*, 21.

⁸⁷ Falk Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy: The Rise of the Confucius Institute* (Routledge, 2015), 86.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Wang, 501.

⁹⁰ Ingrid d'Hooghe, *China's Public Diplomacy* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2014), 151.

Li Zhaoxing (李肇星) held an online Q&A session with over 20 000 netizens in which he answered 40 of over 2000 questions raised by the audience.⁹¹ Additionally, the MOFA maintains active accounts on Weixin (微信) and Weibo (微博), the Chinese counterparts to LINE and Twitter respectively, under the name of *Waijiao Xiaolingtong* (外交小靈通).⁹² As of 29 April 2018, the MOFA's Weibo account has published nearly 14,000 posts and counts approximately 7.8 million followers.⁹³

Finally, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (中國人民政治協商會議 - CPPCC), the country's highest political advisory body, is also active player in Chinese public diplomacy. The CPPCC consists of citizens from various backgrounds, ranging from politicians to celebrities, and is tasked with devising recommendations and advice on matters regarding public concern.⁹⁴

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the CPPCC (外事委員會), which actively engages in exchanges with foreign officials and representatives from non-governmental organizations. In its 2013 report to the 12th CPPCC National Committee, the organization's Standing Committee states: "Over the past five years, we sent 163 delegations abroad, hosted 61 visiting delegations, held 7 international conferences including the 21st Century Forum 2010, and conducted friendly exchanges with 253 institutions in 139 foreign countries and with 14 international or regional organizations."⁹⁵ It continues, "We conducted high-level dialogue

⁹¹ Kejin Zhao, "The Motivation Behind China's Public Diplomacy," *The Chinese journal of international politics* 8, no. 2 (2015): 3.

⁹² There is no English name for the account on the MOFA's portal, however, in a 2016 press conference transcript of Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the Xinhua News Agency refers to the account as 'Diplo-Chat'. See: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/bilingual/2016-03/10/c_135174583.htm

⁹³ "微博 - 外交小靈通," (accessed June 2, 2018. [https://www.weibo.com/wjxlt.](https://www.weibo.com/wjxlt))

⁹⁴ d'Hooghe, 151.

⁹⁵ Qinglin Jia, "Report on the Work of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Cpcc)," (accessed April 21, 2018, [https://www.china.org.cn/china/NPC_CPPCC_2013/2013-03/18/content_28278251.htm.](https://www.china.org.cn/china/NPC_CPPCC_2013/2013-03/18/content_28278251.htm))

with other countries in exchanges of visits, and engaged in in-depth communication with foreign participants at international conferences we held or attended. We made full use of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad in Beijing, the World Expo in Shanghai and international conferences on public diplomacy to deepen our friendly exchanges with relevant organizations, major think tanks, mainstream mass media, influential figures and ordinary people in foreign countries.”⁹⁶

Since 2010, it has been periodically publishing its “Public Diplomacy Quarterly” (公共外交季刊) in which it presents theories and reports on its activities. The publication is led by former SCIO director Zhao Qizheng (趙啟正), who currently serves as the dean of the School of Journalism and Communication at the Renmin University in Beijing. Zhao is also former director of the committee and was one of the earliest advocates for an expansion in Chinese soft power initiatives.

In addition to the governmental bodies above, there are a great number of non-governmental organizations that play minor roles in the country’s public diplomacy.

3.2 Mass Communication and Media

Chinese public diplomacy is active in government-subsidized institutions but also in traditional media channels, such as broadcasting and printed media. Authorities use a wide array of channels ranging from radio stations to supplements in world-renowned newspapers.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

3.2.1 Radio: China Radio International

China Radio International (CRI) is the CCP's first initiative to communicate with foreign audiences. On December 3, 1941 CRI aired its first broadcast from a cave in Yan'an (延安), in a situation so dire that its news anchor reportedly had to frighten away the wolves with his flashlight.⁹⁷ Its first English-language broadcast came on September 11, 1947 and the station moved to Beijing when the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. Since then, it has expanded phenomenally: by 2011 it had nearly 70 affiliate radio stations airing over 3,200 programming hours both nationally and internationally. Of these hours, 1,520 were broadcasted abroad in 61 languages in over 70 countries. CRI's self-stated mission is to "introduce China to the rest of the world, introduce the world to China, report global affairs to the world, and promote understanding and friendship between the Chinese and peoples from other countries."⁹⁸

CRI recognized the potential in new media formats, such as the internet, and launched the China International Broadcasting Network (CIBN) in 2011, a joint venture with private companies such as Youku-Tudou and Alibaba. CIBN is a broadcasting network that relies on mobile and internet communications to transmit data. This allows CRI to not just publish its own content but also to act as a content distributor for other channels, allowing for extra revenue.⁹⁹

As part of China's propaganda apparatus, the CRI naturally serves the interests of the Chinese government. General director Wang Gengnian (王庚年) described CRI's

⁹⁷ China Radio International, "History of Cri English Service," (accessed June 3, 2018, http://english.cri.cn/about_us/his-service.htm.)

⁹⁸ China Plus, "Who We Are," (accessed June 10, 2018, <http://chinaplus.cri.cn/aboutus/aboutcri/62/20170216/393.html>.)

⁹⁹ Amanda Lee, "Realnetworks Hits Mother Lode in China's Booming Market for Video Streaming," (accessed June 10, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/tech/enterprises/article/2107524/realnetworks-hits-mother-lode-chinas-booming-market-video-streaming>.)

overseas development strategy with the Chinese phrase “borrowing a boat to head out to the sea” (借船出海) : using local media to spread its message.¹⁰⁰ Well aware that Chinese media are treated with suspicion, the CRI buys up and invests in local radio stations to broadcast its content in order to “influence international mainstream society and mainstream media”.¹⁰¹ This has proven to be a very controversial strategy as these local radio stations often do not disclose their relation with the CRI, reporting on Chinese content from a pro-Beijing stance while failing to make mention of funding of the Chinese government.¹⁰²

In 2015, the organization became the focus of a scandal when British press agency Reuters, in an investigative series called “The Long Arm of China”, accused the CRI of attempting to influence lawmakers and public opinion through a worldwide covert radio network.¹⁰³ CRI is said to fund and make partisan news reports on radio stations owned by a complex web of subsidiaries registered not under the CRI but under a handful of naturalized U.S.-citizens of Chinese descent. Under this approach, the CRI circumvented local regulations that require organizations (e.g. Voice of America, BBC) to disclose funding from foreign governments or if they represent the interest of foreign powers, such as the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA) in the U.S. The report triggered an investigation by the FCC and the U.S. Justice Department, an action that was followed by harsh condemnation of the state-run news outlet The Global Times, which labeled the incident “confusing and incomprehensible Western paranoia”.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Lulu Jichang, "China's State Media and the Outsourcing of Soft Power," (accessed June 15, 2018, <https://cpianalysis.org/2015/07/15/chinas-state-media-and-the-outsourcing-of-soft-power/>.)

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Koh Gui; Schiffman John Qing, "Voice of China: Beijing's Covert Radio Network Airs China-Friendly News across Washington, and the World," (accessed June 20, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-radio/>.)

¹⁰⁴ Global Times, "Paranoid West Calls for Vigilance to Ideological Infiltration," (accessed June 20, 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/950921.shtml>.)

3.2.2 Television: China Central Television News

China Central Television News (中國中央電視台) is the main state television broadcaster in China. The channel began its first broadcast in 1958 under the name of Peking Television and later changed its name to CCTV in 1978.¹⁰⁵ It is one of the “Central Three” (中央三台) media outlets along with People’s Daily and the Xinhua News Agency.¹⁰⁶

While initial development was very slow- CCTV only launched its second channel almost 30 years later, in 1989, it experienced a phenomenal growth in both number of channels and broadcasting hours in recent years.¹⁰⁷ Today, CCTV boasts 24 public channels, 21 pay channels in addition to 8 mobile and 28 online channels, reaching approximately 96% of the Chinese population or 1.2 billion people.¹⁰⁸ While it does serve as a mouthpiece of the Chinese government, CCTV does not just rely on government subsidies, on the contrary: CCTV makes stellar profits and even contributes to the government budget through revenue from advertising. In 2008, it reported an income of 2.5 billion USD.¹⁰⁹ Yet CCTV remains a state-run organization and its global expansion also relies on government support.

CCTV is the perfect illustration for China’s ambitious media expansion. It set up its “Overseas Broadcasting Center” in 1991 and launched its first international channel, CCTV-4, in October 1992. Though aimed at audiences abroad, CCTV-4 broadcasted in Mandarin and targeted overseas Sinophones, mainly in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau.¹¹⁰ In 2000, CCTV further pursued internationalization with its first English-language channel, CCTV-9, which

¹⁰⁵ China Central Television, "About Us,"(accessed June 20, 2018. <http://www.cctv.com/english/20030805/101215.shtml>.)

¹⁰⁶ Jinquan Li, *Power, Money, and Media: Communication Patterns and Bureaucratic Control in Cultural China* (Northwestern University Press, 2000), 274.

¹⁰⁷ Ying Zhu and Chris Berry, *Tv China* (Indiana University Press, 2009), 46.

¹⁰⁸ Si Si, "Expansion of International Broadcasting: The Growing Global Reach of China Central Television," (2014): 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹⁰ Xiaoling Zhang, "China’s International Broadcasting: A Case Study of Cctv International," in *Soft Power in China* (Springer, 2011), 59.

was a 24-hour news network. In 2004, CCTV-E&F was launched: a French-Spanish bilingual channel which then ran separately in 2008. The following year in 2009, CCTV-Arabic and CCTV-Russian were established, bringing the number of languages CCTV broadcasts in to six, in addition to Chinese dialects such as Hakka and Cantonese.¹¹¹

Creemers identifies localization as a key element in CCTV's communication strategy.¹¹² At a time in which Western news outlets are closing down bureaux, CCTV is opening new offices and studios around the world. In addition to broadcasting centers in Washington and Nairobi, it has 5 regional central offices, 63 overseas correspondents and cooperation agreements with 279 overseas media institutions.¹¹³

In 2003, CCTV's international channels went through a major overhaul and pursued further localization by undertaking a bold move unprecedented in modern Chinese media: it hired foreign journalists, news anchors and TV-personalities to represent the network.¹¹⁴ Jiang Heping (江和平), then director of CCTV-International, motivated the decision by stating that the network's recent changes will substantially enhance CCTV's professionalism, its image as an international news network and above all its credibility.¹¹⁵ In this light, it also adjusted its programming to reflect its new international image: the focus shifted from China to Asia, though reporting would still take place from a Chinese angle.¹¹⁶ In addition, the network's

¹¹¹ Duan Peng, *International Communication Strategies of Chinese Radio and Tv Networks: Initial Observations* (Springer, 2017), 85.

¹¹² Creemers, 309.

¹¹³ Si, 5.

¹¹⁴ Zhang, in *Soft Power in China*, 60.

¹¹⁵ ** Heping Jiang, "Window on China and the World CCTV-9," in *Promoting Peace and Prosperity in a Globalised World*, Asia Media Summit, ed. Sucharita S. Eashwar (Publication with UNESCO collaboration/sponsorship: 2005), 173

https://web.archive.org/web/20071129114254/http://download.aibd.org.my/books/AMS_05_Promoting_Peace_and_Prosperty.pdf

¹¹⁶ Zhang, in *Soft Power in China*, 60.

tagline changed from “CCTV International, your window on China” to “CCTV International, your window on Asia”.

In another round of reforms, CCTV was officially relaunched as CGTN (China Global Television Network) on December 31, 2016. The network’s rebranding once again highlighted Chinese authorities’ ambition to make CCTV a major player on the international media scene of the same magnitude as Qatar’s Al-Jazeera or Russia’s RT. On the occasion of CGTN’s inauguration, President Xi Jinping visited the newly renovated studios, and made a congratulatory announcement stating that the network must “strengthen [Chinese] cultural self-confidence”, and “let the world know that China is a building force of world peace, a contributor to the future of mankind and a protector of the international order.”¹¹⁷

Analysis of CGTN’s overseas broadcasts show that the network promptly defends and supports China when it is the subject of criticism or controversy in international news.¹¹⁸ It is very attentive to topics sensitive to China, such as environmental issues, human rights, Tibet and Taiwan. Occasionally the network will question Western viewpoints and policies but it largely follows the agenda of the Chinese government.¹¹⁹

Jirik’s work reveals that CGTN, despite its aspirations to be an internationally established news outlet, is constrained in its reporting when it comes to a number of topics.¹²⁰ For instance, the channel is not allowed to report on the families of the Party’s leadership unless a similar story has been written and published by the state-run Xinhua News Agency. Reports on Taiwan are off-limits unless the news in question is not politics-related or if it can serve

¹¹⁷ 人民日報, “習近平致信祝賀中國國際電視台 (中國環球電視網) 開播,” (accessed June 22, 2018, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-01/01/nw.D110000renmrb_20170101_5-01.htm.)

¹¹⁸ Zhang, in *Soft Power in China*, 62.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ John Jirik, “Cctv News and Soft Power,” *International Journal of Communication (19328036)* 10 (2016): 3540.

Chinese interests.¹²¹ Contributors must only report negatively on the Dalai Lama and are not allowed to report about the Pope. Additionally, staff members are instructed to use Xinhua as an editorial guide for their newsgathering. (Self-)censorship is thus an essential element of CGTN's reporting.

According to its own data, CGTN reaches over 140 million households.¹²² The network, however, has never released any information about ratings and viewership, leaving many questions unanswered about the actual reach and effectiveness of CGTN's soft power efforts.

3.2.3. Xinhua News Agency

Founded in 1931, Xinhua News Agency (新華通訊社) is the official press agency of the government of the People's Republic of China. Originally called Red China News Agency (紅色中華通訊社), it was renamed Xinhua in 1937 after the communist party's infamous "Long March". Xinhua reports in eight languages- Chinese, English, Arabic, French, Japanese, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese. It is not just by far the largest and most influential media entity in the country; with 32 offices in China and 180 bureaux in over 200 countries worldwide it is also one of the largest news outlets in the world.¹²³ Due to its function as the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party and its colossal size, it is often nicknamed "the largest propaganda machine in the world".¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² CGTN, "About Cgtn America," (accessed June 26, 2018. <https://america.cgtn.com/2016/12/28/about-cgtn>.)

¹²³ Xuequan Mu, "Xinhua to Integrate Ai into News Production," (accessed June 25, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/09/c_129786724.htm.)

¹²⁴ Wenfang Tang and Shanto Iyengar, "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine to a Multipurposed Global News Agency: Factors in and Implications of Xinhua's Transformation since 1978," in *Political Communication in China* (Routledge, 2013), 377.

Since its inception, Xinhua has always been a propaganda tool for the Communist Party. One of its core missions is to push a consistent and unified propaganda line throughout the Chinese mediasphere. Xinhua has a monopoly on foreign news: it is the sole source of news from abroad and attempts to control the newsflow in and outside the country.¹²⁵ Foreign journalists who report from within China are also required to obtain press credentials from either Xinhua or two other government bodies: the General Agency of the Press (GAPP) or the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television (SARFT). Until recently, it was also the only source of information for the Chinese general public.¹²⁶ To say it in the words of a Xinhua employee: “In the past, if Xinhua didn’t cover an event overseas then the Chinese public would not know about it.”¹²⁷ For some official announcements and important issues, Chinese media are still required to report only articles published by Xinhua.¹²⁸ In this sense, Xinhua serves as a barrier between China and the world.

Through Xinhua’s monopoly, the Chinese Communist Party pursues complete control of all news content within the Great Firewall. For instance, Sina.com, China’s largest news website with over 450 million hits every day, does not have its own journalists. According to Chinese regulations, Sina.com and other news hubs like Sohu are not allowed to publish their own political news content and must copy such articles only from authorized government news sources like Xinhua or China Daily.¹²⁹

Xinhua’s place in the Communist Party’s extensive apparatus cannot be overestimated. It is one of the eleven agencies directly reporting to the State Council, the second highest government body after the Politburo. One characteristic that emphasized Xinhua’s

¹²⁵ James F Scotton and William A Hachten, *New Media for a New China* (John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 115.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹²⁷ Pal Nyri, *Reporting for China: How Chinese Correspondents Work with the World* (University of Washington Press, 2017), 109.

¹²⁸ Stefanie Weil, *Lobbying and Foreign Interests in Chinese Politics* (Springer, 2016), 161.

¹²⁹ Johan Lagerkvist, "China's Online News Industry: Control Giving Way to Confucian Virtue," in *China's Science and Technology Sector and the Forces of Globalisation* (World Scientific, 2008), 3.

capacity as a body of the Chinese government is that all its correspondents are granted diplomatic passports.¹³⁰ This allows Xinhua reporters to set up offices in countries where foreign journalism is extremely restricted such as North Korea or Laos, where Xinhua is the only foreign news agency allowed to maintain a permanent presence.¹³¹ Furthermore, a fair amount of Xinhua's staff have functioned as both reporter and diplomat. For instance, it was a Xinhua correspondent that served as chief mediator for the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and West-Germany in 1972. According to Charles Elliott, Xinhua offices also serve as unofficial representative institutions in countries that do not entertain diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China or do not recognize it as a country.¹³²

While it is an undisputed fact that Xinhua is one of the most powerful instruments in the Communist Party's propaganda apparatus, its phenomenal global expansion is not just motivated by the Party's hunger for soft power. Funding issues were also a crucial element in Xinhua's development of overseas activities. Like all media, Xinhua was heavily reliant on subsidies from the Chinese government until the country's economic transition in 1978, after which the state withdrew much of its financial support to its media outlets.¹³³ Like CCTV, this forced Xinhua to look for revenue substitution elsewhere. In addition to its core activities, media and newsgathering, Xinhua diversified extensively, at some point even owning a farm until 2002, when its new operations were prohibited from engaging in commercial activities after a series of scandals and revelations of corruption.¹³⁴ The introduction and rise of the popular local dailies also affected Xinhua's revenue stream and threatened its monolithic position. These dailies developed their own networks, hired their own journalists and did their own

¹³⁰ Charles W Elliott, "Releases from Xinhua," *The global dynamics of news: studies in international news coverage and news agenda*, no. 2 (2000): 343.

¹³¹ Scotton and Hachten, 118.

¹³² Elliott, 345.

¹³³ Scotton and Hachten, 118.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

reporting on news that was more appealing to the general audience: crime, accidents, disasters, etc.

Consequently Xinhua started successfully lobbying authorities to increase subsidies, which increased significantly, especially since the 2000s. This also influenced its domestic reporting: pressure fell on Xinhua to report more positively in order not to upset its influential benefactors in Beijing or it would risk losing its hard-earned government subsidies.¹³⁵ Some local officials went as far as paying Xinhua for more positive coverage, which was then distributed among staff in the shape of incentive bonuses.¹³⁶ Paid journalism (有償新聞) was in fact a widespread issue in Chinese media and while authorities later clamped down on the practice, it still recurred in the 2010s.¹³⁷

Xinhua realized it needed to look outwards for additional revenue and at the same time it recognized Chinese authorities' need to counter what it perceived as anti-Chinese Western news for what it was: a unique opportunity. In 1983, the government approved Xinhua's motion to turn itself into a "modern and socialist news world news agency with Chinese characteristics" which initiated its ambitious transformation.¹³⁸ However, as an institution, Xinhua was also aware that it needed fundamental restructuring in order to be able to compete with foreign news agencies. Hong identifies several areas in which Xinhua has changed.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Ibid., 121.

¹³⁶ Dong Han, "Paid Posting in Chinese Cyberspace: Commodification and Regulation," *Television & New Media* 19, no. 2 (2018): 50.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Tang and Iyengar, in *Political Communication in China*, 380.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Firstly, in order to be considered a global news agency, it needed to have offices worldwide. Consequently, Xinhua grew exorbitantly in size. While it had just a handful of overseas offices before the economic reform, most of which situated in socialist countries, it had expanded to 80 foreign bureaux with over 230 staff members in the early 1980s. In other words: in less than five years, Xinhua's overseas operations had doubled in size.¹⁴⁰ Table 3.1 illustrates the extraordinary speed and the scope of Xinhua's expansion. Between 1950 and 1996 its total number of foreign bureaux as well as employees had tripled, though it should be noted that this change took place entirely after the economic transition of 1978. By 2010, it had 123 foreign bureaux across the globe with over 13,000 employees.

Table 3.1: Growth of Xinhua 1950-2010

Year	Overseas bureaux	Total staff	Wire services	Major foreign clients	News output (in millions of words/year)	News items (year)	News photos (year)
1950	28	2,000	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1996	100	7,000	14	56	201	8,400	27,000
2005	105	8,000	23	113	621	40,000	365,000
2010	123	13,000	40+	200+	1,460	110,000	547,500

Source: Junhao Hong. "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine to a Multipurposed Global News Agency: Factors in and Implications of Xinhua's Transformation Since 1978." *Political Communication* 28.3 (2011): 377-393.

Secondly, Xinhua steadily increased its news output from a mere 201 million words per year in 1996 to almost 1.5 billion in 2010, a sevenfold increase. Individual news items as well as news photos also grew exponentially by a factor of thirteen and twenty respectively. As Xinhua increased its number of overseas offices, it also began covering more international news instead of retaining a constant focus on China. The increase in articles was accompanied with an increase in clients, which allowed Xinhua to generate revenue and continue its operations

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 381.

abroad.¹⁴¹ In the past, Xinhua would often exchange articles with other agencies free of charge in order to make a name for itself on the international stage.¹⁴²

Despite its increase in volume, Xinhua was still plagued by a number of issues that affected the quality of its work. Scotton points out that Xinhua's reports were often out of date by the time they were published, usually several days or even a week following the event.¹⁴³ However, thanks to revenue generated from abroad and government subsidies, Xinhua was able to modernize its communications infrastructure and substantially increase its number of wire services from just 3 in 1950 to 14 in 1996, only to reach over 40 units in 2010.¹⁴⁴ Halfway the 1980s, Xinhua implemented its first 24-hour news distribution operations for both domestic news but also its overseas offices. With a vast network of offices abroad and an around the clock news service, Xinhua was now finally able to compete with the other press giants.

Table 3.2: Facts on eight major global news agencies (2010 figures)

	AP	Reuters	AFP	Xinhua	EFE	ITAR-TASS	DPA	IPS
Total bureaus	217	183	120	156	72	130	112	N/A
Countries covered	200	200	165	190	120	N/A	138	120
Languages	4	20+	6	7	6	6	4	19
Employees	3,700	16,900	2,900	13,000	N/A	N/A	1,200	N/A
Editorial staff	2,460	2,700	1,400	4,000	3,000	200	1,620	N/A
Daily news output (million words)	20	8	0.6	4	1.0	0.2	0.2	0.1

Source:Junhao Hong. "From the World's Largest Propaganda Machine to a Multipurposed Global News Agency: Factors in and Implications of Xinhua's Transformation Since 1978." *Political Communication* 28.3 (2011): 377-393.

Table 3.2 compares the size and assets of Xinhua and other major news agencies.

As a relative newcomer to the world press stage, Xinhua competes with “the big three” news agencies: Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Agence France Presse (AFP). Other major players in

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 380.

¹⁴² Xin Xin, *How the Market Is Changing China's News: The Case of Xinhua News Agency* (Lexington Books, 2012), 111.

¹⁴³ Scotton and Hachten, 125.

¹⁴⁴ Xin, 112.

the field are the Spanish Agencia EFE, the Russian ITAR-TASS, the German DPA and Inter Press Service (IPS).

As is apparent from the numbers above, Xinhua has clearly outpaced minor players like EFE, ITAR-TASS, DPA and IPS and should instead be compared to the big three. AP is by far the leader in almost every aspect of measurement. Its number of bureaux and countries covered are the highest of any other agency and its daily news output is more than double that of Reuters, the second largest news agency. Reuters, however, produces in over 20 languages and far outranks AP in numbers of editorial staff and employees. With 8 million words published every day, it produces twice the output of Xinhua, despite a comparable number of editorial staff and employees.

On the other hand, Xinhua appears to have greatly surpassed AFP, the traditional number three, in almost every aspect. It has more bureaux, covers more countries in more languages and has three times as many staff in addition to an almost 7 times larger word output. In this sense, Xinhua has successfully transformed itself into one of the world's largest news agencies, offering services comparable to monoliths like AP and Reuters.

However, despite Xinhua's thorough metamorphosis from a national news agency to one of the world's biggest news wires, it is still part of the Chinese propaganda system and ensured to be controlled by and entrenched of communist ideological thought. According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), approximately 80% of its journalists are members of the Chinese Communist Party.¹⁴⁵ Xinhua actively scouts universities for new talent, only the best students with absolute loyalty to the party are recruited.¹⁴⁶ Another recurring observation in Chinese journalism is recruiting high school graduates and sending them to Party schools (黨

¹⁴⁵ Reporters Without Borders, "Xinhua - the Worlds Biggest Propaganda Agency," (accessed June 28, 2018. https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/Report_Xinhua_Eng.pdf.)

¹⁴⁶ Scotton and Hachten, 123.

校) , after which they are considered “politically reliable” and less exposed to “dangerous ideas.”¹⁴⁷ These schools are also the breeding ground for China’s future officials and functionaries.

Xinhua’s first and foremost task is to serve the Chinese Communist Party. As Hong states: “Xinhua is both the eyes and mouth of the party; it sees the world from the party’s communistic perspective and speaks for the interests of the Party.”¹⁴⁸ The Party maintains direct and absolute control over the agency: all of Xinhua’s top directors are directly appointed by the Central Committee and all strategic decisions must be acquire party approval before being implemented. In this aspect, Xinhua’s ascent as a global news agency has not changed the organization’s political affiliation nor its basic function: it is identical to Red China from 1931. On the contrary: it has become an extremely powerful propaganda instrument for the Communist Party. Xinhua still has a monopoly on foreign news in China and is very selective about what news it wires to the country.¹⁴⁹

3.3 Confucius Institute

The Confucius Institute is the Chinese counterpart of European language and culture institutes, like France’s Alliance Française, Germany’s Goethe Institut or the Italian Società Dante Alighieri. Its mother organization, Hanban, describes the Confucius Institute as “a platform for cultural exchanges between China and the world as well as a bridge reinforcing friendship and cooperation between China and the rest of the world and are much welcomed

¹⁴⁷ Zhongdang Pan, "Improvising Reform Activities," *Power, money, and media: Communication patterns and bureaucratic control in cultural China* (2000): 99.

¹⁴⁸ Tang and Iyengar, in *Political Communication in China*, 382.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

across the globe.”¹⁵⁰ It is an attempt to familiarize the mainstream audience with the Chinese language and the Chinese culture.

The motive to establish a Chinese cultural institute remain somewhat nebulous, however, the initial idea seems to have come from Chinese diplomat Lu Qiutian (盧秋田). As ambassador, Lu had previously been stationed in several European countries like Luxemburg, Romania and Germany. In an interview with Hartig, Lu states that he “deeply understood the cultural differences between East and West. The failure to know the differences always leads to unnecessary misunderstandings.”¹⁵¹ With this in mind, Lu made the suggestion to establish a cultural institution to his colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who welcomed the idea. The suggestion was echoed by his contacts at the Education Ministry, which cited increasing overseas demand for Chinese language education. This served as a catalyst for the ministry to take the idea into consideration.

After an initial pilot project in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the first official Confucius Institute was opened in Seoul in November, 2004.¹⁵² Establishing the first institute in Seoul was not a random choice by Chinese authorities but rather symbolic: it revealed the government’s sense of history.¹⁵³ Korea was the last territory of the Chinese Empire before it came under control Japanese control after the First Sino-Japanese war of 1894. After the World War II, South-Korea became host to a large American military presence: it was now part of the American sphere of influence. However, Korea’s post-dictatorship democracy and its stellar economic growth resulted into a renewed interest in China. China, of course, welcomed this rekindled affection and gladly accepted Korean students as well as Korean investment. By

¹⁵⁰ Hanban, "About Confucius Institute/Classroom," (accessed June 26, 2018. http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm.)

¹⁵¹ Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy: The Rise of the Confucius Institute*, 99.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁵³ Don Starr, "Chinese Language Education in Europe: The Confucius Institutes," *European Journal of Education* 44, no. 1 (2009): 65.

2004, the number of Korean students in China had surpassed the Japanese and now formed the largest group of foreign students in the country. By opening its first Confucius Institute in Seoul, China sent different messages to different actors in the region. To South Koreans it implied a reentry into the Chinese sphere of influence, to the Japanese it conveyed a united front against “Japanese aggression” and towards Americans it implied a departure from the post-World War II state of affairs.¹⁵⁴

The initial goal was to establish 100 Confucius Institutes, however, Hanban quickly surpassed this number: as of May 2018, there are 525 Confucius Institutes and 1,113 Confucius Classrooms in 147 countries.¹⁵⁵ According to Xinhua, there are a total of 1.7 million students enrolled in the universities, under the guidance of 46,000 Chinese teachers.¹⁵⁶

All Confucius Institutes are overseen at the Hanban headquarters in Beijing. When it was first set up, Hanban was nothing more than a Chinese language education entity under the Chinese Ministry of Education.¹⁵⁷ Over the years, it grew to encompass many other activities and responsibilities such as cultural and language exchanges and came to fall under the shared responsibility of 12 different ministries and commissions: the Ministry of Education, the General Office of the State Council, the Ministry of Finance, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television, the State Press and Publications Administration, the State Council Information Office, and the State Language Committee.¹⁵⁸ Each ministry has its own

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Xia Li, "Spotlight: Confucius Institutes Help Enhance Friendship between China, Europe," (accessed June 28, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/31/c_137221158.htm.)

¹⁵⁶ Yurou, "Confucius Institutes Athens Conference Aims to Deepen China-Europe Ties," (accessed June 28, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/22/c_137195962.htm.)

¹⁵⁷ Su-Yan Pan, "Confucius Institute Project: China's Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power Projection," *Asian Education and Development Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 25.

¹⁵⁸ Zhe Ren, "The Confucius Institutes and China's Soft Power," (2012): 3.

responsibility in the organization: for example, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Education Ministry see to how Hanban communicates with foreign authorities and organizations. They also help Hanban coordinate and communicate with Chinese diplomatic missions abroad to establish new Confucius Institutes. As such, Confucius Institutes are not independent entities but rather “agents of the state” and the Hanban leadership is occupied by party members to ensure absolute oversight.¹⁵⁹ The general director of the Hanban is Xu Lin (許琳), member of CPPCC and until recently, the board was chaired by Liu Yandong (劉延東), former vice premier of China and member of the Communist Party’s Standing Committee.

According to Paradise, the Confucius Institute has three main goals: to teach the Chinese language, to foster cultural exchange and to promote business between China and the rest of the world.¹⁶⁰ The Institute operates through a set of rules that it calls “Constitution and By-Laws of the Confucius Institute”, in which it defines the institute’s role as follows: “Confucius Institutes devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese language, to enhancing understanding of the Chinese language and culture by these peoples, to strengthening educational and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and other countries, to deepening friendly relationships with other nations, to promoting the development of multi-culturalism, and to construct a harmonious world.”¹⁶¹

According to Hartig, the definition above reveals two insights of how Hanban motivates the project to the world.¹⁶² The first point is that the Confucius Institute is presented as a reaction to demand from overseas. This conveys the impression that there is no hidden

¹⁵⁹ Pan, 26.

¹⁶⁰ Paradise, 651.

¹⁶¹ Hanban, "Constitution and by-Laws of the Confucius Institutes," (accessed June 29, 2018. http://english.hanban.org/node_7880.htm.)

¹⁶² Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy: The Rise of the Confucius Institute*, 101.

agenda or ploy and that the initiative is simply a question of supply and demand: the world wants to know more about China so China provides it. Secondly, the definition provides an idealistic goal in which the institute's mission is describes the Chinese striving for understanding, world-peace and harmony. This falls in line with the image that China is trying to build for itself: a peaceful China to reassure the world that there is no such thing as the "China Threat".

The rules further stipulate the many responsibilities of the Confucius Institute, such as language teaching, providing study resources, promoting Chinese culture and cultural exchange, organizing the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) etc. However, they also contain obligations for the host institute, such as the promise not to carry out any activities that might conflict with Chinese laws and regulations. An additional clause in the regulation states that Hanban reserves the right to interpret the institute's principles in its own way, leaving plenty ambiguity on what constitutes a breach of the regulations.

What separates the Confucius Institute from its Western counterparts is its unique structure. Confucius Institutes can take many shapes, but the most common type is a joint-venture situated within the campus of a foreign university.¹⁶³ This differs greatly from other countries' institutions, which are usually independent institutions, i.e. located at a neutral setting and not affiliated with local bodies. Confucius Institutes, on the other hand, are commonly created through as a cooperative between a university abroad and a Chinese university.¹⁶⁴ Chinese universities actively search for potential partner universities and help set up a Confucius Institute on the partner university grounds. For example, the Confucius Institute at the Free University of Berlin is a cooperation between the German university and Peking

¹⁶³ Ibid., 103.

¹⁶⁴ Paradise, 651.

university. The institute at University of Michigan was created in partnership with Renmin University in Beijing, etc.

The founding process normally takes up to 18 months. The host institution is required to present proof that there is enough demand in the area for Chinese language education and find a Chinese partner university. Additionally, it must provide practical facilities such as classrooms, infrastructure and equipment. Hanban then supplies the start-up funds for the institute (ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000) along with its own teaching resources.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, Hanban also takes on the cost of up to two Chinese teachers' salaries and regularly subsidizes events and activities for half of the expenses.¹⁶⁶ It is not difficult to see why the Confucius Institute has known such an explosive growth over the recent years: it is a generous and attractive initiative for universities both home and abroad.

While the application process may seem like it requires initiative from the host university to establish a Confucius Institute, in the end, the decision to fund and open an institute lies with Hanban.¹⁶⁷ Ding and Saunders (as cited in Falk, 2015), found in their research found that Hanban does not randomly choose host institutions but rather has a strategic approach to where it opens its Confucius Institutes, stating that the majority of the institutes are located in liberal democracies which embrace issues like human rights and personal freedom (United Kingdom United States, Germany etc.) This is illustrated in Table 3.3. In countries that do not attach great importance to these values, there has not yet been such a massive rollout of Confucius Institutes.¹⁶⁸ According to the table above, Confucius Institutes have a much denser

¹⁶⁵ Starr, 71.

¹⁶⁶ Hartig, "Communicating China to the World: Confucius Institutes and China's Strategic Narratives," 246.

¹⁶⁷ Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy: The Rise of the Confucius Institute*, 105.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Sheng Ding and Robert A Saunders, "Talking up China: An Analysis of China's Rising Cultural Power and Global Promotion of the Chinese Language," *East Asia* 23, no. 2 (2006): 22.

distribution in developed countries: except for Thailand, all countries that host over 10 Confucius Institutes are first-world countries.

While its unique structure is what separates the Confucius Institute from its counterparts, it is also the reason it is subject to such heavy criticism. Some critics even label

Table 3.3: Number of Confucius Institutes per Country (2018 numbers)

Countries	Number of confucius institutes	Number of confucius classrooms
United States	110	501
United Kingdom	29	148
Korea	23	13
Germany	19	4
Russia	17	5
France	17	3
Thailand	15	20
Australia	14	67
Japan	14	8
Australia	14	67
Italy	12	39
Canada	12	35

Source: Wai-Chung Ho. *Culture, Music Education, and the Chinese Dream in Mainland China*. Vol. 7. Springer, 2018.

the institute “academic malware”.¹⁶⁹ Much of the distrust towards the project stems from the perception that Confucius Institutes are authoritarian-backed propaganda tools located on school campuses.¹⁷⁰ This leads to fears of interference or (self-) censorship at the host university since Hanban can decide to close down an institute at any given time. Others accuse the institutes of having a hidden agenda and serving as possible instruments of communist propaganda.¹⁷¹ Scholars themselves are divided on this topic. Gill & Bates assert that one of the tasks is to portray China as a peaceful and gentle country and as such serve an openly

¹⁶⁹ Marshall David Sahlins, *Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2015).

¹⁷⁰ Starr, 78.

¹⁷¹ Hsi Chang Li, Sam Mirmirani, and Joseph A Ilacqua, "Confucius Institutes: Distributed Leadership and Knowledge Sharing in a Worldwide Network," *The Learning Organization* 16, no. 6 (2009): 474.

political agenda.¹⁷² Others such as Li et al. refute these arguments, stating that there is no scientific proof for them.¹⁷³

Hanban, well aware that its projects are controversial, maintains that the Confucius Institute is a strictly cultural project and denies all links to political motivation. Director-general Xu Lin even rejected the implication that the Confucius Institute is an instrument of soft power, stating that it is nothing more than a medium to endorse Chinese culture and promote the education of the Chinese language.¹⁷⁴ However, the institute has the subject of many scandals that contradicted the apolitical stance of the organization, such as the Braga Incident in which the same director above ordered the immediate removal of a number of handouts as they contained information relating to Taiwan, effectively carrying out a policy of censorship at a conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies.¹⁷⁵ The incident sparked widespread condemnation and resulted into the termination of a number of institutes by several host universities like Stockholm University and the University of Chicago.

Despite the complete denial of the institute serving Chinese soft power goals, it is an extremely successful implementation of three public policy goals: Firstly, the Confucius Institute serves as a stage for introducing Chinese culture to local communities and actively engaging with them.¹⁷⁶ This can be through activities and events, such as familiarizing the local public with traditional aspects like Kung-Fu or calligraphy. In 2010, Hanban had organized various types of events at more than 300 institutes in 50 countries. In addition, in honor of the “Chinese Language Year”, Hanban had organized over 600 cultural events with 300,000

¹⁷² Gill and Huang, 18.

¹⁷³ Chang Li, Mirmirani, and Ilacqua, 474.

¹⁷⁴ Rui Yang, "Soft Power and Higher Education: An Examination of China's Confucius Institutes," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 8, no. 2 (2010): 238.

¹⁷⁵ John Sudworth, "Confucius Institute: The Hard Side of China's Soft Power," (accessed June 28, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-30567743>.)

¹⁷⁶ Pan, 28.

visitors in Spain and Russia alone.¹⁷⁷ Such events engage with the mainstream audience and spark the public's interest for the country.

Secondly, the Confucius Institute targets not just the mainstream audience but also local elite such as politicians, academics and university partners. For the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, Hanban invited over 300 rectors and 2000 directors of various organizations. Former chairwoman Liu Yandong later explained that these are steps to strengthen personal communications and lay the groundwork for future cooperation (as quoted in Pan).

Lastly, Confucius Institutes are used to promote a harmonious image of China. As one of the top leaders of Hanban, Liu was present at every Confucius Institute Conference during which she repeatedly stressed China's goal of fairness, justice and its quest for an improved quality of life, essentially painting a rose-red picture of China. Confucius Institutes are thus also an element to counter the China Threat Theory.¹⁷⁸

3.4 Host Diplomacy

Another strategy of Chinese public diplomacy is the so-called "host diplomacy" (主场外交). While there is considerably less literature (especially from the Western side) on this topic, host diplomacy is a concept put forward by Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi in 2014. State-media outlet China Daily describes this idea as "diplomatic events hosted or initiated by a country that has the ability to set and execute agendas which other participants find attractive and are willing to support."

In other words: host diplomacy means hosting major summits and events and thus amplifying one's profile on the world stage. While the term "host diplomacy" might sound like

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid..

a completely new concept, a closer look reveals that it is an idea based on attraction and an obvious divarication on Nye's theories.

The only Western academic who touches upon this concept is David Shambaugh in a 2015 article where he acknowledges the existence of this strategy, elaborating on the numerous governmental and nongovernmental summits China has hosted such as the Boao Forum For Asia, the Belt and Road Forum (BARF) etc. Also part of host diplomacy are government-associated exchanges in which the International Department of the CCP invites foreign politicians from various countries. This allows the Party to establish and nurture connections with key figures from all around the world.

Chen provides a more in-depth and detailed analysis on host diplomacy, identifying three conditions for an event to qualify as host diplomacy. Firstly, there must be a defined geographic location (e.g. activities held within the boundaries of a certain country). Secondly, the host nation should be able to play a dominant or a key role in the discussions and exert significant influence. Lastly, the activities held should have an impact on the host country's diplomatic agenda. Additionally, There is a "home field advantage" for the host country as it can play location, time and many other factors to its benefit. However, if the host country solely provides the venue for an event and fails to exert any influence in the benefit of its national interests, then the situation is deemed as a "failed attempt" at host diplomacy. This means that not every country is able to engage in host diplomacy by doing so.

By organizing multilateral summits and conferences, the host nation is able to exert influence and control the agenda in international politics. Furthermore, the number of participants but also the importance of the participating countries and the delegations they send can serve as an indicator to the host country's standing on the world stage.

China has arguably been successful in its host diplomacy efforts. It has hosted many multilateral conferences and launched numerous policies that have found widespread acceptance in the region based upon these conferences . The One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative illustrates the success of China's host diplomacy.

3.5 Conclusion

Public diplomacy is China's principal method for amassing soft power. China's public diplomacy actors are not centralized, instead, many government entities are active in the field, ranging from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the CPPCC.

In recent years, China has invested massive amounts of money to expand its media apparatus because it sees communication capacity as a precondition for its rise on the world stage. China's media are active in virtually every field: China Radio International broadcasts radio programs all over the world whereas CCTV's international branch, CGTN is a global player in TV. Xinhua, with its extensive network and offices worldwide, already ranks among the world's largest press agencies.

Chinese media is constantly expanding and evolving. In March 2018, authorities announced the merger of the three main state media outlets: China Radio International, China National Radio and CCTV (including all six channels of CGTN). The three will form one massive media group called Voice of China (中國之聲) which, according to state media, as a bigger entity will allow them to further spread Party principles and ideology.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ CGTN - China to merge state media broadcasting giants (accessed July 8, 2018
https://news.cgtn.com/news/794d444f7a6b7a6333566d54/share_p.html)

China further relies on host diplomacy to influence certain trends on the world stage. As organizer of major events, China draws attention to its country and is able to set the international political agenda.

Finally, Another important instrument of Chinese soft power is the very successful Confucius Institute which helps disseminate the Chinese language and culture. While officially not acknowledged, the Institute tries to shape a better image of China while at the same time its unique structure, often criticized, provides many opportunities for Chinese universities to establish valuable networks and pursue further internationalization.



4. Opportunities and Challenges of Chinese Soft Power

Evaluating soft power is not an easy task, especially since the Chinese interpretation of soft power differs from its original definition in many aspects. While China's eagerness to be a major player on the international stage is obviously illustrated by its pursuit of soft power, it is clear that influence does not come easily. Despite authorities' massive investments to win over hearts and minds abroad, Portland's Soft Power 30 still ranks China as 25th on the list, far behind smaller countries such as Portugal, Austria or even Belgium.¹⁸⁰ This chapter aims to make an objective appraisal of the assets and the liabilities of Chinese soft power efforts.

4.1 Strengths

4.1.1 A Cultural Superpower with an Enticing Language

Nye's three principal sources of soft power are a country's foreign policy, its political values and its culture. The latter is of extreme importance in China's soft power strategy and receives more attention in Chinese soft power theory than the other two. In fact, when Wang Huning's introduced the concept of soft power to China, he did so in a work titled "Culture as National Soft Power", in which he identified culture as the main source of Chinese soft power.¹⁸¹ As a result, the term soft power is often rephrased as "cultural soft power" in Chinese publications.

Chinese leaders are well aware of this and have implemented a myriad of policies and initiatives to bank on the value of Chinese culture. The focus of authorities endorsement lies largely in traditional Chinese culture as opposed to popular culture as the former is seen as

¹⁸⁰ McClory.

¹⁸¹ 王滄寧, "作為國家實力的文化: 軟權力," *復旦學報(社會科學版)* 3 (1993).

apolitical and has the potential to appeal every segment of the target audience abroad.¹⁸² After all, China has served as a role model for surrounding countries for hundreds, if not thousands, of years: it has exported its ideologies, its language, its script and culture to almost all of its surrounding countries.

The Confucius Institute plays a major role in these cultural exchanges, especially in Asian countries. China still shares a heritage of Confucianism with many of its neighbors and uses this fact to its advantage. Despised and branded as backwards by the Communist Party merely a few decades ago, Confucius is now *en vogue* again.¹⁸³

As traditional communist doctrines like Marxism and Maoism lose tract with the general public, the Party reverts to ancient Chinese culture for guiding principles.¹⁸⁴ As a result, Confucius now serves as a cultural ambassador and mascot for its flagship cultural project, the Confucius Institute. The ancient philosopher has of course no connection with the language institute, nor do Confucius Institute preach Confucianism, however, Confucius is a mystical figure with no politics attached. Hartig quotes Jain and Groot who stated that “a Mao Zedong Institute would probably not be welcomed in most countries.”¹⁸⁵ A Confucius Institute, however, entails familiarity and commands respect. Perhaps *The Economist* put it best when it stated: “Party officials use Confucius as a Father-Christmas-like symbol of avuncular Chineseness rather than as the proponent of a philosophical outlook.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² d’Hooghe, "The Expansion of China’s Public Diplomacy System," in *Soft Power in China*, 25.

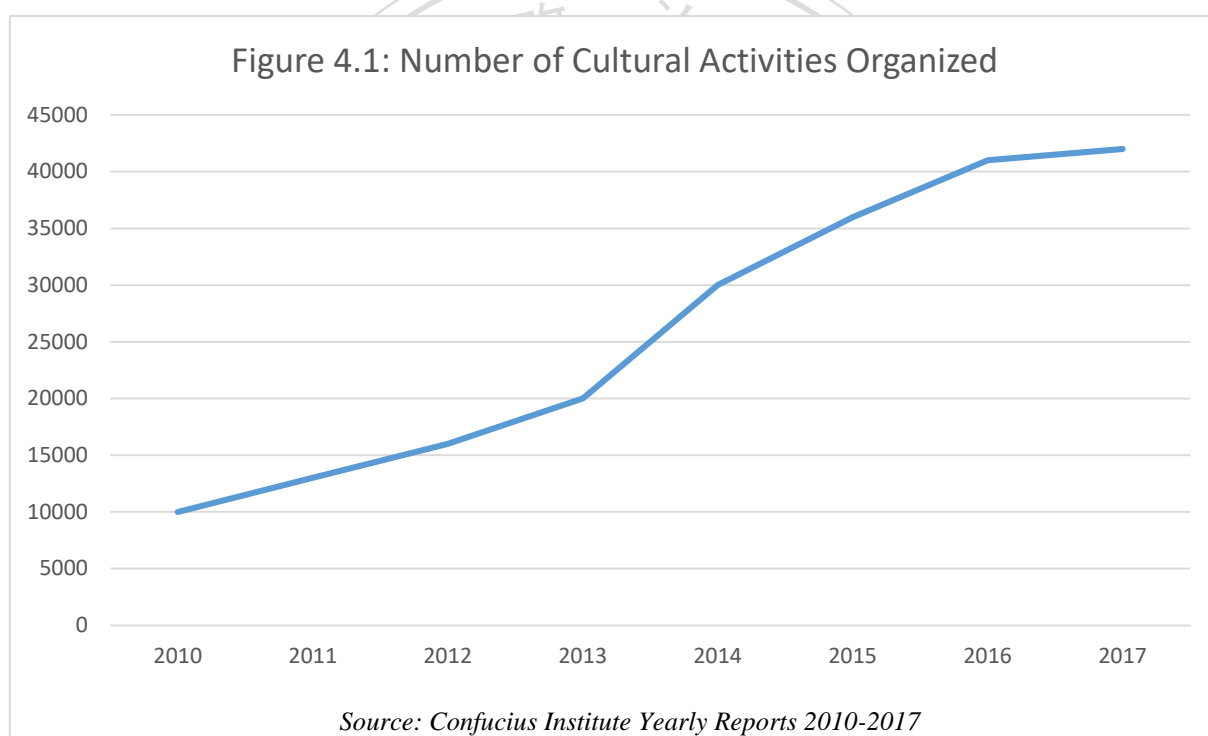
¹⁸³ Paradise, 648.

¹⁸⁴ Hartig, *Chinese Public Diplomacy: The Rise of the Confucius Institute*, 103.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ *The Economist*, "Rectification of Statues," (accessed June 28, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2011/01/20/rectification-of-statues>.)

Figure 4.1 shows that in 2017, Confucius Institutes worldwide organized a total of 42,000 cultural events that attracted over 12.72 million participants.¹⁸⁷ This is a fourfold increase of its number of events in 2010, during which it reported the organization of 10,000 events. In comparison, the German Goethe Institut welcomed 16 million visitors at 32,000 events in 2016.¹⁸⁸ It is clear that the Confucius Institutes organized more events. While its German counterpart had more visitors, it is important to note that the Goethe Institut, founded in 1952, predates the Confucius Institute by 52 years and is much older and more established.

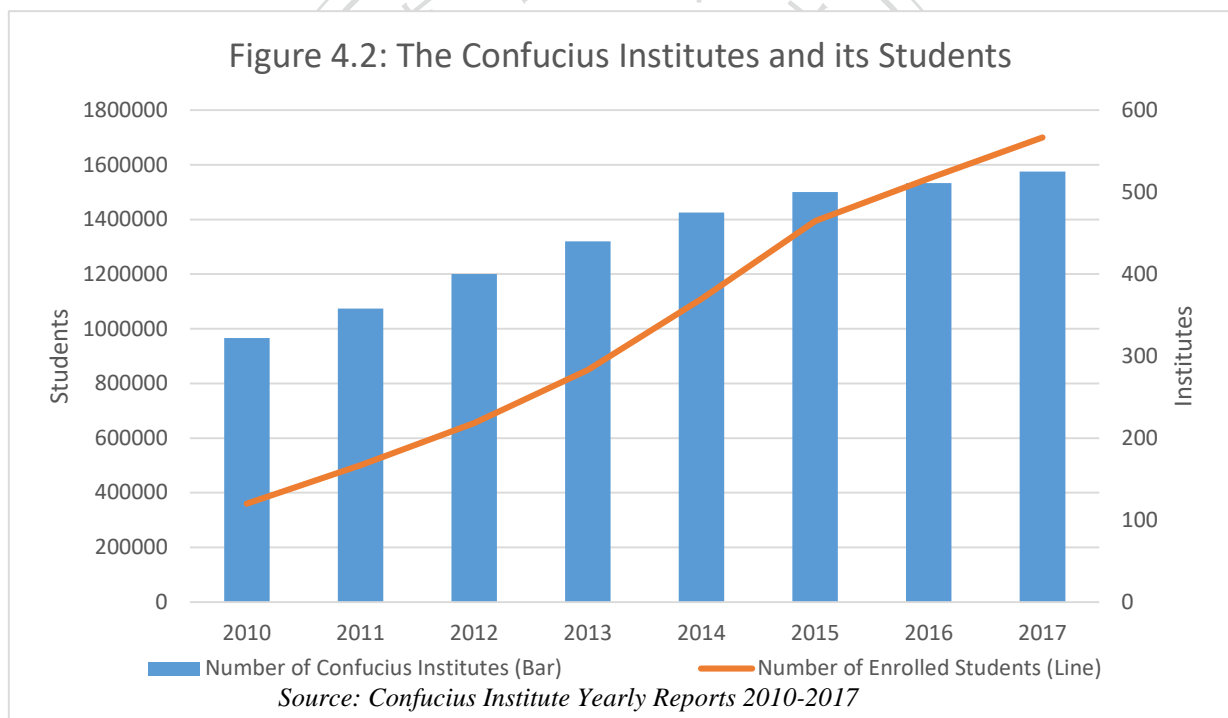


In contrast, the Confucius Institute is only 14 years old and has over double the number of institutes and is active in 146 countries as opposed to the Goethe Institut's 98 countries. Taking these numbers in consideration, the Confucius Institute's achievements are very impressive.

¹⁸⁷ 漢辦, "孔子學院年度發展報告 2017," (accessed June 30, 2018. <http://www.hanban.edu.cn/report/2017.pdf>.)

¹⁸⁸ Goethe Institut, "Jahrbuch 2016/2017," (accessed June 29, 2018. https://www.goethe.de/resources/files/pdf132/goethe-jahrbuch-2016_2017_gute-auflsung-verschlsst2.pdf.)

In addition to culture, the Chinese language is also an enormous asset for China. From Australia's former prime minister Kevin Rudd to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, the country's explosive economic growth and the growing importance of its language has attracted many new learners of Chinese. Figure 4.2 illustrates the growth of the number of Chinese learners at the Confucius Institute in relation to the number of Confucius Institutes from years 2010-2017. As of 2017, a total of 1,700,000 students were enrolled in Chinese courses in over 500 Confucius Institutes. In comparison, in 2016, the Goethe Institut had 278,000 registered students and the Alliance Française had 458,000 students for its French courses.¹⁸⁹



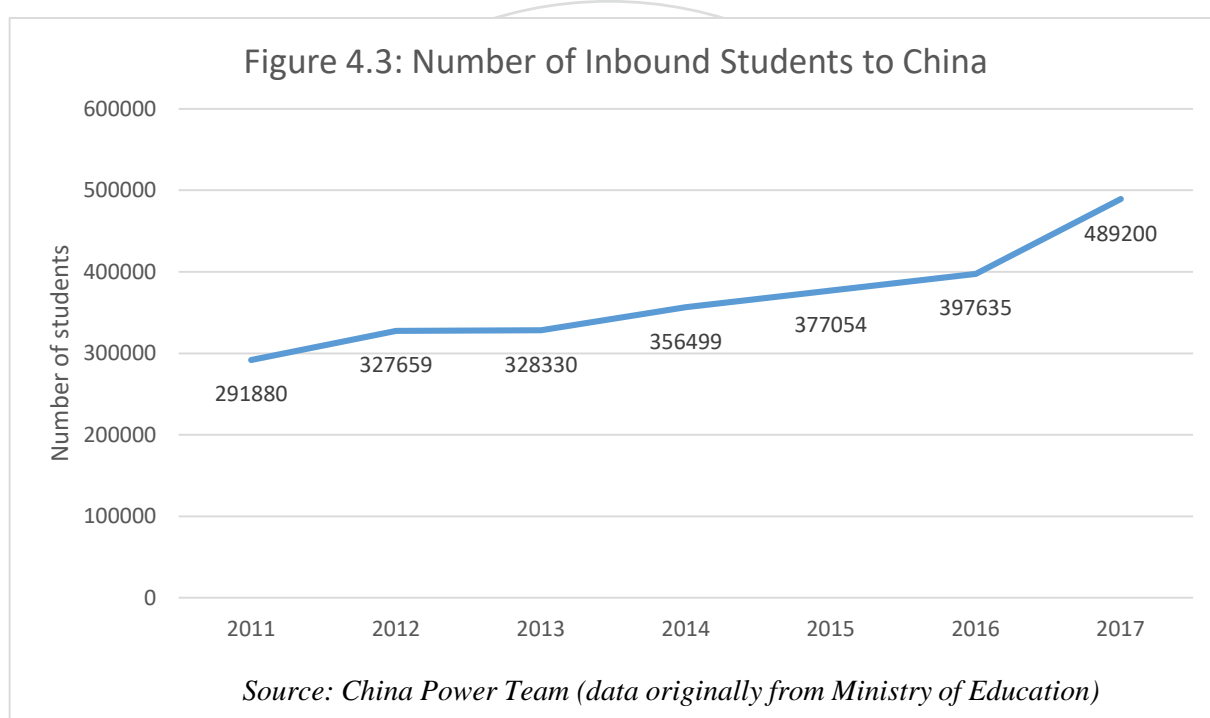
As such, the Confucius Institute is far more popular and competitive in comparison with its European counterparts and potentially a major source of soft power for authorities. The

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 37.

Fondation Alliance Française, "Rapport D'activités 2016," (accessed June 29, 2018. https://www.fondation-alliancefr.org/wp-content/medias/Fondation%20en%20action/RAP_ACTIVITES_2016_BD.pdf.)

Institute's constant expansion and popularity highlights its growing importance and strength as a medium for Chinese language and culture.

In addition to the growing number of Chinese language students, the number of exchange students studying in China has also increased immensely. Today, China is the third largest destination for international students, ranking behind the United States and the United Kingdom.¹⁹⁰ According to the Ministry of Education, approximately 489,200 foreign students pursued higher education in China in 2017, up from 328,330 in 2013.¹⁹¹



The growth in international students is mostly because of the generous amount of scholarships provided by authorities. Times Higher Education reports that in 2015, over 40% of all international students were recipients of Chinese government scholarships.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Grace Shao, "China Is Third Most Popular Destination for International Students," (accessed June 29, 2018, [https://america.cgtv.com/2017/03/17/china-is-third-most-popular-destination-for-international-students.](https://america.cgtv.com/2017/03/17/china-is-third-most-popular-destination-for-international-students/))

¹⁹¹ Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, "Growing Number of Foreign Students Choosing to Study in China for a Degree across Multiple Disciplines," (accessed June 30, 2018, [http://en.moe.gov.cn/News/Top_News/201804/t20180403_332258.html.](http://en.moe.gov.cn/News/Top_News/201804/t20180403_332258.html))

China Power Team, "Is China Both a Source and Hub for International Students?," (accessed July 1, 2018, [https://chinapower.csis.org/china-international-students/.](https://chinapower.csis.org/china-international-students/))

¹⁹² Carly Minsky, "Five Reasons Why You Should Study in China," (accessed July 1, 2018, [https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/advice/five-reasons-why-you-should-study-china.](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/advice/five-reasons-why-you-should-study-china))

Most international students come from neighboring countries, with South-Korea accounting for 16% of the total number of international students.¹⁹³ This is unsurprising, given China's recent efforts to cozy up to countries in the ASEAN bloc. There is also a growing number of incoming students from Belt and Road countries, from which 200,000 international students originated. Pakistan, as a notable example, provided over 19,000 students, double the 9,500 students it sent out in 2012, mirroring the cordial relations between the two countries.¹⁹⁴ China is also the second largest destination for African students, surpassed only by France. The number of African students rose from a mere 1,703 in 2003 to a whopping 61,594 in 2016, with Ghana (5,552), Nigeria (4,746) and Tanzania (3,520) accounting for most students.¹⁹⁵

Joseph Nye identifies exchange students as an important part of soft power. Foreign students will often adopt the mindset and the values of their host country and go home with a sense of affinity and a greater appreciation for the country's values and its institutions.¹⁹⁶ Often times, their foreign education also allows them to hold important positions in their home countries. As a consequence, they may be able to influence policy outcomes that affect their host countries. Beijing has recognized this and is proactively investing in potential future leaders, especially from developing countries, as a long term strategy for creating soft-power resources.

Finally, the China's popularity as a tourist destination is also growing. The economic benefits are obvious: in 2017 over 139 million people visited China and contributed 5.4 trillion yuan (\$860 billion) to the Chinese economy, accounting for 11% of the country's GDP.¹⁹⁷ Visitors hailed mostly from neighboring Asian countries, mostly ASEAN countries,

¹⁹³ China Power Team.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 45.

¹⁹⁷ China Daily - Tourism numbers see steady rise (accessed July 1, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201802/07/WS5a7a400ea3106e7dcc13b2ea.html>)

highlighting the attractiveness of China in the region. China's position as a major regional and economical power plays very much to its advantage. Beijing often talks about a "shared destiny" for Asia and has taken many initiatives using ASEAN as a platform to project its soft power.¹⁹⁸ Along with Japan and South-Korea, it is a member of the ASEAN Plus Three forum and signed the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) in 2010 to further strengthen regional cooperation. These initiatives have led for tourism to play a significant role in cultural exchange between the two areas: ASEAN countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia are the extremely popular with Chinese tourists. In 2016, 19.8 million Chinese nationals visited ASEAN member states, up 6.4% from the previous year. On the other hand, 10.34 million people from the ASEAN region visited China, an increase of 58% from 2015.¹⁹⁹ For China, tourism is a key factor in strengthening its position and its legitimacy as a regional leader. Chinese tourists going to these countries export the image of a wealthy, stable and confident China with them, also familiarizing these countries with Chinese as people.²⁰⁰

4.1.2 Alternative Development Model and Generous ODA

A unique asset for China is that it follows a different development model than one from Western developed countries, the so-called Beijing Consensus, a term coined by American policy analyst Joshua Ramo. The China Model promotes autocratic development as opposed to the traditional development model put forward by (mostly Western) liberal democracies. After all, the end of the Cold War was considered a great victory for these "Western" values and influential publications like Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History" predicted the worldwide proliferation of democracy in international society.

¹⁹⁸ You Wu, "The Rise of China with Cultural Soft Power in the Age of Globalization," *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 8, no. 5 (2018): 771.

¹⁹⁹ ASEAN Secretariat News, "Asean, China to Boost Tourist Traffic in the Year of Tourism Cooperation," (accessed July 1, 2018, <http://asean.org/asean-china-to-boost-tourist-traffic-in-the-year-of-tourism-cooperation>.)

²⁰⁰ Wu, 771.

This does not mean that China is actively promoting its development model. On the contrary, during a speech in December 2017, Xi stated “China will not import foreign models of development nor export the Chinese model (...) We will not ask others to copy the Chinese practice.”²⁰¹ However, it is actively advocating authoritarianism as an alternative to liberal democracies through its media outlets, like China Daily’s article headlined “Enlightened Chinese democracy puts the West in the shade.”²⁰² More recently, in June 2018, Global Times tweeted a link to an article on its website declaring that “[the] Western multi-party system only works to aggravate societal divisions and is more likely to fail in Asian countries.”²⁰³

Many emerging economies, especially in South-East Asia look up to China’s defiance to the West while at the same time producing securing economic growth for its citizens.²⁰⁴ Developing countries admire the Chinese “no-nonsense” approach that in many people’s eyes, gets things done. British historian Timothy Garton Ash once described the China model as “the biggest potential ideological competitor to liberal democratic capitalism since the end of communism.”²⁰⁵

Indeed, China’s economic rise has opened many doors. For over a century, the unchallenged economic prowess of the United States enabled it to extend great influence over the world’s international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Countries that relied on international aid had no choice but to accept the conditions

²⁰¹ Chengcheng, "China Will Not 'Export' Chinese Model: Xi," (accessed July 2, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/01/c_136793833_2.htm.)

²⁰² Laifang Li, "Enlightened Chinese Democracy Puts the West in the Shade," (accessed July 3, 2018, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thpcnationalcongress/2017-10/17/content_33364425.htm.)

²⁰³ Global Times (accessed 25 Jun 2018, <https://twitter.com/globaltimesnews/status/1011255306033262592>.)

²⁰⁴ Thomas Barker, "The Real Source of China's Soft Power," (accessed July 3, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/the-real-source-of-chinas-soft-power/>.)

²⁰⁵ Timothy Garton Ash, "We Friends of Liberal International Order Face a New Global Disorder," (accessed July 3, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/sep/11/1>.)

and the U.S.-led “imposition” of democratic values.²⁰⁶ Fudan University professor Zhang Wei-Wei (張維為) famously proclaimed in a 2006 opinion piece in the International Herald Tribune that “[The West] imposed liberalization before safety nets were set up; privatization before regulatory frameworks were put in place, and democratization before a culture of political tolerance and rule of law was established (...) China is viewed by others as modest, America as arrogant; China leads by example, America by lectures and sanctions, if not missiles.”²⁰⁷

No doubt, China has emerged as one of the largest creditors of the world, including that of the United States.²⁰⁸ Although the exact number is a state secret, it is estimated that between 2000-2014, Beijing spent \$362bn on loans and foreign aid. The United States figure amounts to \$399bn.²⁰⁹ China has also established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a multilateral development bank, in which it holds a stake of 30%. The institution is widely regarded as a rival to the IMF and the World Bank. As opposed to official development aid (ODA) from OECD members (known as the Development Assistance Committee or DAC), Chinese money comes with “no strings attached”, this is called the Non-Interference Policy (不干涉外交政策).²¹⁰ This means that aid recipients are not required to implement any reforms or make any efforts for good governance, a very attractive option for illiberal governments or those with weak democratic institutions. For instance, when Uganda – a democracy – implemented draconian anti-gay laws in 2014, the United States along with several

²⁰⁶ He Li, "The Chinese Model of Development and Its Implications," *World Journal of Social Science Research* 2, no. 2 (2015).

²⁰⁷ Wei-Wei Zhang, "The Allure of the Chinese Model - Opinion - International Herald Tribune," (accessed July 3, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/01/opinion/01iht-edafrica.3357752.html>).

²⁰⁸ Reuters Staff, "China Regains Spot as Largest Foreign U.S. Creditor," (accessed July 4, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-treasury-securities-idUSL2N1L11RV>.)

²⁰⁹ Cecilia Hatton, "China's Secret Aid Empire Uncovered," (accessed July 5, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-41564841>.)

²¹⁰ Global Times, "China's Foreign Aid Comes with 'No Strings Attached'," (accessed July 4, 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/649128.shtml>.)

European countries such as Denmark and Norway cut financial aid to the country.²¹¹ China, however, unfazed by these developments, increased its investments in the country \$875 million the next year.²¹²

For China, its development model, its generous ODA but also the extremely ambitious OBOR project can serve to enhance not just its influence but also its image. China can present itself as a benign actor and a responsible world power: China is indeed rising but at the same time its selfless foreign aid is helping other countries to grow as well.²¹³

4.2 Weaknesses

4.2.1 Inconsistent and Contradictive Foreign Policy

Perhaps the biggest obstacle of Chinese soft power is, ironically, China itself. Chinese foreign policy is very inconsistent with the image it tries to shape for itself and often works against its own soft power efforts.

An obvious example would be its attempts to counter the “China Threat” theory. Beijing is aware that its fast-paced ascent on the world stage has bred anxiousness in the region and has launched a charm offensives with catchy slogans like “Peaceful Rise of China” (中國和平崛起) and “Good Neighbor Policy” (睦鄰友好政策) to reassure neighbors. Fravel argues that as a result of the latter, China has shown great willingness to resolve territorial disputes with its neighbors. In the past, Beijing has made heavy compromises, sometimes

²¹¹ Reuters Staff, "U.S. Cuts Aid to Uganda, Cancels Military Exercise over Anti-Gay Law," (accessed July 4, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-uganda-gay-announcement/u-s-cuts-aid-to-uganda-cancels-military-exercise-over-anti-gay-law-idUSKBN0EU26N20140619>.)

²¹² Steven F Mandu, "Minister Kyambadde Applauds Chinese for Investing in Uganda," (accessed July 4, 2018, <http://eagle.co.ug/2018/01/16/minister-kyambadde-applauds-chinese-investing-uganda.html>.)

²¹³ Hongxi Yang, "Make Intl Aid More Effective and Balanced," (accessed July 6, 2018, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2012-07/25/content_15616466.htm.)

settling for less than 50% of the contested areas in some cases.²¹⁴ However, while China often talks about a “shared destiny” for Asia and has launched a wide array of initiatives to ease these worries (such as the cooperation with ASEAN member states), it still finds itself at the center of territorial disputes and negative attention on the world stage. After all, Xi’s China is no longer a China that “hides its strength and bides its time”, it is a confident and rising world power that is increasingly assertive.

Its most notable territorial dispute is the one in the South China Sea, where China lays claim on the archipelagos and the exclusive economic zones contested by Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines. The conflict has resulted in heightened tensions and discontent among China’s neighbors.

In 2014, violent anti-China protests broke out in Vietnam when Beijing greenlit an oil rig deployment near the Paracel Islands (西沙群島) which are claimed by both countries but in fact controlled by China.²¹⁵ The move resulted into widespread anti-Chinese sentiment among the Vietnamese population, which led to another wave of protests in 2018 when Hanoi announced economic reforms that the public saw as land concessions to China.²¹⁶

Similarly, in 2016 the Philippines successfully challenged the legality of China’s “nine-dotted line” at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Beijing, however, dismissed the ruling, stating that the arbitral tribunal has no jurisdiction over the matter.²¹⁷ Despite popular discontent, the Philippines’ newly elected president, Rodrigo Duterte, did not

²¹⁴ Taylor M Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation: Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 55.

²¹⁵ William G. Frasure, "Vietnam Steers between China's Threat and Public's Anger," (accessed July 6, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/06/vietnam-steers-between-chinas-threat-and-publics-anger/>.)

²¹⁶ Martin Petty, "In Vietnam, Distrust of Government's China Policy Fuels Protests," (accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-protests-analysis/in-vietnam-distrust-of-governments-china-policy-fuels-protests-idUSKBN1JF0VU>.)

²¹⁷ Xinhua, "Chinese Diplomat Says South China Sea Tribunal Has No Jurisdiction," (accessed July 6, 2018, http://china.org.cn/world/2016-05/12/content_38443762.htm.)

further pursue the matter in exchange for Chinese guarantees of investment and a promise that it would not further expand into other reefs.²¹⁸

Another major point of concern is the militarization of Chinese-controlled reefs and islands in the South China Sea, which has not just upset neighboring countries but also the United States. In addition to constructing military bases on existing territory, China is also building artificial islands while state media propagate that “China has the right to build whatever it needs within its territory.”²¹⁹ During a visit from U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Xi reaffirmed China’s resolute stance on the South China Sea, stating that “China does not want others’ properties but it will also not yield an inch of the territory of its ancestors” (老祖宗留下來的領土一寸也不能丟，別人的東西我們一分一毫也不要)。²²⁰

Such remarks reveal a very ambiguous foreign policy: for China the disputed territories are not disputed at all, they are integral part of its territory. As such, China does not see it as a contradiction to its peaceful rise, as it is merely defending its territory.²²¹ Beijing refuses to acknowledge other countries’ claims and at the same time dismisses the China Threat theory as unreasonable and unsubstantiated. This comes at a time in which Chinese military expenditure has seen a consistent year-on-year increase, reaching \$175 billion, up 8.1% from the previous year.²²²

Furthermore, Chinese officials do not always express themselves with due finesse when confronted with questions regarding Chinese foreign policy. At a July 2010 ASEAN

²¹⁸ Al Jazeera, "Filipinos Protest China's Build up in Disputed Sea," (accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/filipinos-protest-china-build-disputed-sea-180210095558354.html>.)

²¹⁹ Yusha Zhao, "Land Reclamation to Expand in South China Sea Islands: Expert," (accessed July 6, 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1088347.shtml>.)

²²⁰ 人民日報. “習近平會見美國國防部長馬蒂斯,” (accessed July 3, 2018, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2018-06/28/nw.D110000renmrb_20180628_1-01.htm)

²²¹ Katherine Morton, "China's Ambition in the South China Sea: Is a Legitimate Maritime Order Possible?," *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 916.

²²² Brad Lendon, "China Boosts Military Spending 8% Amidst Ambitious Modernization Drive," (accessed July 6, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/04/asia/chinese-military-budget-intl/index.html>.)

meeting in Hanoi, China's then Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi (楊潔篪) refuted concerns from a Singaporean minister on the South China Sea with the words "China is a big country and other countries are small countries. That's just a fact."²²³ More recently, spokeswoman for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hua Chunying (華春瑩) commented that "small countries should not make unreasonable demands" when asked a question on this identical topic.²²⁴ Both quotes were hyped and frequently cited in foreign media outlets.

Without a doubt, some of China's actions and comments do not further Chinese soft power pursuits at all. On the contrary, they may damage them and undo previous efforts that have sought to win over the hearts and minds overseas. As a rising world power, China needs a consistent and coordinated foreign policy that neighboring countries do not perceive as menacing. If not, China's efforts to establish itself as a peaceful world power may be in vain.

4.2.2 Human Rights Issues and Lack of Legitimacy

The Beijing Consensus highlighted in previous chapters as a strength of Chinese soft power is at the same time also a weakness. Indeed, values that are attractive in one place can be reviled in another.²²⁵ In Western countries especially, China is viewed as a state with an authoritarian and repressive regime.²²⁶ Indeed The role of civil society in China is very limited and under Xi, it is even being pushed back. Since Xi's coming to power, China has seen unprecedented crackdowns on human rights activists, lawyers, dissidents and NGOs.²²⁷ The

²²³ Terry McCarthy, "China's Aggressive Stance Reveals Lack of Coordination," *Yale Global Online*, December 5 (2012).

²²⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on January 22, 2015," accessed July 6, 2018. (http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1230645.shtml.)

²²⁵ Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 55.

²²⁶ d'Hooghe, "The Expansion of China's Public Diplomacy System," in *Soft Power in China*, 29.

²²⁷ Nick Cumming-Bruce, "China's Rights Crackdown Is Called 'Most Severe' since Tiananmen Square," (accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/05/world/asia/china-human-rights-united-nations.html>.)

death of Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo (劉曉波) in July 2017 in police custody drew much regret and attention to China's human rights situation from all over the world. ²²⁸

More recently, authorities' treatment of minorities has also been in the international spotlight, resulting into headlines like "Apartheid with Chinese Characteristics: China has turned Xinjiang into a police state like no other" in the mainstream media outlet *The Economist* or even led Canada's public broadcaster CBC-Radio Canada to publish an article titled "Thank the Party!: China tries to brainwash Muslims in camps." ²²⁹

A 2017 study from Pew Research Center asking participants if the Chinese government respects the personal liberty of its subjects (Figure 4.4) indicates that audiences from most countries believe that it does not. Only 11 out of 38 surveyed countries answering 'yes' reached the threshold of 50%, many of which are developing countries. With 71%, the highest percentage of any country, Nigerian participants overwhelmingly agree that Chinese citizens enjoy personal freedom; a consequence of the massive Chinese investment in the country in recent years, no doubt. On the other hand, at least three fourths of participants in all "Western" democracies, which China frequently accuses of having a monopoly on media and spreading anti-China narratives, gave a negative answer. At the end of the spectrum we find Sweden, where 95% of participants answered that Chinese people do not enjoy the same liberties. Responses from China's neighbors Japan and South Korea were also negative where only 9% and 18% respectively agreed with the question.

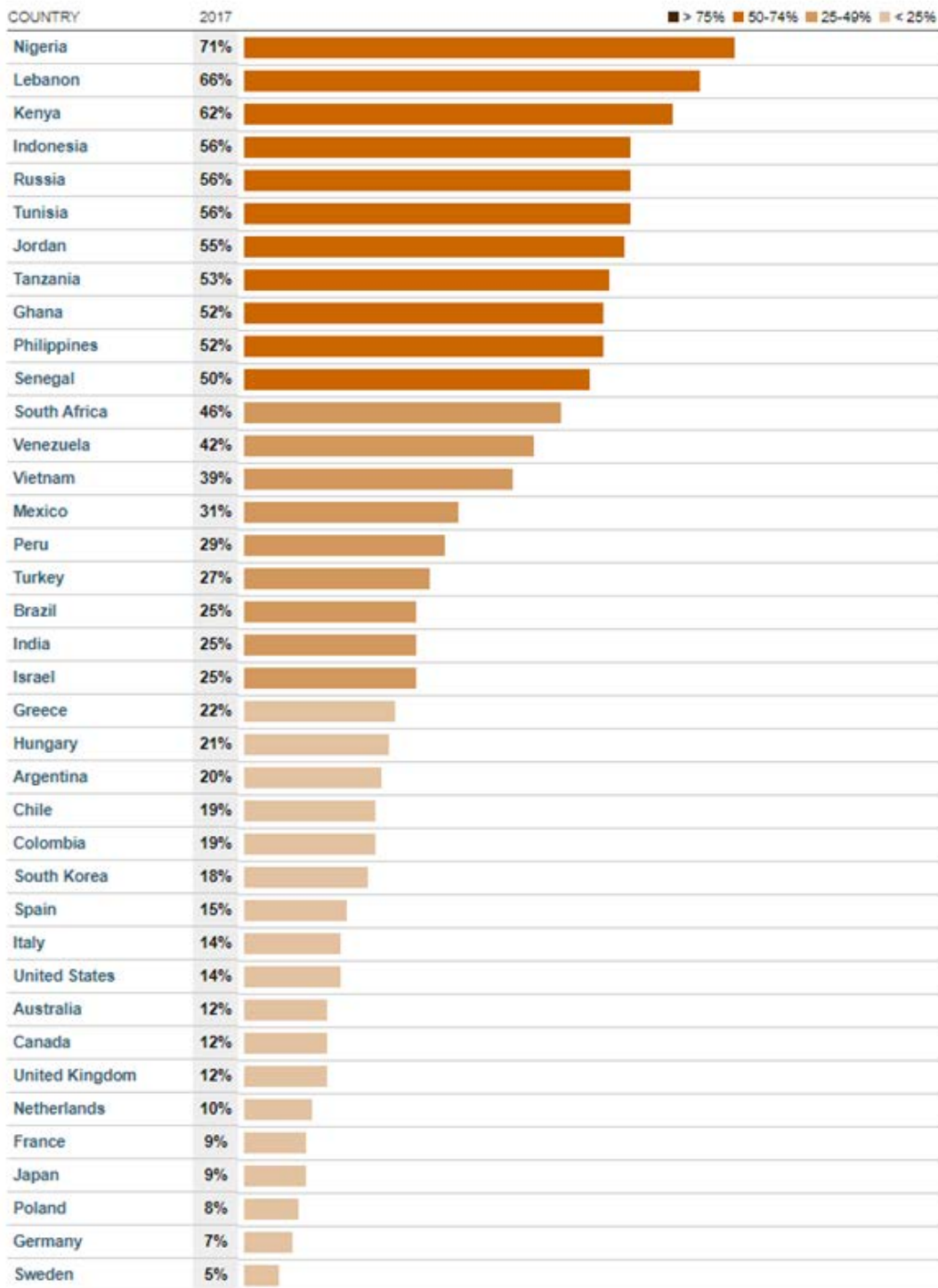
²²⁸ BBC, "Liu Xiaobo: China's Most Prominent Dissident Dies," (accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-40597514>.)

²²⁹ *The Economist*, "Apartheid with Chinese Characteristics: China Has Turned Xinjiang into a Police State Like No Other," (accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2018/05/31/china-has-turned-xinjiang-into-a-police-state-like-no-other>.)

CBC, "Thank the Party!: China Tries to Brainwash Muslims in Camps," (accessed July 2, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/china-internment-camps-1.4666686>.)

Figure 4.4: Does China's government respect the personal freedoms of its people?

Percent responding **Yes** (2017)



Source: Pew Research Center - Global Indications Database
 Retrieved June 27, 2018 from:
<http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/71/survey/19/>

Nye's concept of soft power entails that foreign policy based on shared values such as civil liberties and human rights are powerful sources of soft power.²³⁰ The data above, however, reveals that world has by far a negative perception of China's human rights record. Chinese authorities frequently announce progress is being made and periodically release white papers on China's human rights situation. However, for Beijing, improvement of its human rights situations does not constitute granting civil liberties to its citizens but rather more economic and cultural freedom and a higher standard of living.²³¹ Yet, this has failed to convince foreign audiences in most liberal democracies and China's human rights situation remains without a doubt an obstacle for Chinese soft power.

Another major hurdle for Chinese soft power is authorities their severe lack of credibility.²³² This is an issue that is very much related to the political system in China and its approach to public diplomacy. China's political institutions are not only nondemocratic, they are also extremely opaque and secretive. Outside China, this leads to doubts about the Communist Party's legitimacy and whether or not the Chinese government really does speak on behalf of its people.²³³ Such views obviously undermine the diplomatic messages and soft power initiatives of the Chinese government. After all, Nye names credibility and good reputation as essential in order to find an audience in a society that is saturated with information: a paradox of plenty.²³⁴ Information from governments that lack these qualities will be considered propaganda and yield counterproductive results.

From a media-theoretic point of view, this is also very problematic. While China has indeed invested massively in its international media expansion and now owns one of the

²³⁰ Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 62.

²³¹ Sheng Ding, *Is Human Rights the Achilles' Heel of Chinese Soft Power? A New Perspective on Its Appeal* (2012), 645.

²³² d'Hooghe, "The Limits of China's Soft Power in Europe," 183.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 107.

most extensive networks in the world, its reports are still often considered of questionable authenticity. This is especially the case when the topics covered move from a sphere of consensus to a sphere of controversy.²³⁵ In 2008, Liu Yunshan of the Central Propaganda Department famously declared that the power to disseminate information determines the power to influence (傳播力決定影響力).²³⁶ However, China's image problem may not be one of lack of communication capacity but one of lack of credibility.

4.3 Conclusion

The strength of China's diplomacy lies very much in its instruments. The Confucius Institute is China's biggest asset in spreading its language and culture. Compared to its counterparts, which have been around for over a century like Alliance Française, the Confucius Institute has seen an extremely high number of enrollments in a little over a decade. The increasing importance of Chinese because of the country's economic growth certainly plays a role in the institute's popularity.

China's rise has also resulted into a massive increase in international students. Many of these inbound students come from China's periphery or from countries that are part of Chinese soft power initiatives, such as the One Belt One Road Project. These students will likely develop an affinity towards China and perhaps even adopt Chinese values and ideas, thereby creating a durable long-term source of soft power.

In addition, China's increasing popularity as a tourist destination makes it possible for visitors to become familiar with the country. Not only does this provide economic benefits but it also allows visitors to develop a fondness of China. Many of tourists come from ASEAN

²³⁵ Sun, 66.

²³⁶ 中國共產黨新聞, "接地氣才能有底氣"——記中共中央政治局常委劉雲山, (accessed July 7, 2018. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/BIG5/n/2012/1225/c64094-20013177-2.html>.)

countries, as China has made efforts to develop closer ties with its Good Neighbor Policy. Similarly, many Chinese travel to these countries, taking with them the image of a wealthy and affluent China. Indeed, China's economic development has amazed both friend and foe and served as a source of admiration, despite China not promoting its own model. It has also enabled Beijing to grow into one of the largest ODA providers in the world, offering aid to developing countries, regardless of their governance, with "no string attached". This has won over many hearts in developing countries, on the African continent especially.

At the same time, China's authoritarian system of governance makes it very unpopular in the West and some of its neighbors. Its blatant disregard for human rights and freedom of speech work against its attempts to overhaul its image. Furthermore, while China has massively expanded its communication capacity over the last years, it still lacks credibility, a fact that can lead foreign audiences to perceive Chinese broadcasting as propaganda. Furthermore, it is clear that the image that China wants to build for itself does not always correspond with reality.

Finally, China's foreign policy often contradicts its soft power efforts. While Beijing has many policies in place to construct cordial relationships with neighboring countries, it also agitates them by its expansion in the South China Sea. A consistent foreign policy is necessary if China wants to win over the hearts and minds in its periphery.

5. Conclusion

China's push for soft power must be interpreted in the context of the role it has appointed to itself: that of a rising superpower. With President Xi, the days of hiding one's strength and biding time are long gone. Today, China is an increasingly assertive nation with a growing importance in international politics.

In the beginning of this study, I sought an answer to the following questions:

1. How does China view soft power?
2. How does China obtain soft power?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese soft power?

I have found that in fact, Chinese interpretation of soft power build on Nye's original concept yet slightly diverges in a number aspects. Indeed, soft power in Chinese context is also based on the principle of attraction: spreading the Chinese Dream and better understanding of Chinese values are a core objective of its soft power pursuit. However, as opposed to just using it to win over hearts and minds abroad, China also uses soft power in its domestic sphere.

For Beijing, soft power serves both for nation branding as well as nation building. Through soft power, authorities aim to create a robust Chinese identity, one that withstands foreign influence, in order to enhance national cohesion and ensure regime stability. The Communist Party needs to make "Chineseness" an attractive concept if it wants to legitimize its rule, especially in areas with large ethnic populace, such as the Tibet and Uyghur autonomous regions.

The Chinese dream is an essential part of the Party's nation building efforts. It is essentially a nationalistic discourse that builds on the humiliation narrative, an integral part of the Chinese identity. Through the Chinese dream, China will finally see its long-awaited rejuvenation and reclaim its rightful place as the center of civilization. Rejuvenation, however, is a gradual process that can only happen under the guidance and leadership of the Communist Party.

Public diplomacy, as the principal method of Chinese soft power, is a responsibility shared between various government bodies. The objectives of Chinese public diplomacy as fourfold: to strive for better understanding from the world by telling its story, to counter foreign propaganda, to promote unification with Taiwan and to promulgate the country's foreign policies.

China's enormous investments media apparatus in recent years highlight the importance of mass media it puts on global reach and communication. As China takes its place on the world stage, its influence must correspond its economic might. Right now, China sees itself stuck to the image it was given by Western media: that of a rigid autocratic regime. If China truly wants to exert its influence on a worldwide scale and legitimize its position as a global power, it needs to sway the opinion of foreign audiences in its favor. This can only be done if it has the capacity to reach audiences worldwide.

Today, China's state media have gone global. In just a few years, China Radio International and CCTV have branched out massively and now have the capacity to broadcast and report foreign listeners worldwide, often from a Chinese angle of interest. While many Western news outlets are struggling, CCTV's international branch, CGTN, has opened regional offices and broadcasting centers from Nairobi to London. CGTN has heavily localized its

reporting in order to boost internationalization and credibility of its network. CGTN, too, actively works to build a better image of China and defends the country in light of criticism.

Xinhua, China's state-run news agency, has also undergone thorough reforms and carried out a worldwide expansion. It now ranks among the world's largest press agencies, alongside Reuters, AP and AFP. It is, however, still under direct supervision and control of the Communist Party. Xinhua's journalists go through rigorous ideological training to ensure absolute loyalty to the Party. Despite it being one of the world's largest agencies, it is still a mouthpiece for the Party and its primary function is to serve Party interests.

Nye names three pillars of soft power, namely: a country's culture, its political values and its foreign policy. For China, its principal source of soft power is its indeed traditional culture as its political system is at odds with most other countries. The Confucius Institute is, without a doubt, the star of China's cultural diplomacy. The Institute serves several goals: to spread the Chinese language, foster Chinese culture and promote business between China and the world. Despite occasionally being the subject of controversy, in just a matter of years, it has organized hundreds of thousands of cultural activities and enrolled almost two million learners of Chinese. Generous funding from Hanban and the Institute's exceptional structure have resulted into a rapid expansion of its network and fostered the internationalization and networking of Chinese universities. Confucius Institutes are very successful in introducing Chinese culture to local audiences as well as local elites. They also aim to promote a better, harmonious image of Chinese society.

Additionally, while China does not actively promote its development model, it still remains a source of admiration to a certain degree. China's economic growth and foreign investment has spurred a massive inflow of international students to the country. Many of these students come from countries in which China has ongoing projects, such as the One Belt One

Road initiative. Official development assistance has also won over many hearts and minds in developing countries.

However, while China does massive efforts and investments, it faces a series of obstacles and challenges, most of which are arguably self-inflicted. China's foreign policy in recent years, despite government strategy, very much contradicts its theorem of "Peaceful Rise". Its ever-growing military budget and aggressive expansion of military bases in the South-China Sea has resulted into anxiousness and distrust in neighboring countries, as witnessed by popular mass protests in the region.

Moreover, China's opaque and nondemocratic system of governance is extremely unpopular with Western democracies. For the most part, China is perceived as not respectful of the civil liberties of its subjects, a view which is further complicated by government crackdowns on journalists and human rights activists. The treatment of minorities in recent years has exacerbated this impression, as echoed in Western media outlets.

While the efficiency of China's massive soft power push does not fall under the scope of this thesis, some questions can be raised. Why is it that India, despite having considerably fewer resources to invest, can bring forth Bollywood and the Chinese cultural industry cannot? How can neighboring Cool Japan amass so much soft power? South-Korea absolutely dwarfs China with its popular culture: why is there no Chinese wave? These may serve as motivation for future studies.

Today, China's soft power push is more likely than ever to succeed. While in 2018, Donald Trump declared that America no longer wants to be the policeman of the world, Xi Jinping talked about China's responsibility in his "shared future for mankind".²³⁷ As the

²³⁷ Liangyu, "Xi Calls for Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind," (accessed July 7, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/10/c_137099759.htm.)

United States increasingly its focuses on itself under its “America First” policies and neglects its international standing, there is a growing vacuum for China to step in. If China plays its cards right, this can be a unique opportunity to enhance its soft power and establish itself as responsible superpower.

However, Beijing also needs to reflect on the self-imposed constraints that prevent it from amassing soft power. China wants to present itself as an alternative, the opposite end of the spectrum the world’s relationship with the United States. Its leadership radiates determination and confidence, however, it remains to be seen whether China can also convince the rest of the world.



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