

Chinese soft power



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In broad understanding, power is ability to show influence on others in order to get desirable outcomes. It is possible to have an impact on behavior of other individuals by means of three basic directions such as threatening by coercion, by offering incentives or paying and by making others want what one wants. The State can get desirable outcomes in international politics because other states want to follow it. They can show this desire by admiring the country's values, just emulating its examples or aspiring for openness and prosperity. In international politics the weapon of "hard power" which forces other states to change by means of threatening or using economic or military means, while "soft power affects through culture values and ideology thereby getting other countries to want the outcomes that a particular country wants – co-opts people rather than coerces them (Nye, 2004). There is a one question which attracts attention of all is exactly that of China's soft power. This essay explores various aspects of this type of power in the context of Chinese policy in particular how China can best use its soft power to be beneficial to the international community.

Nowadays China is broadly well-known as "global factory", defining appreciably a contemporary world financial-economic and political landscape. However, in terms of cultural-ideological attractiveness China is still losing to the United States. Thanks to the strategy of soft power which has been elaborated by outstanding American scientist Joseph Nye, Beijing is urged to eliminate this disbalance.

The China's statement of commencing the realization of such strategy has officially been made in 2007 during the session at XVII congress of Communist party of China, the Chinese party leader Hu Jintao proclaimed

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that there was a need of increasing the importance of “ soft power” model in the country’s external and foreign economic policy.

As shown by the analysis carried out by Chinese policy of « soft power», takes into account the basic mechanisms of the classical concept of forming positive image of the country in international arena. Thus, under the « classical concept» refers to the concept of which the State intended to constitute the task of global geopolitical nature and have the resources to do so.

Among these mechanisms, firstly, the conducting various cultural actions which would have been the most positive features of Chinese culture with an emphasis on the achievement of China (economy) in recent years. In the second, adjusting of the cooperation to provide assistance in social and economic fields. In the third, conducting balanced policy in the world arena allows to play an important role in preventing the deterioration of the international situation and reinforcing of the global political and economical stability.

Cultural aspects which have very rich cultural and historical traditions of Chinese civilization are in a special place in the Chinese soft power. The successful experience of the US has shown that right cultural policy helps to provide positive image of a state within the framework of another civilization landscapes. By this given fact, the increasing amount of Chinese cultural projects overseas can be explained. Cultural actions of China are urgent to show universal influence on the global audience, which includes an

important West audience as well as an audience of Asian, African, Hispanic, and Muslim civilization.

The recent Olympic Games 2008 in Beijing had this universal influence. Their scope allowed to demonstrate the fact of impressing economic growth of China the past decade, which brought the Celestial Empire to the list of the world leaders and has given an opportunity to create a powerful financial and industrial base. Namely, due to this, Beijing has been able to devote to such a powerful record of shares of the amount of 42 billion USD. Besides, this amount has shown a strong effect on forming a positive image of China in international arena.

In the framework of cultural nature, China offers the word its own understanding of development as separate individual, society and also interstate and interpersonal relationships. While American concept of soft power offers the word so-called “ American Dream” which is based on successful relations external life of individual, China offers “ the idea of harmonious world”, which includes Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism in which the main accent is given on achieving inner harmony, a derivative of which supports an external harmony.

According to the analytical researches, it has made strong effect on consciousness of Confucian carriers. Furthermore, it also allowed simultaneously through the media to bring awareness to the carriers of other civilizations backbone idea of modern Chinese politics, rooted in antiquity.

Generally speaking, Chinese idea of harmonious world is built on the values which may be attractive for many countries. According to Yu Keping, putting <https://assignbuster.com/chinese-soft-power/>

forward idea of “ the harmonious world”, the Chinese government considered that such valuable ideal is universal aspiration of all mankind, and “ world and development” are great themes of the modern life are important content of building harmonious world. Thus in process of deepening of economic globalization interests of the states and the people will become more and more multiplane, politics will be more multipolar and culture is more diverse. Hence, mutual tolerance, respect, peaceful coexistence and realization of ancient Chinese ideal of “ unity and unification”, offers preservation of distinctions in generality and maintenance of the unity without coercion. In conditions of the contemporary world, it means that China will oppose attempts to impose values and a system of own civilization through force toward other states. Implied sense looks obvious here: while the US uses “ hard power” for distribution of its own values world wide, China prefers ideas of non-intervention in affairs of others and respect to diversity of ways of development and culture (Yu Keping, 2007: 31).

Meanwhile, China does not intend to be limited in one-stage demonstration of its legacy. With a purpose of permanent promotion of Chinese traditions, language and culture there is a new project which is being realized all over the world known as “ Confucius Institutes”. After the 9/11 terroristic actions, the US made it harder to obtain American visas for foreigner students, thereby essentially reduced their number, which China counted as sort of an advantage for itself thus increasing the number of foreign students (Kurlantzick, 2007: 183) . The first such institute has been opened in 2004 in Seoul. Five years later, by the end of the 2009 there have been 260

Confucius Institutes and 70 Confucian courses in the world, where Chinese language, culture, and history have been learnt by 120 000 people. As Chinese universities are becoming more academically competitive, the number of foreign students in Chinese universities has extremely increased (Saunders, 2006: 20).

The second strategic component of soft power is cooperation in providing assistance in social and economic sphere, and also in education, health care, and provision of humanitarian aid is priority to help developing countries. An accent on developing countries is established on foreign policy doctrine of China. In particular, China is focused on Latin-American and African states because of their growing consumer markets and rich natural resources.

Consequently, according to the official sources, the main priorities of the Chinese foreign policy are to ensure national economical interests through realization of various social, economic and cultural projects. In particular, in accordance with China' Foreign ministry 30-50% working hours of all diplomatic missions abroad must be given on soft power aspects.

Chinese combination in the framework of the second component of soft power is to promote ties in assisting large-scale help in huge social significant projects, obtaining concessions on extracting mineral recourses and cooperation in production sphere. Assisting in these social projects, thus Beijing creates a favorable image among the population and governing circles. As historical practice shows, such image is more stable in the mass consciousness.

Chinese promotion of “ soft power” in Latin America

As far as China is concerned in Latin American region, Beijing has two main objectives in the region: economical interest regarding from oil to steel and to soybeans, and political, trying to persuade all the Central and Latin American nations that recognize Taiwan to change their allegiance.

According to Julia Sweig, CFR senior fellow for Latin American studies – “ There’s a strategic competition between Taiwan and China in Latin America region”.

Latin American states are also happy to turn to Beijing as an alternative to the US. Chinese-Latin American relationship is an active economic penetration, purchase of company’s assets commodity which is tied with oil-gas, in particular, in such countries like Venezuela and Brazil. Namely, Beijing has promised Caracas to invest \$ 8 billion in social projects, in exchange for that agreement which was signed on oil production, the creation of the company for the construction of tankers and a refinery in China on reprocessing Venezuelan oil. Total between the two countries more than 300 agreements have been signed.

As regards Brazil, China has made an agreement, in accordance with that; Brazilian suppliers will be exporting 60-100 thousand barrels per day. China has already become the second largest trade partner of Brazil, and today aspires to balance economical aspect of social-cultural component.

Furthermore, the Chinese government has negotiated more than 500 trade investment deals with Latin American countries during the last three years, investing more than \$50 billion in the region. Trade volume between China

and Latin America has reached \$143 billions in 2008, besides, average income constituted 39, 7%. Nowadays, China is the third biggest trade partner of Latin America.

Explicit example is a tour of the vice-president of China Xi Jinping to Latin American countries in February 2009, thus emphasising unprecedented a high status of Chinese-Latin American relations. He has repeatedly said that in conditions of a new period it is necessary to enhance the humanitarian and cultural exchanges between China and Latin America, where the central role is Brazil. Particular attention will be paid to education, health care, sport, tourism, struggling with poverty, social defence and environmental issues, and also to expanding the cooperation between youth and woman's organisations of China and Latin America.

A practical embodiment of such statements is China's efforts to increase the amount of humanitarian aid. Thus, China promptly responded to the epidemic of " swine flu" in Mexico, and immediately gave the country an urgent humanitarian assistance on \$ 5 million, including assistance in the form of cash of \$ 1 million, and material assistance on \$ 4 million.

According to professor of strategy at the National War College, in Congressional testimony Cynthia Watson, when in 2004, Chinese leader Hu Jintao toured Latin American countries, he proclaimed that " message of greater economic, trade, financial, culture and technology ties was exactly the kind of the obligation which Latin America long wanted from the US".

Consequently, this relationship is continuing to grow as evidence of frequent Hu Jintao's frequent visits on Latin American continent. The last time he

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visited Cuba, Costa-Rica and Peru, before that he visited Brazil, Argentine, Chili and Cuba. Since then, Beijing reinforce its influence in the region, where many business projects are being realized regarding oil supplies, gas and oil products from Venezuela, Brazil and Bolivia.

While Latin Americans can feel satisfaction from business cooperation with China, however they do not consider the Chinese communist model as a role model.

Chinese promotion of “ soft power” in Africa

In fact, the expansion of Chinese activities in African continent is primarily exercised by the need for energy resources, raw materials and success to the new markets for low cost manufactured goods. As evidence of this, Africa is the source of 30% of China’s import oil.

During the last decade, China has been confidently increasing its presence in diplomatic, military and economical affairs of African continent. Relatively quite strong trade developing between China and Africa is a clear confirmation to this tendency. According to the expert of Council on Foreign relations Stephanie Hanson, since 2002 till 2003 the bilateral trade between China and African doubled and reached \$18. 5 billions, by 2007 it had reached 73 billions, and hit an all time high in 2008, reaching a historic new level of \$106. 8 billion.

Furthermore, Cynthia Watson in her written essay argues that consolidating of cooperation of Beijing with Latin America has two main reasons such as mineral recourses and diplomatic acknowledgement of Taiwan. Seemingly,

that these two reasons are also being used in Africa. (China Brief, June 10, 2004)

As Peter Brookes, Senior Fellow in National Security Affairs noted that “ Beijing’s involvement in sub-Saharan African security issues has expanded on conducting peacekeeping operations, exchange programs and troops deployment”. China has adjusted close military relations with Sudan, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. (The Weekly Standard, October 9, 2008)

Nevertheless, China’s involvement on this continent is much wider than political and economical cooperation. The particular interest for Washington is represented by sale of the Chinese weapons to African countries. First of all, as regards small arms and light weapons. According to the Congressional Research Service – “ China consider such supplies as one of its means to reinforce its political positions as a powerful state”. Some accuses Chinese selling of these types of weapons to the insolvent states which were accused of human rights abuses and also regions of conflict runs, really contradict to the national interest of the US. Some analysts see this as evidence that China is destabilizing rather than developing the continent, as it has pledged to do. However, Chinese authorities claim that it’s dedicated to peace on the continent, and it points to its peacekeeping operations in Africa as proof. For instance, let’s take Sudan, according to the State Department’s Coordinator for International Energy Affairs of the US, David L. Goldwyn – “ Providing with military aid to the Sudan’s government is not a policy of non-interference on the contrary, military aid to the government of Sudan has sort of an impact.” As an example, the Khartoum government is supposedly sponsoring a

campaign of ethnic cleaning in Sudan's Darfur region, where according to the United Nations; about 200, 000 people have been killed since 2003.

In order to find out whether China was involved to these numbers of death somehow or not, nonetheless there are some preconditions to think so as that China's National petroleum has invested in Sudan's oil industry, and as some local human rights activists claim that much of the income generated by this investment to buy weapons and ammunition from China itself. In addition, a lot of weapons have been found in Democratic Republic Congo, which is devastated by civil war, are also of Chinese design and manufacture, and China supplied arms to both belligerents during the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998-2000, claims Goldwyn.

The third component of the conception of " soft power" is to conduct very balance policy in the international arena, which shows growing influence on formulating positive image of the country. In addition, Chinese foreign policy is also obeyed to the aforementioned prince like " harmonious world". If to look at the policy of PRC of the previous years, in fact, there are no examples when Beijing supported any kind of aggressive actions which could lead to the occurrence of new military conflicts.

Nowadays, the present Chinese policy within the framework of ideological conception of " harmonious world" has a few positions. First of all, proclaiming that China always adheres to independent principles. Proceeding form fundamental interests of Chinese nation, world nations and the real events, China elaborates its own position and political course by all international questions; China does not obey to any external pressure, does

not establish any strategic relations with powerful states or political blocks, does not participate in the arms race and does not conduct a military expansion.

Furthermore, China is against hegemonism and tries to defend the world in all. They do not divide the world states on small and big, on strong and weak, on rich and poor thus consider each state as an equal member of international society. Moreover, China does not impose to other states its social order and ideology, and likewise does not allow other states to impose their social system and ideology to themselves.

However, famous American expert in China Joshua Kurlantzick (2007) argues that Chinese aspiration to include soft power in the foreign policy arsenal has not passed unnoticeable. In his book “ Charm Offensive: How China’s Soft Power is Transforming the World” he describes mechanism of Chinese penetration to the South-East Asia, Latin America and Africa where he tried to show how China uses its diplomacy, international aid, investments, trade preferences, culture and scientific exchanges for influence on developing countries. As far as he is concerned, American policy-makers began focusing on the war in Iraq, Afghanistan and the struggle against terrorism that they have forgotten of their own projection of “ soft force”, thus having created emptiness, which nowadays fills China. Kurlantzick suggests that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, China may become the first state which may try to challenge the United States.

The hypothesis of Kurlantzick calls into question repeatedly repeated promises of China not to become hegemon and not go to expansion.

Apparently, that Chinese challenge to the US does not assume a new arms race which is capable to exsanguinate the Chinese economy. Opposition of two systems will not revive, because China took a course on the integration into the world economy and extraction of the maximum benefit from globalization. The success of economic reforms became a new base for Chinese financial aid, which received an opportunity to become a huge investor and donor for the developing countries. However, it is still early to speak about the triumph of the “ Chinese model” due to China’s internal problems. Furthermore, Chinese potential of soft power still remains modest, whereas the challenge to the US has not absolute character. In a sense, Kurlantzick’s critic was directed not only against China, but also against the US authorities due to prolonged war in Afghanistan and Iraq, which has made an American potential of “ soft” impact toward other states weaker. Therefore, even small success of China may look disproportionately significant and even deterrent.

In contrast, Wang Yiwei (2008) argues that if Kurlantzick thinks that American freedom values still attract the whole world, and the recession of the US soft power has a temporary character due to the miscalculations of the White House, then as far as China is concerned, they have to elaborate their own view regarding soft power issue. According to Wang Yiwei, The US domination over the world will not be eternal and now is gradually falling down. Hence, rise of BRIC states (Brazil, Russia, India and China), shows that the world is not only a circle oriented on the Western axis, but another non-western world is also possible, which induced other countries to seek its own model of development and to aspire toward diverse world.

To conclude, thus, today it is already possible to confidently ascertain occurrence of a new Chinese phenomenon in the world, which aspires to enter on a new analogical to the influence of the US and Europe level of “soft power”. Advantage of Chinese “soft power” is that along with the aspiration to increase geopolitical rank of China, also aspires to create harmonious non-confronting relations with other civilisations, which will definitely foster to reinforce international stability, security and mutual understanding.

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