

Understanding China Through Sharp Power: Dragon's Teeth?*

Keskin Güç ile Çin'i Anlamak: Ejderha'nın Dişleri Mi?

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ABSTRACT	ÖZ
<p>China is making important initiatives in economic and political issues to become a global power. China's initiatives determine the approaches of other countries, especially those who see China as a threat. In this context, "sharp power" (锐实力) as a new concept of International Relations literature has been used to define China. In this study, the emergence of sharp power concept is discussed; China's sharp power policies are illustrated with various examples; and criticisms directed to the concept are mentioned. Also, many problems related to the concept have been shown, and a holistic approach to the concept has been put forward in the study. In this study, based on the literature, it has been shown that there is a "concept war" between the global powers and that China is left behind in this framework. In International Relations studies, the aims of states in international politics or cooperation or conflict situations with other countries are analyzed with smart power, soft power and many other concepts. With this study, it is aimed to contribute to both the International Relations discipline and the Chinese foreign policy literature with sharp power, which is a new concept in the discipline of International Relations.</p>	<p>Çin, küresel bir güç olmak için ekonomik ve siyasi konularda önemli girişimlerde bulunmaktadır. Çin'in girişimleri, özellikle Çin'i tehdit olarak gören ülkeler başta olmak üzere diğer ülkelerin yaklaşımlarını belirlemektedir. Bu bağlamda, Uluslararası İlişkiler literatürünün yeni bir kavramı olarak "keskin güç" kavramı Çin'i tanımlamak için kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada keskin güç kavramının ortaya çıkışı tartışılmış, Çin'in keskin güç politikaları çeşitli örneklerle gösterilmiş ve kavrama yöneltilen eleştirilerden bahsedilmiştir. Ayrıca çalışmada kavramla ilgili birçok sorun gösterilmiş ve kavrama yönelik bütüncül bir yaklaşım ortaya konulmuştur. Literatüre dayalı bu çalışmada küresel güçler arasında bir "kavram savaşı" olduğu ve Çin'in bu çerçevede geride kaldığı gösterilmiştir. Uluslararası İlişkiler çalışmalarında, akıllı güç, yumuşak güç ve diğer birçok kavramla devletlerin uluslararası politikadaki amaçları veya diğer ülkelerle işbirliği ya da çatışma durumları analiz edilmiştir. Bu çalışma ile Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplini yeni bir kavram olan keskin güç ile hem Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplini hem de Çin dış politikası literatürüne katkı sağlanması amaçlanmıştır.</p>
<p>Keywords</p> <p>China, Sharp Power, Soft Power, Concept War, China Threat</p>	<p>Anahtar Kelimeler</p> <p>Çin, Keskin Güç, Yumuşak Güç, Kavram Savaşı, Çin Tehdidi</p>

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1. Introduction

*“It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white,
as long as it catches mice”.*

Deng Xiaoping

China draws attention as the world's second economic power. Population, dollar reserves, military spending, etc. are the factors that determine other countries' approaches to China. The rise of China is suspected by some countries and even perceived as a threat by the United States, in particular. Therefore, China as a global player has become a country that has economic and political aims in many parts of the World (Friedberg, 2011; Akdağ and Aktütün, 2021). Countries that see these goals as a threat to their interests also lead to the emergence of different literature for China. At this point, it is possible to talk about the concept of sharp power. According to Walker (2018a: 11), “the authoritarians’ unexpected ability to carry out digital-age censorship and to exert influence abroad has created a need for new terms that can adequately describe this new situation.”. The new term is “sharp power” (锐实力).

Power types such as hard power, soft power, smart power, etc. have been produced in the literature of International Relations. Sharp power has also become a new concept, mainly produced to deal with Russia and China. The concept of soft power, which is generally accepted in the literature, has received many criticisms when considered together with China. In particular, it is emphasized that China's soft power practices are different from other countries. These criticisms paved the way for the emergence of sharp power. In this context, the study sought an answer to the following question with a literature review: “How can the concept of sharp power be evaluated in discussions of the rise of China?”

The remainder of the study is organized as follows: the next section reviews related literature about the concept of “sharp power”. After the literature survey, a conceptual framework about sharp power is presented based on different approaches to sharp power. Then, China’s sharp power practices from Confucius Institutes to censorship of academic journals are mentioned. Finally, discourses that do not accept the concept of sharp power and reactions directed to sharp power are discussed. It should also be noted that although sharp power is related to Russia and China, the study only deals with China. Thus, it is aimed to provide a general framework on a newly developing concept about Chinese foreign policy and to contribute to the literature.

2. Literature Review

The seminal article on sharp power belongs to Walker and Ludwig (2017a). Economist (2017a) magazine published a special issue on sharp power in 2017 with its cover titled “sharp power: the new form of Chinese influence”. A few articles on sharp power have been published to the best of our knowledge. Singh who was the first writer addresses the issue without giving a conceptual explanation of sharp power. Besides, Singh (2018: 8) interestingly “endeavours to shed light on this subject to an Indian readership”. Lincot’s (2019: 39-49) paper focuses only on China’s sharp power in an age of uncertainty. Wu (2019) examines the sharp power of China through Taiwan and Hong Kong protesters.

Besides, two books are published on the sharp power. The Age of Sharp Power: China, Russia and Iran: The Interference is not Soft which was the first published book that investigates the

sharp power over Russia, Iran, and China and examines these countries within the framework of the developments in Italy (Messa, 2019). Fulda (2019) focuses on the struggle for democracy in Hong Kong and Taiwan as “sharp power and its discontents”. Without giving a conceptual explanation of sharp power, he addresses the attitude of the Chinese Communist Party on this issue.

Walker and Ludwig’s (2017a) paper is generally accepted and cited in the literature as the first work concerning sharp power. However, the concept of sharp power was first used by Mead (2004: 48) in the article entitled “America’s Sticky Power” in the context of US foreign policy. Therefore, it is necessary to determine that Mead used the concept for the first time. Mead also included the article in his book titled “Power, Terror, Peace, and War: America’s Grand Strategy in a World at Risk” in 2005. Mead (2005: 21) distinguished between sticky power, sweet power and sharp power in a chapter titled “The Shape of American Power”. When Mead’s studies are taken into consideration, it is seen that he evaluated sharp power as a “very practical and unsentimental thing” and saw the US as a sharp power and made inferences for US foreign policy.

Walker and Ludwig (2017a) used the concept related to China and Russia and did not refer to Mead in their study. Additionally, it is seen that there is no reference to Mead’s work in the “Soft Power to Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence in the Democratic World” which is an important work in sharp power literature. Other important sources of sharp power also did not refer to Mead in their studies.

The concept of sharp power has become a remarkable subject after an article entitled “The Meaning of Sharp Power” published by Walker and Ludwig in Foreign Affairs. This publication should be considered in conjunction with a study entitled “Soft Power to Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence in the Democratic World” published by the National Endowment for Democracy (2017). In this framework, it can be stated that the National Endowment for Democracy played an important role in the emergence of the concept. It should also be noted that this institution operates in Washington, is funded by Congress and aims to “the strengthening and growth of democratic institutions in the world”. Therefore, it is possible to state that the National Endowment for Democracy operates under manipulation and influence (Economist, 2017b: 17). This explanation is important in terms of showing the political dimensions of the emergence of the concept.

3. What is Sharp Power?

There have been many different interpretations of China’s soft power practices. In the post-Cold War era, researchers studying Russia and China in terms of soft power witnessed different practices. These authoritarian regimes, which suppressed free expression and political pluralism to protect the power in their countries, have started to use the same practices more internationally (Walker and Ludwig, 2017a). As long as Russia and China do not reduce the pressure on civil society in their countries, they will have problems with their soft power (Nye, 2019).

China is ranked 27th in the Soft Power 30 (2019) in 2019. According to “The Soft Power 30”, the main issues related to China are as follows:

The emerging global power has been facing geopolitical (and reputational) challenges on multiple front over the past year. The US-China trade war; blacklisting of Huawei by the

US; escalating criticism of the treatment of Uighurs in the Xinjiang province; continued tensions on the South China Sea; and most recently the pro-democracy, anti-Beijing demonstrations in Hong Kong have all put pressure on global perceptions of China. [...] China's growing soft power strengths in culture, education, and enterprise, will continue to be tempered by negative global perceptions of China's foreign policy and human rights issues.

Nye (2015) states that China's soft power has some limitations. China's soft power is emphasized by both former President Hu Jintao and President Xi Jinping. Besides, China spends 10 times higher than the United States does on "foreign propaganda". However, it can have a positive image in areas like Latin America and Africa where there are no territorial disputes and human rights issues are not always at the forefront. According to Nye (2015), two main reasons limit China's soft power. The first reason is nationalism. It is possible to see nationalist rhetoric in the South China Sea where China has problems with its neighbors. For example, the anti-China uprisings in Vietnam began after China's activities in the waters claimed by both countries. The second reason is originated from the problems in an uncensored civil society creation in China. The main source of China's soft power is still her government. Individuals, the private sector and civil society do not exist in China's soft power. China does not have soft power elements such as pop culture, Hollywood and universities in the USA. China's approach towards human-rights activists also damages the country's image in spite of positive developments like the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2009 Shanghai Expo. In this context, Walker and Ludwig (2017b) state that similar activities in foreign policy should not be considered as soft power, as the activities of the Chinese administration in the fields of media and education in China are not considered as soft power.

Walker (2018c) states that authoritarian regimes such as Russia and China are not based on hard power and their soft power is not sufficient but they can still have an impact on other countries. For these countries, "key attributes of sharp power are outward-facing censorship, manipulation, and distraction, rather than persuasion and attraction". In this framework, Walker (2019a) explains the need for a new concept such as sharp power:

The unanticipated ability of authoritarian states like China to exert influence abroad has created a need for new terms that can adequately describe this new situation. Among such terms is 'sharp power.' This describes an approach to international affairs that typically involves efforts at censorship and the use of manipulation to degrade the integrity of independent institutions.

Walker and Ludwig (2017a) make the following statement regarding sharp power:

Observers should not understand Moscow's and Beijing's efforts as "soft power." They are more properly labeled "sharp power.". Authoritarian influence efforts are "sharp" in the sense that they pierce, penetrate, or perforate the political and information environments in the targeted countries. In the ruthless new competition that is under way between autocratic and democratic states, the repressive regimes' sharp power techniques should be seen as the tip of their dagger. These regimes are not necessarily seeking to "win hearts and minds," the common frame of reference for soft power efforts, but they are surely seeking to manipulate their target audiences by distorting the information that reaches them. [...] the term "sharp power" captures the malign and aggressive nature of the authoritarian projects, which bear little resemblance to the benign attraction of soft power.

Hur (2019: 184) asks “why do authoritarian states use sharp power?”. The answer is that soft power is insufficient in the face of democracies and the political costs of hard power are high. Therefore, authoritarian states resort to sharp power for their goals which cannot be achieved by soft and hard power. According to Rasheed (2018), “‘sharp power’ may be a hybrid of ‘hard power’ and ‘soft power’ or a sub-set of one of them.”. Russia and China have been blamed for opening global television channels to manipulate the news or establish educational and cultural centers for their benefit. Sharp power, as Walker (2018a: 17) said, “neither really soft nor hard, is able to flourish.”. In Insa Ewert words, “‘sharp power’ has been defined as a combination of subversion, bullying, and pressure, which promote self-censorship. Whereas soft power builds attraction through culture and values, sharp power comes with a strong connotation of manipulation. While soft power is presented as alluring, sharp power seems dangerous.” (ChinaFile, 2018). Nye (2018a) states that, “[...] sharp power is a type of hard power. It manipulates information, which is intangible, but intangibility is not the distinguishing characteristic of soft power. Verbal threats, for example, are both intangible and coercive”.

Sharp power is also mentioned as an American concept that claims China and Russia intervene in the internal affairs of foreign countries (Koetse, 2018). Nye (2018b) explains this situation in terms of America as follows: “Washington has been wrestling with a new term that describes an old threat”. Isackson (2019) considers “Russia and China as the current champions of sharp power.”. Taehwan (2018) claims that the sharp power of Russia and China is a clear challenge to the liberal world order. Besides, Nye (2019) portrays North Korea and Iran as authoritarian sharp power along with Russia and China. According to Wu (2019: 133), “the term sharp power useful for referring to manipulative or coercive authoritarian influences hidden under or amidst ostensibly soft power efforts”.

Nye stated that advances in information technologies make sharp power much more important and effective. Therefore, control of the internet by China and Russia's intervention in the 2016 American election has shown that democracies must defend themselves (Chapman, 2018). Rasheed (2018) pointed out that the sharp power concept is concerning certain political events. Interestingly, the sharp power concept emerged in 2016 after the FBI investigation into the involvement of a major Russian banker link to the Kremlin in illegally transferring money to US President Trump's election campaign. In Australia, as another example, Senator Sam Dastyari resigned after a report showing that he had received money from a billionaire in contact with the Chinese government. Senator Dastyari was also known for his opposition to the official discourse of his country in dispute with China in the South China Sea. Copper (2018) showed that Walker and Ludwig's pioneering work was published at the same time as the National Security Strategy report which was published in the Trump period and also presented Russia and China as a threat to the US. In spite of this, Liu (2018), as a counter-example, mentioned from anti-communist parties in the 1948 Italian elections supported by the US with a secret fund. In other words, it is possible to find examples of sharp power for the USA in the past years. Nye (2018b) stated that the US intervention in the Italian election in 1948 was an example of sharp power, not soft power.

Koetse (2018) asserts that the sharp power concept can be called “Chinese threat theory 3.0”. The rise of Chinese nationalism and military capacity as well as China's impact on security issues in its region have led China to be positioned as an ideological, economic, military and

ecological threat by the rest of the world. In this context, the sharp power concept can now be added to this list.

4. Practices to Sharp Power

By 2050, China's centuries-old goals will be determined in two ways. First, by 2021 as the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party, it will aim to create a "moderate welfare society". Secondly, the centenary goal of the People's Republic of China is to create a "fully developed state". Thus, China aims to realize the dream of "the great awakening of the Chinese nation again" by achieving the status of great power as a global leader (Taehwan, 2018).

Sharp power aims to strengthen the image of the country effectively in politics, media, and academia. In this concept, it is possible to mention that China's sharp power has three characteristics: (i) spreading all over, (ii) causing self-censorship, and (iii) no evidence that China is doing so (Economist, 2017b: 18). The Beijing administration, which is not forced on election circles, freedom of expression and assembly in its country, uses these tools against democratic countries to reshape the international order, dissolve traditional alliances, expand its influence and strengthen its dignity (Williamson, 2018: 3).

The destructive effects of sharp power are not only limited to the political field but also be felt in many areas from culture to academia as well as from the media to the publishing world (Walker, 2018c). China's sharp power has been going on for years. China remains distant from states and firms and does not issue visas to journalists and academics who criticize its policies. China has control over Chinese people living abroad through Chinese media and Chinese groups (Economist, 2017b: 18). According to Singh (2018: 9-18), sharp power has seven characteristics: political power, coercion, culture, language and religion, media manipulation, academia, Chinese Diaspora, inducements. Firstly, it is possible to give many examples of China's political power with reference to her diplomatic presence from South Sudan to the Czech Republic [Czechia]. Czech President Milos Zeman, who harshly critics China over the period 2009-2014, completely changed his perspective on China after Xi Jinping's first visit to the country as President. This visit, which resulted in a strategic partnership, helped Czechia gain billions of dollars. The second characteristic is coercion. China's economic investments in Greece as part of the One Belt One Road project have been a driving factor in Greece's political support for China. China aims to spread its culture and language all over the world via Confucius Institutes. In the context of manipulation of the media, China is making significant investments in newspapers, television, radio, internet, etc. across the world. Thus, China tries to explain its domestic and foreign policy to the world from her point of view. Another one is the academy. Each year, 289 universities in China invite international students to doctoral, master, undergraduate and similar educational programs in almost all fields. China also attaches importance to international students to learn Chinese. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students abroad are important for the Chinese diaspora. Chinese Students and Scholars Associations, which are active in this field, help Chinese students abroad. Lastly, inducements are important to China's sharp power. For example, Xiangmo Huang, who is a Chinese billionaire, donated both Australia China Relations Institute and political parties in Australia.

China has been referred to as the "digital dictatorship" due to its activities both at home and abroad and especially within the framework of the Hong Kong protests in 2019. China's attitude against Hong Kong protests and the disinformation campaign show the "digital dictatorship". Millions of Chinese have been forced to use "Study the Great Nation" app, which was developed to provide ideological control (Wu, 2019: 148-149).

Cole (2018: 10) focuses on the difference between soft power and sharp power and explains the difference with two examples. The use of China's culture and global media presence to increase its worldwide effectiveness leads to confusion over soft power elements and sharp power practices. While these practices are considered legitimate for soft power, they are considered to be incompatible with moral issues and democratic values when carried out by a non-democratic regime. First, a Chinese firm invested in Hollywood film studios to ensure that sensitive issues for China such as Tibet and Taiwan, and blacklisted actors for the Chinese Communist Party were not included in the films. The second is to organize concerts aimed at the "unity" of the Chinese people and the promotion of Chinese culture in communities outside China. These concerts are organized to create a society and distinguish the soft power examples from the sharp power examples. For these reasons, China's soft power and sharp power do not exclude and contradict each other.

Table 1 shows the contents of Chinese sharp power practices. China applies these practices in the face of countries and various problems. For example, China spreads Confucius institutions to many parts of the world on one hand, but on the other hand, continues its censorship activities from the academy to the media.

Tabl1 1: China's Soft / Sharp Power Practices

AREAS OF ACTIVITY	PRACTICES
Discourse/ Narrative	- China Dream - Traditional Confucian values - Sinocentric worldview
Media	- Media offensive - Utilizing local media companies through buying-up and "borrowed boat" strategy
Diaspora	- Utilizing diaspora organizations/Chinese-language media and CSSAs as both agent and target
Culture	- Confucius Institutes disseminating official views - Self-censorship
Political pressures / cooptation	- Direct & indirect political pressure - Economic incentives - Self-censorship - Encouraging Chinese compatriots' political participation

Source: Taehwan, 2018

Taehwan (2018) mentioned some practices related to sharp power. With an investment of \$9 billion to international media since 2009, China has promoted positive views concerning China in English, Chinese and local languages through state-owned China Central Television (CCTV), China International Radio (CRI), China Daily and Xinhua News Agency. Since 2014, Chinese universities have collaborated with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to organize "training programs" for influential journalists in developed countries (Cole, 2018: 16). In this framework, Nye (2018) stated that while Xinhua's (China's official news agency) activities in other countries are considered soft power techniques, China Radio International's secret support to 33 radio stations in 14 countries is different from soft power.

There are examples of China's direct intervention in the media sector. For example, in September 2018, a writer called Azad Essa in Independent Online (South Africa's second-largest media group and partly under the control of Chinese investors) proposed to write an article about the persecution of the Uighurs in China. The proposal by Essa led to the cancellation of her column. According to the World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders, China, which ranked 176th among 180 countries in 2018, has invested approximately 3 billion Euros in the media sector over the last 10 years. Thus, these

investments can be considered as an effort to prevent critical issues about China in the global media (Reporters Without Borders, 2018).

Since China's overseas diasporas are important indicators of sharp power, China has turned its attention to a strong diaspora of around 60 million. Besides, conventional sources of soft power can also be used by sharp power. For example, the Confucius Institutes, launched by China in 2004 and spreading rapidly on a global scale, aim to increase interest in China (Taehwan, 2018). China makes its propaganda by spreading the Chinese language and culture in universities around the world. As Wagner (2019) points out, although Confucius Institutes have been regarded as successful in some countries, the Institutes in some countries have responded to increase the influence of the Chinese Communist Party. Confucius Institutes, which are seen as successful, both promote Chinese language and culture in these countries and create an environment of self-censorship on important issues for Beijing. According to Walker (2019b), there is no transparent process for Confucius Institutes, it is unclear how much money the Chinese government gives to universities that open institutes and how much control it has over universities. Similarly, the American Association of University Professors also made an explanation regarding Confucius Institutes:

Their academic activities are under the supervision of Hanban, a Chinese state agency which is chaired by a member of the Politburo and the vice-premier of the People's Republic of China. Most agreements establishing Confucius Institutes feature nondisclosure clauses and unacceptable concessions to the political aims and practices of the government of China. Specifically, North American universities permit Confucius Institutes to advance a state agenda in the recruitment and control of academic staff, in the choice of curriculum, and in the restriction of debate. (Graham, 2014).

Cole (2018: 9) mentions that China's sharp power has three main targets. The three principal targets are “political and economic elites (“elite capture”); media and public opinion; and civil society, grassroots, and academia.”. According to Cole, one of the most visible areas of China's sharp power is the academy. More than half a million Chinese students abroad take part in institutions in the West. Another important field of sharp power is the publications and media sector. It is possible to give many examples of this field. In November 2017, at least 1000 Springer Nature articles were blocked in China because they covered topics such as Taiwan, Tibet and the Cultural Revolution (Shepherd, 2017). An agreement between Cambridge University Press and the Chinese administration in August 2017 was also an example of sharp power. The Chinese government requested to be censored in China more than 300 articles in the China Quarterly published by Cambridge University Press. These articles in the China Quarterly are about Tibet, Tiananmen Square, the Cultural Revolution and President Xi Jinping (Haas, 2017). Also, the Association for Asian Studies in the United States stated that China has requested censorship on approximately 100 articles published in the Journal of Asian Studies published by Cambridge University Press (Cole, 2018: 15). According to Williamson (2018), censorship events in the world's oldest and most prestigious university publishers showed the effects of Beijing's sharp power.

China also intervenes in Hollywood movies that will be screened in the country. Nevertheless, Aynne Kokas points out that “no Hollywood producer that wants to take advantage of the Chinese market would at this point include a film that includes anything about Taiwan, about Tibet, about Tiananmen”. For example, Marvel's “Doctor Strange” changed the origin of one

of the characters in the film from Tibetan to Celtic. In “Skyfall”, a scene in which James Bond killed a Chinese security guard was censored in China (Lubin, 2016). China's censorship system can also be seen in the country. The online censorship system, known as the Great Firewall, can manage Chinese people's internet access. For this purpose, the Chinese government is applying more machine learning. China also pressures foreign companies such as Google and Facebook, which are forbidden from China to block certain contents (Mozur, 2018).

5. Reactions to Sharp Power

Although China does not want to conquer foreign lands, most people fear that China will conquer foreign minds. Many countries, particularly Australia, Britain, Canada, and New Zealand, began to oppose China's activities. But unlike the West's opposition to the Soviet Union in the past years, China is an important force in the world economy (Economist, 2017c: 9). For this reason, China is a power that can be politically opposed but cannot be ignored economically.

According to Si (2018), many concepts that end with “power” produced by US experts serve to protect the US's global interests and promote an Americanized democracy. In this respect, a critical paper on the sharp power concept was published in Global Times which is one of the most important newspapers in China. In the article, it is pointed out that the sharp power used by Western media to define China and Russia carries a value judgment. Unlike the concepts of hard and soft power, sharp power as a so-called academic concept serves to confirm the prejudices of the West towards China. The worsening of the image of the West in China and the increasing economic weight of China in the West raises concerns in the West, as well as the concept of sharp power arises from these concerns. According to the newspaper, as long as China adheres to its values, the West can't manipulate the world public opinion (Global Times, 2018).

Sha (2019) argues that sharp power is presented as a new “Chinese threat” and there are three myths about China. The first myth is the false image that the Chinese government is running a campaign targeting the US society. The second myth is the negative point of view of the Confucius Institutes that aims to teach the Chinese language and spread Chinese culture. Because Confucius Institutes are not different from France's L'Alliance Francaise, Germany's Goethe Instituts, or Spain's Cervantes Institute. Finally, the tendency to see the interaction between China and the US as a zero-sum game leads to misinterpretation of relations. Besides, Chen Fengying, a researcher at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said that it is difficult to accept changes in the world order for some Western countries that are afraid of losing their dominant position in the world. Western countries have also characterized China with “China threat” and “China collapse” because of their concern about China's rapid economic growth in recent years, and have ignored China's usual external relations. Therefore, it is possible to see the concept of sharp power as a new stage of the “Chinese threat” concept (Si, 2018).

Because Western experts prefer the concept of soft power for their own countries which make similar practices, Ji Zhiye, chairman of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, refuses to use the concept of “sharp power” to express China's competitiveness, attractiveness, and development (Ekomonitör, 2018). Liu (2018) states that sharp power is a result of a failed combination of hard and soft power or “unsmart power”. From this point of view, it is important to consider whether a new concept such as sharp power is needed.

Wang Guoqing, the spokesperson of China's most important advisory body, made the statement regarding sharp power: "it is not the first time that new expressions have been concocted [by the West] to China, and I believe it won't be the last time. Some Westerners may have physically entered the 21st century, but are mentally stuck in the Cold War era". Guoqing quoted Martin Luther King Jr. in his speech, referring to the situation between China and Western countries with the words "men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they cannot communicate; because they are separated communicate." (Koetse, 2018).

Taehwan (2018) mentions "foreign political influence operations" concerning the actions of sharp power. Accordingly, it is difficult to separate foreign political influence operations from public diplomacy or soft power from hard power because all of them use similar soft power tools such as media, culture, and diaspora. Moreover, the rise of sharp power should be considered within the framework of the goals of China and Russia. With Putin's long-standing rule and Xi Jinping's re-leadership of China, the geopolitical desires of the two powers have revealed their sharp power as an important instrument for their foreign policy.

According to China, the sharp power is an "irresponsible and paranoid" discourse, and this discourse is a sign of the concern of the great powers for China's growing international influence (Rasheed, 2018). In this framework, Si (2018) argues that the concept of sharp power suggests the concept of the "Thucydides trap", which describes the conflict between a rising power and a dominant power. According to Yanru (2018), China prefers a development path designed by itself, which is not developed by Western experts. Accordingly, there are three ways to do something in the world: the right way, the wrong way, and the "Chinese way". In the past, the West had determined the right and the wrong. China's political and economic power also increases its discourse and the Chinese way can be presented in the right way.

Yabin (2018) states his objection to the concept of sharp power as follows:

The concept of 'sharp power' is nothing but another demonizing tool against China, even if it seems like an academic term. So, we do not accept it. However, if 'sharp power' could be explained as a new dimension to evaluate a state's capability to learn, transform, and innovate in this modern era, it will be of more academic significance.

In addition to all these reactions, Nye (2018) had some warnings about sharp power. Accordingly, democracies should not overreact to China's sharp power and information warfare. China can also increase its soft power if it reduces party control over civil society. In contrast, media manipulation and secret communication channels are damaging China's soft power. Democracies should also refrain from using authoritarian sharp-power tools.

6. Conclusion

The rapid rise of China led to the emergence of the sharp power concept. China is regarded as an important rival and threat by the US. In addition, Chinese policies which cannot be regarded as soft power have made her a sharp power. Thus, a different concept of "power" was preferred to define China's activities. Sharp power as an example of US-based conceptualization is a continuation of hard power, soft power, and smart power approaches. Among these concepts, the sharp power concept stands apart from the others. The negative image evoked by the word "sharp" causes China's reactions. China considers the sharp power as "blame" and rejects it. Also, there is no country other than China that reacts to the concept of sharp power. When the reactions to sharp power are taken into consideration, the statements made by Chinese writers and Chinese media draw attention.

Considering the literature, although the sharp power is said about Russia and China, the literature is predominantly based on China. China's soft power problems can be seen as the cause of its sharp power. In the study, the soft power tools used by authoritarian administrations were considered as sharp power. Therefore, what determines the sharp power is not the tools per se, it is who uses them. In addition, sharp power was evaluated in the study as follows: sharp power is the one that determines what can and cannot be talked about. This definition has two dimensions: "you must talk about me" and "you can't talk about me". Sharp power achieves these through propaganda and censorship tools. The point where sharp power differs from soft power is that there is no "you can't talk" approach and censorship in soft power. In this context, similar to the concept of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics", it is possible to evaluate sharp power as Chinese characteristics soft power. In international relations, it is much more important to make your own voice heard when everyone is speaking, rather than silencing the other party.

The following questions may be asked from a different perspective: Sharp power, what cuts? What do the dragon's teeth cut? In China's sharp power, especially academia, media, language, Confucius Institutes and censorship are the prominent topics. Looking at the practices of China, it is seen that it can cut off anything that hinders its own story and criticizes its own discourse. The continuation of the practices that can be shown as sharp power makes the dragon's teeth sharper. In other words, China, which continues its sharp power practices, is actually increasing its sharp power. Especially, as stated in the study, the increase in China's propaganda and censorship activities causes this situation. In this case, it harms the concept of the "China Dream" that Xi Jinping is trying to create.

As pointed out by Nye (2018), "power sometimes depends on whose army or economy wins, but it can also depend on whose story wins." In this sentence, we can substitute the word "story" with the word "word" because we can identify our own "rival or enemy" in international relations. Superpowers sometimes war over words. When this war is considered within the framework of sharp power, China has been losing this war. In order to win the war of concepts, instead of rejecting a concept produced by the West, it is necessary to try to impose a concept created by itself. It is therefore very important that China can produce a discourse on the United States in the future. For example, when Xi Jinping's "China Dream" is used more widely than the concept of sharp power, China's goals can be realized. Otherwise, sharp power practices will increase the reaction against China. As shown in the study, China's sharp power strengthens the negative attitude of countries towards China.

As Copper (2018) pointed out, in the future, the possibility that other authoritarian regimes such as North Korea, Iran, or Cuba, will be able to use their sharp powers. From this interpretation, the issue of sharp power can be addressed in subsequent studies through sharp power practices, case studies, and comparisons. As long as the concepts are discussed, the literature can be enriched and the concepts can be understood more accurately.

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