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Chinese Soft Power

Abstract: China's modern power is based on traditional sources: territory size, demographics, economy, and army. An important factor of power is soft power, which is based on culture, foreign policy (including economics), and values. Chinese soft power resources have an old tradition and the possibility of using them is large, and most importantly, in the current international environment, they can use them to gain and maintain an advantage over competitors. The article presents the elements of China's soft power that determine its advantage over other countries and the weaknesses that may limit its influence. It largely determines the research methods used: statistics and system analysis. The latter method makes it possible to determine the scale of China's influence and the chances of using them in the 21st century.

Keywords: *soft power resources, culture, values, foreign policy*

Introduction

Soft power is a relatively new term in the Chinese scientific discourse borrowed greatly from Joseph Nye's works. The Chinese easily refer to this term as it resembles Sun Tzu's philosophical concepts (Wang & Lu, 2008). The term has remained relevant enough for the leaders of the Middle Kingdom to perceive the practice of soft power as a historic chance to revive the glory of their country. Furthermore, the Chinese government has become aware of differences between the elements of power and that many countries are alarmed by China's increasingly stronger position. Therefore, China focuses on the development of soft power in order to present the country as a non-threatening power (Wang & Lu, 2008). Chinese power is based on enormous economic growth, followed by respective prosperity levels. The country's economic growth allows China to be recognised as the world hegemon (Picqart, 2006; Brunet & Guichard, 2011; d'Hooghe, 2011; Brautigan, 2009; Marszałek-Kawa, 2011; Marszałek-Kawa & Rezmer, 2019).

The article aims to determine China's soft power and its potential use for the growth of a state's power. There is rich literature on the issue of soft power in its broad meaning.

A considerable part of the publications, which have been referred to, belongs to the canon of sciences about international relations (Łoś, 2017). The theoretical tool used to analyse the Chinese soft power issue is a statistical method that allows you to compile indicators defining China's position.

The concept of soft power was noticed and applied by Joseph Nye, Jr. (1991). He described it as the ability to shape others' preferences thanks to attractiveness and attraction through possessed resources, which he included culture, values, and the style of conducting foreign policy, including economic resources.

Supporters of soft power have imposed many restrictions on the term and boundaries of its applicability, proving how difficult it is to determine universal rules, methods, and verifiable research results (Nye, 2006). Therefore, one may assume that soft power is connected with elements of culture, the value of education, the efficiency of state institutions, and diplomacy. It also includes some elements of the economy.

Soft Power: Culture

China's economic development has attracted the world's attention in the last thirty years. Although cheap Chinese products have flooded markets worldwide, little has been said about Chinese culture. Culture, unlike soft power, includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, laws and customs of society. Soft power uses culture, but public diplomacy and foreign cultural policy are different. Discussions about the cultural dimension of China's soft power focus primarily on Confucius Institutes and the growing popularity of Chinese language learning. China has a great past and very rich cultural heritage although its latest history is marked by humiliating failures. When the Chinese economy became one of the biggest, the country gained the chance to catch up with western countries not only in terms of economy. The export of cultural achievements may help to promote Chinese national heritage abroad, strengthen soft power and help China gain greater access to the worldwide market. Moreover, culture may help to overcome a negative image in western media. If China wants to become a true superpower in the world, it must enhance the power of its culture. China can refer to its past when its great civilisation directly affected Indochina, Japan, and Korea. The culture of this country has fascinated Europe since the times of Marco Polo and in the 17th and 18th centuries, everything of Chinese origin was in fashion (Rawnsley, 2009). There was a great interest in literature, philosophy, medicine, cuisine, martial arts and tai ci, and currently there is an increasing interest in film, music and fashion. That is why Chinese leaders consider culture the greatest source of soft power. The Chinese state can succeed where the communist authorities exercise full control: in the military and economic spheres. However, where freedom in creating cultural works plays a key role, China cannot meet the challenges of creating original artistic works (Gao, 2017).

Chinese culture is not only about addressing the past. A new generation of Chinese artists, writers, film-makers, and actors combines traditional art with modern ideas and

achievements. In 2002, Gao Xingjan became the first Chinese writer to be awarded the Noble Prize in literature. He was a citizen of France at the time. Chinese painters like Fang Lijun and Zhang Xiaogang are invited to exhibit their works in the most prominent galleries and museums worldwide. The Chinese movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has become a box office success and the celebrated actress Gong Li has been present at the most important film festivals. In 2010, thanks to enormous financial outlay, a film about Confucius was produced. Despite its artistic quality, the film did not meet the challenge posed by *Avatar*, coming to Chinese cinemas. Confucius had lost this battle and the authorities decided to withdraw the American film from the cinemas. It proves the existence of limitations in Chinese culture. This weakness also manifests itself when many examples of national heritage, such as books, poems, films, artworks, plays are considered subversive by the regime and banned in the country. It is a clear weakness of China because the political centre, to a great extent, decides what is good (d'Hooghe, 2005).

Confucius Institutes are the most visible and stable instrument of Chinese activity (Jacques, 2009). The first Institute was created in 2004 in Seoul and up to 2020, many Confucius institutes and classes came into existence.

	Confucius Institute	Confucius Class
Asia	95	52
Africa	38	10
America	144	384
Europe	149	153
Oceania	17	49
Together	443	648

Source: www.hanban.org

The main goal of institutes is to teach the language and verify language competence through exams and organising cyclical celebrations connected with the Chinese culture (Shambaugh, 2007). The weakness of the Institute is Hanban's supervision (National Office of International Promotion of the Chinese Language), resulting in close financial and organisational connections with the Chinese government (Brady, 2008), which uses the structures of the Confucius Institute as the tools of public and cultural diplomacy (Jocelyn, 2008). The institutes resemble British Council or Alliance Francoise, which aim to promote British or French cultural brands but are not overtly connected with the government (Wang & Lu, 2008). Individual facilities may apply for financing for individual projects, (Falk, 2007) and have great freedom of choice in this respect. Naturally, sensitive topics are to be avoided, e.g., Taiwan, Tibet, Tienanmen. Thanks to the present global fascination with the Chinese culture and language, the government in Beijing finds international partners, willing to co-finance the projects of the Institute.

The development of the network of Confucius Institutes enables the development of the language, the lack of which globally prevents achieving cultural advantage. The government is aware of this adverse situation, therefore, publishers in China must focus on promoting national culture and making the outside world develop a positive image of China. The content of Chinese export publications concentrates on language aspects, resulting in increased book translations financing. However, in recent years customers have become increasingly interested in philosophy, sociology, traditional medicine and books for children. Nevertheless, buyers most frequently come from the region that is a traditional market for China, i.e., Hong Kong or South Asia. Nowadays, propagating the Chinese language is very important, but so is popularising the English language. The Chinese government has considered it a priority and taken action to increase knowledge of the English language, which should facilitate communication between China and the world and be the key to successful competition in the global market.

What China may inspire the world with is closely connected with technology. Currently, China is one of the biggest centres for developing new technologies. In 2003, China launched manned vehicles into space (after the US and the USSR). Four years later a similar one was sent towards the moon. In the contemporary world China has become a leader in the field of technologies using renewable energy sources. Despite these achievements the Chinese have not been successful in receiving the most prestigious world awards – the Nobel Prize. By 2014 there had been merely eight Noble Prize winners from the PRC, four of whom represented exact sciences, which only confirms the fact that the Chinese have mastered the skill of copying other people's ideas.

In 2008–2020, 1.8 million Chinese students studied abroad and 220 thousand foreign students studied at Chinese universities, which points to the fact that the Chinese prioritise the development of science and openness to the world. In 2014, there were over 80 thousand students from 185 different countries, including 77% from Asia, 10% from America and Europe, 2% from Africa and 1% from Oceania. Most students come from South Korea, Japan, the US, Indonesia, and Vietnam. China has been trying to attract more foreign students to the country by creating new scholarship programmes for students from developing countries, mainly from Africa and South Asia. Beijing offers generous scholarships to these foreigners who have decided to study Chinese and start studies or research in China. Additionally, prominent foreign scientists from the West are invited, which is a way of modernising the Chinese university system. Scientists born in China working in the West are also encouraged to return to the country through financial incentives.

The strengthening of soft power would not have been possible without the spectacular Olympic Games. In the 1990s, China hosted the Asian Games, and finally succeeded in becoming the host of the Olympic Games in 2008. By organising the Olympic Games, the Chinese wanted to demonstrate to the world and their own citizens that communism is the right path to follow as, in Beijing's interpretation, it is efficient in organisational respect.

The sports facilities were just stunning. "The Bird's Nest", as the main stadium was called, is one of the most popular symbols of the Olympic Games in Beijing, apart from the swimming pool commonly known as "The Water Cube". The same can be said about medals which were embedded with nephrite of different colours, depending on the kind of medal. The symbolic message was clear: nephrite is a stone associated with China, and an old royal gem representing beauty, nobility, perfection, strength and immortality. The Chinese had made a great effort to make facilities and people connected with the Olympic Games amazing. What is more, the city was decorated with millions of flowers, pollution was limited, and the homeless and people holding views inconsistent with the official ones, were removed from the city centre. For a year, the inhabitants of Beijing had been undergoing training in good manners, they had been taught what they were allowed to talk about in public places and volunteers, and taxi drivers had been taught English.

The organisation of the Olympic Games aroused controversy but no sports boycott. The only symbol of objection to the Chinese policy in Tibet and the violation of human rights in China was the absence of some politicians at the opening ceremony. This group included British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, Polish President and Polish Prime Minister, and the Secretary General of the UNO Ban Ki-moon. However, the majority were present, including the representatives of political powers such as President of France Nicolas Sarkozy, Prime Minister of Japan Yasuo Fakuda, Prime Minister of Russia Vladimir Putin or President of the US, George W. Bush.

Soft Power: Values

Ideas and values are of particular significance in the resources of the Chinese soft Power. Deng Xiaoping's reforms have abolished the ideology of Maoism and the norms imposed by the state, which does not mean that they have been given the freedom of choice. At that time, in the more or less official speeches of the leaders, it was emphasised that the Chinese Empire had been one of the longest-lasting civilisations in the world, proud and strong power on the continent, outshining other countries. Its bureaucratic organisation was strong and Confucianism, together with other traditional philosophies, was significant and influential. Confucianism has become the basis of determining Chinese values where the most important are kindness, the right judgement and ceremony conventions. Nowadays, the Chinese authorities use these categories to build a harmonious society as an alternative to communist values, which have failed. These values are of even greater importance because they have spread quickly in countries dominated by Confucian culture. In the imperial dimension, in the Chinese culture such notions as a national state or sovereignty did not exist in traditional thinking. China considered other countries subordinate states; they were expected to exist in the state capital, become subordinate to the emperor and pay levies. The state was universal embracing "all under Heaven". The Chinese civilisation as *the*

Middle Kingdom is in the Centre where favourable harmony of Yin and Yang exists. That is why China is stable through its culture and harmonious development.

Chinese relations with the surrounding areas and non-Chinese population were affected by the concept of Sinocentrism and the superiority of China. This Sinocentrism and the Chinese world order have survived thanks to the durability of the Chinese civilisation. Most societies of east Asia, its northern part in particular, developed within Chinese cultural borders. According to the Chinese world order the relation between China and its neighbours resembled relations between a sovereign and a vassal. The Chinese state was based on a peculiar division of power. Central bodies and further authorities of provinces and counties. Below, was people's government-controlled, one way or another, by regional authorities. People's government with a wide array of competencies, plays a major role and enjoys great social recognition. It enabled China to operate in a social order supported by house, clan, and family (households) administration (Gallin & Hsing, 1966). Such a state structure could not be national, on the contrary, it rose above ethnicity. In Confucianism the most important moral rule is duty. However, it refers to the sense of duty towards own family, associates, and group members. It does not have to include behaviour towards people from outside the group. Consequently, it may give rise to some pathological behaviour, e.g., copyright infringement. That explains why China is a country of fake products where the great careers of members of families in power are no surprise to anybody (Kuenstler, 2005).

The character of the country is based on Confucian principles. However, it does not have a religious character as authorities at all levels fulfil administrative duties without referring to supernatural forces. Besides, Chinese piety comes down to rituals, ceremonies and beliefs in mysterious forces of nature (Gawlikowski, 2003). Nevertheless, the country's leaders have always been considered superior beings and their authority has been moral. It was believed a human being had to become civilised and moral. This process requires instilling various social duties and suppressing egoism. Equally important is restraint, observing norms, etiquette, and decency, imposing strict rules of various behaviours and activities which meet social requirements and the natural order. Through these activities people achieve different degrees of humanity, thus, they are not equal. All this influences views, present in east Asia, which exclude individual freedom or autonomy. The same applies to the world of Islam, Buddhism, or Confucianism, where it is assumed that people belong to different levels of existentialism and do not form one group in terms of equality. There is no gap separating people from animals or gods, whose status they may achieve in the all-embracing world, from a little worm to Buddha.

Confucianism has a universal character: it supports social order and harmony and teaches respect for the system and authority. According to Confucius, a man or a country should be conquered with the righteousness of the heart and civilisational attractiveness. Since the times of Lao Tzu, the Chinese have believed in the integration of Yin and Yang, the unity of opposites which are separate as two poles but tolerate mutual contradictions. It enables building harmonious international relations which respect cultural differences

and the differences of the developmental model. Moreover, a great emphasis is placed on the spirit of tolerance, equality, dialogue, cooperation, mutual benefits of different cultures and social systems, cultural knowledge, and diversification. Taoists believe in the unity of the human world and nature, harmony and energy, which guides all people. Consequently, peace is the key element of taken actions. Buddhism exemplifies the spread of this religion in China, whose authorities were tolerant and open to new ideas. That is why, morality, which should be guidance for rulers and their subjects on how to act properly, was so important for the supporters of Confucius. Chinese thinking translates into constructing a strategy of fighting, the example of which was Sun Tzu. According to him, the best victory is attained without a battle (Sun Tzu, 2010). A battle is the last resort or a political weakness and to avoid it one should follow a certain strategy which builds a social order based on the principle: "Do not do anything that is hurtful to you" (Weihong, 2010).

Confucianism as an ideology capable of maintaining the unity of society, is successful. In 2006, President Hu Jintao tried to introduce patriotic rules based on this ideology, but it was mocked on the Internet by young people. Nevertheless, it should be perceived as a positive image of budding criticism. However, it is important that this idea was understood as "update nationalism". On the one hand, it was a concept of remembering all the harm done to the Chinese state by other nations; on the other hand, it emphasised the state's growing power. There was a lot of information in school textbooks about other states robbing China. The nationalist way of thinking was reinforced by the media (Medeiros & Fravel, 2003). Based on old/new rules, the society was not to be an alternative to communism but to liberalism. Beijing – formulating new ideas shaping the society – is less and less afraid of 1989 repeating itself, when young people protested against the authorities on Tienanmen square. New, younger elites seek comfort – instead of being interested in history and politics, they focus on studying business subjects and getting familiar with the latest technology. Young intellectuals who, in Chinese history, used to stimulate reforms, this time have made a pragmatic deal with the government. The state has provided them with a relatively easy improvement of their material status, which was the main dream of this generation (Ramo, 2004).

Foreign Policy as an Element of Soft Power

 Apart from culture and values, the most important soft power resource is foreign policy. The process which placed China in the international system dominated by Europe, began with the end of Sinocentrism and the Chinese world order. China's defeat in 1840 in the first Opium War destroyed the Chinese sense of superiority and led to the fall of Sionocentrism and the disintegration of the Chinese world order. It triggered off the transition to the treaty system. The Chinese empire was forced to obey diplomatic rules of equality between China and its partners, destroying, in this way, the fictitious remains of the ancient feudatory system. The first decade of the 20th century marked the change of the Chinese world order

to the modern national state system. China was no longer the world, it was just a part of the international system (Suisheng, 2011).

As China joined the modern international system of national states, fearing imperialism threatening its territorial integrity, it became a fierce defender of sovereignty rights, an essential basis of the national state system. Using western concepts of legal uniformity and territorial sovereignty, Chinese political elites began to defend their national and territorial sovereignty against foreign interference.

When China began to accept the idea of uniformity among national states and fought for its sovereignty, the non-western world fell under the rule of world powers which did not treat weak states as equal. The status of a nation-state was determined by its economy and military power. China's inertia made it struggle for status equal to other nation-states. Consequently, the clash between traditional Sinocentrism and the modern system of the national state, wars, unequal treatment, humiliation, material and territorial losses, in other words, everything that the Chinese had tolerated during a century of contacts with foreign world powers, became the source of inspiration for the Chinese to defend their sovereignty Chinese (Kim, 1991). The Second World War and the taking of power by the communists in 1949 changed very little in Beijing's perception of the world, but it took a new form, consistent with the idea of the revolution.

In the 1950s, the Chinese government saw the world as divided between socialism and capitalism. Referring to the concepts of Marxism and Leninism, the Chinese government propagated the idea of world peace through the triumph of socialism. It turned out to be the most important and long-lasting. At that time, 5 rules, which should regulate the relations between countries, were formulated: respect for territorial independence and sovereignty, condemnation of military aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful co-existence and mutual respects and obligations (Bates & Yanzhong, 2006; Shirk, 2007; Wang, 2011).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the world was viewed through the prism of the "three worlds" theory, created by Mao. The first world constituted two superpowers, i.e., the US and the USSR; the second included developed countries and socialist regimes in East-Central Europe. Developing countries were called the third world. Both "American capitalism" and "Soviet revisionism" were considered the greatest obstacles. At that time, the Chinese government assumed that another world war was inevitable unless it was stopped by the world revolution, which would permanently eradicate imperialism and wars.

PRC's policy gradually evolved after Mao's death. Deng Xiaoping returned and managed to stop the execution of the revolutionary class war at the *3rd* Plenary *Session* of the Central *Committee* of the Communist Party of China in 1978, focusing on the economy (Hays, 2005). Deng opened the door to mutual, foreign undertakings. In line with the new concept special economic zones were established and farmers worked for their own profit. Most importantly, he changed the way of thinking in China and encouraged his fellow countrymen to prosper. At the same time, he marked borders of Chinese foreign policy following the

Taoist principle of "low level" (Tao guan Yang hui) to build strength and wait for the right moment (Leonard, 2008). Becoming powerful, China could not accept a passive attitude. In the 1960s, it proposed creating a fair, rational international system. Chinese foreign policy concentrated on such issues as peace and development while criticising the arms race and military alliances, which it considered less important than international institutions.

At the beginning of the 21st-century, Chinese foreign policy acquired a new dimension. When Chinese authorities repeatedly claimed they did not intend to abolish the existing international system, they simultaneously became much more critical of some aspects. Many reforms were suggested together with an alternative "harmonious" vision of the world. At the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2002, the strategy for long-term national interests pressed for transforming Chinese society into a society of "moderate prosperity" (xiaokang) by 2020. It meant creating a stable international environment and avoiding conflicts was necessary.

Undoubtedly, the main elements of the concept of harmonious development are consistent with soft power actions and constitute an added value of Chinese diplomacy (Rice, 2000; Kang, 2003). By relying on the UNO China tried to create an image of a reliable country committed to solving global problems, such as environment or food (Carminat & Carminati, 2022). As part of the Global Strategy (2016), China is implementing the One Belt, One Road (BRI) initiative (Miao, 2021; Voon & Xu, 2020). As part of the BRI, China cooperates with the world through huge investments in infrastructure, mainly transport in Asia, Africa, and Europe. The scale of the investment is comparable to the Marshall Plan. The BRI creates new jobs and can improve China's image (Duarte & Ferreira-Pereira, 2022).

In contrast to western diplomacy which adheres to moral rules such as appropriate management, democracy, transparency, the rule of law and respecting human rights, Chinese diplomacy is not governed by any moral principles. Acting for its economic and strategic interests, China has established friendly relations with many developing countries without any preliminary conditions usually required by western democracies. Beijing explained that in this way it implemented the principle of non-interference and the strategy of not upsetting authoritarian regimes with the conditions posed by western democracies, such as respecting human rights in countries with business opportunities. Taking into consideration the increasing power of China, political leaders of these countries may begin to treat Beijing as protection against American power. Consequently, many authoritarian leaders of the Third World countries were pleased to see the Chinese model of development as an alternative to the policy of the West (Ramo, 2004; Conrong, 2012).

In order to strengthen proposed directions in foreign policy, at the 17th National *Congress of the Communist Party of China* in 2007, a great emphasis was placed on building and using the power of Chinese society as a whole. It was decided that investments would be made in public diplomacy and, particularly, culture. In the understanding of Western standards, it is difficult to achieve as public diplomacy cannot be operated and controlled by the government. It hinders the development of the modern model of public diplomacy, which

is based on open dialogue and the policy of connections among independent participants (Martin, 2009). On the other hand, it enables Chinese leaders to plan their message and actions carefully and ensures that the guidelines have been implemented appropriately. While developing public diplomacy, China may have gotten trapped between seeking perfection in creating its image and a structural lack of openness in its society and inability to resign from control. As long as political dissidents are imprisoned for their political views, no public diplomacy will be able to change the image of China as a country where human rights are violated (Saunders, 2006).

The difficulties connected with the implementation of soft power by state institutions are reflected in the organisational changes of suitable decision bodies. In most countries, foreign affairs departments are the most important bodies in diplomacy (d'Hooghe, 2011). Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs is another major player in public diplomacy. In 2000, the first media centre, which had an easily accessible internet website, was set up in this department to improve relations with the international press (d'Hooghe, 2007). This department influences the operation of the spokesperson system, which has also been revolutionised. In the beginning, the institution of the spokesperson was considered to be a western idea. Nevertheless, in the late 1970s, spokesmen began to release information at special conferences organised for the purpose of internal communication. As of 1983, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly provided journalists with information at specially organised conferences. Despite introducing the new system, propaganda models were, to a great extent, still respected. Spokespeople usually read scripts and seemed unnatural, spoke slowly, and the reporters were not allowed to ask them questions or respond to their requests for explanation or clarification of their announcements. Foreign journalists heard "no comment" as an answer to their question. Foreign press perceived the spokesperson as a new tool of propaganda.

The year 2003 was the turning point in the work of press spokespeople. The presence of appropriate authorities emphasised the credibility of press conferences. The number of press conferences in the new format increased: more time was allocated to asking questions, and the number of journalists increased. According to SCIO's guidelines, each of the 17 ministries appointed a spokesperson, and a similar procedure was implemented in autonomous regions and local governments. The tools for improving and accelerating the transfer of information to foreign media were Internet websites and information in English.

There have also been changes among professional diplomats. After 1989, older officials were retired and replaced by a new generation of diplomats who could speak better English and local languages. They had a more cosmopolitan attitude and a very good knowledge of the problems of the country they had been accredited to. They were better educated, well-travelled, and frequently graduates of foreign universities when they became professional, clerical staff (Liu, 2005).

Currently, on the regional and global scale, Chinese foreign policy is aimed at presenting the country as valuing peace, concentrated on people's needs, open to cooperation, tolerant

and responsible (Suijan & Shiping, 2007). However, conscious implementation of 'soft policy' does not mean resignation from the strategy of hard power. In this context, the US perceives China as the greatest rival. What is more, China's foreign policy in South Asia is a good example of pursuing both strategies simultaneously, using soft and hard tools of the policy. It is also worth mentioning that the implementation of these two policy models depends on the region where they are to be introduced (David, 2003). Implementing soft power seems more visible in relatively smaller countries of South Asia but different in India, where applied tools are more diversified (Melissen, 2005). Following the policy of peaceful co-existence in harmony, China made a strategic agreement with the countries of the region: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan (Sinha, 2010). In the case of India, China tries to establish relations that would support cooperation mainly in the area of economy, despite existing controversial issues. China and India do not have a mutually adopted plan of cooperation concerning the structure of the army and defence, except for occasional military training. The Chinese try not to impose their solutions (Kurlantzick, 2011; Zhongying, 2011) even in such an important area as Southeast Asia. Latin America is perceived as an important market and an area of the US's influence.

Chinese diplomacy based on soft power resources requires a network of cooperating bodies (Pietrasiak, 2014). In order to achieve domination in the region, China decided to form the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The history of its formation indicates China's growing importance in the global context. It also points to the fact that China's policy may be predictable and that the country can cooperate with other countries (Mingijiang, 2008).

Creating the network resulted in China's involvement in the activity of the UNO. There were voices calling for Beijing to use its power responsibly. As a permanent UNO's Security Council member, China supports the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It took an obligation not to use nuclear weapons against other countries and not to participate in the arms race. Since joining the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1984, it has been complying with the obligations of the statute, including control of civil installations, export and import of nuclear material and mutual support of actions related to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (Leonard, 2008). As a result, China has been actively involved in issues connected with North Korea. In order to diminish tension, China actively supported the disarmament dialogue and was frequently the host country of meetings. After 2003, China initiated talks between Korea, the US, China, and later with Russia, South Korea, and Japan. In 2010, following Chinese mediation, the tension in US-Korea relations was reduced, although later, the talks were broken off. China is also involved in security issues, such as Iran's nuclear programme. China is against Tehran having nuclear weapons. However, it recognises its right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and cooperates with this country in trade relations.

China is also present in the Middle East and has appointed a special envoy for this region to conduct talks and negotiations. Equally active is China's diplomacy in Sudan, where it took steps to solve the conflict in Darfur (Łoś, 2013). The Middle Kingdom has also provided assistance to Africa, Latin America, and Asia. In executing the programme,

China realised that supporting authoritarian regimes was not consistent with its interests. Beijing concluded that regimes could not control organised crime and terrorist groups threatening Chinese investments.

Deng Xiaoping's motto of the early 1990s – "keep a low profile and never take the lead" – was, to a great extent, abandoned in foreign policy. It was necessary due to the growing importance of China and the need to use soft power. Present leaders make numerous visits to all continents. Chinese leaders realised their regime was possible and acceptable if it was accompanied by steady economic growth. China's foreign policy is currently conducted in an elegant but overbearing style, and weak opponents are patronised. It is increasingly evident, and as a result of its policy, China has earned the name of "Dragon in partnership clothing" (Grzywna, 2010).

Conclusion

Chinese soft power has some flaws. Many soft power resources are connected with authority structures (Guangjin, 2012). The weak point in China's execution of soft power is the absence of Chinese non-governmental organisations in the international arena, which deprives China of a significant soft power tool and support of state diplomacy. It makes the message, it is trying to convey, less credible and effective (Ziętek, 2010). China realises these weaknesses, which is why it wants to change the perception of various institutions as agencies allegedly established beyond the government's control (Li, 2008). Chinese experts and dissidents are convinced that soft power is necessary for the growth of China, which must be one of the centres of the world culture, where ideas, values, social life and views are attractive and interesting to people in other countries. Building soft power, equal to the main status of the Chinese authority and influence, has become an urgent issue in the development strategy in China. It is worth emphasising that China has already experienced growth based on its hard power – economic, technological and military – but its soft power remains behind. It is mainly used to dismiss the concept of China as a threat. It should allow a better under-standing of Chinese socio-economic reality and convince the external world to accept China. Building soft power benefits China as it helps maintain order and international safety. It also helps to solve problems between China and other countries so that controversial issues do not worsen mutual relations. In this context China, willing to gain in importance, is not in a comfortable position. Considering quick growth and the necessity to compete with other countries, China cannot concentrate on developing soft power because there is still much to be done to grow its hard power.

The popularity of soft power in China probably reflects the Chinese impression of China becoming a hegemon again. Officially, the Chinese emphasise the significance of respecting cultural, social, political and ideological diversity in the world. This emphasis on diversity is in opposition to western proposals of promoting its universal solutions and values globally and in China. It may pose a serious challenge to the status of the ruling Communist Party of

China. Lack of trust indicates that the Chinese social-political system does not correspond with the world's political discourse and atmosphere of openness and political pluralism being dominant norms.

Success and power have made China resign from the 'low profile' principle. China is becoming more aggressive, which may have a negative impact on its existing achievements (Kurlantzick, 2011). Moreover, *Beijing Consensus* cannot tackle many important dimensions of human development in the state and the world, which cannot be fully controlled. The unreformed political system of China is conducive to corruption and excessive concentration on short-term economic benefits, which may stimulate the growth of even greater internal inequalities. It is hard to decide whether *Beijing Consensus* is a transitional development model (Fairbank, 1968) or an original development model. Nevertheless, China has demonstrated to the world that democracy is not necessary to achieve economic growth. Therefore, the two concepts of the economic growth model are expected to compete with each other. In this respect, it is difficult to identify the future winner: the American experience of combining the free market with democracy or the Chinese model of a semi-free market with the authoritarian system. Nevertheless, the Chinese system has proved to have an impressive ability to convert power with respect to specified goals – e.g., the ability to conduct the Olympic Games successfully or stimulate the economy to overcome the global financial crisis. China has not yet found a way to meet the demands of political participation (if not democracy), which tend to accompany increasing per capita income. It may be connected with the abandonment of the communist ideology and the ruling party's authority dependent on economic development to a great extent. China, despite its global commitment, still behaves as a freelancer. However, it is gradually becoming dependent on the world, which it cannot control. The Middle Kingdom's concept of functioning in traditional terms has no chance of succeeding at the global level. Chinese leaders will have to consider other countries' reactions, China's excessively aggressive military attitude could result in the emergence of a counter coalition of its regional neighbours, which would weaken both hard and soft power. Countries in the region tolerate it and benefit from the Chinese economic growth but they are not prepared to accept its military growth.

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