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## AN EXAMINATION OF CHINA'S SOFT POWER INSTRUMENTS

### *Çin'in Yumuşak Güç Araçlarının İncelenmesi*

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**Abstract:** The concept of power has changed since the world wars and the cold war. Technology and nuclear weapons have caused heavy war losses. Countries tried to recover themselves and erase the traces of wars due to the heavy losses they inflicted. In this recovery process, we encounter soft power, which has become necessary as an alternative to military power. Today, states create their policies and set targets following soft power. The People's Republic of China, one of the major powers of the 21st century, has attached importance to the concept of soft power like other actors and has begun to include the instruments of soft power in its policies. China aims to maintain its global position and to continue its peaceful rise, which it expresses at every opportunity. Undoubtedly the essential element for these purposes is considered soft power. Looking at the history of China, the concept of soft power is not a new phenomenon; it is a concept that China has used frequently in the past. This study examines how the People's Republic of China views Joseph Nye's concept of soft power and how it applies to culture, foreign policy, and political values.

**Keywords:** Soft Power, China, Culture, Foreign Policy, Political Values.

**Öz:** Geçmişte yaşanan dünya savaşları ve soğuk savaşın ardından, güç kavramı değişmiştir. Teknolojinin ilerlemesi, nükleer silahların ortaya çıkması ile savaşlarda ağır kayıplar verilmiştir. Ülkeler, verdikleri ağır kayıplar neticesinde kendilerini toparlamaya ve savaşların izlerini silmeye çalışmışlardır. Bu toparlanma süreci içinde karşımıza askeri güce alternatif olarak önemli hale gelen yumuşak güç çıkmaktadır. Aktörler, günümüzde politikalarını yumuşak güç konseptine uygun olarak düzenlemeye başlamış ve elde etmek istediklerini bu kavramı kullanarak çerçevlendirmiştir. 21. Yüzyılın öne çıkan en önemli güçlerinden Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti de diğer aktörler gibi yumuşak güç kavramına önem vermiş ve yumuşak gücün araçlarını politikalarına dahil etmeye başlamıştır. Çin, sahip olduğu küresel pozisyonunu korumayı ve her fırsatta dile getirdiği barışçıl yükselişini devam ettirmeyi amaç edinmiştir. Bu amaçlar için şüphesiz en önemli unsur, yumuşak güç olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Çin tarihine bakıldığında, yumuşak güç kavramı yeni bir olgu değil, geçmişte de Çin'in sıklıkla kullandığı bir kavramdır. Bu çalışmada, Joseph Nye'in yumuşak güç kavramının Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti tarafından algılanışı ve Çin'in yumuşak güç unsurlarının kültür, dış politika ve siyasi değerler kapsamında ele alınması amaçlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yumuşak Güç, Çin, Kültür, Dış Politika, Siyasi Değerler.

## INTRODUCTION

Power, at the center of international relations, is an important concept that has existed since the beginning of human history. Although different thinkers have made definitions of this concept in the historical scene, the common point of all thoughts has been the importance of the concept of power. The power element, which changed according to the conditions of the period, had different characteristics in each historical period and was divided into various categories. For centuries, the sole purpose of people and states has been to survive and maintain their continuity. Undoubtedly, the essential requirement for this purpose is power and being strong. Although the concept of power has wide usage, there needs to be a clear definition or consensus. According to some researchers, the concept of power has been evaluated as the purpose or tool of a struggle. However, according to some researchers, it has been evaluated as the desire to be superior. According to another group, it was defined as the product of a consensus (Dowding, 2012, p. 119). Although the concept of power could not meet a common point in a clear definition and meaning, the most known and first thing that comes to mind is known as "hard power." The concepts expressed about the return of power are generally; Soldier is seen as war, army, and weapon. Power is military power, as understood in parallel with the social structure and teachings of the world. The importance of military power stems from the fact that war is the last resort in international relations (Carr, 1962, p. 109). Although power is known and applied with the meanings mentioned, the historical scene, which witnessed two world wars and many crises and destructions, sought a new power with the globalizing world order. Therefore, states needed policies to ensure their continuity.

At the beginning of these policies, soft power is undoubtedly the first thing that comes to mind. "Soft power" is an essential part of comprehensive national power and is a power that can affect a country with its characteristics without resorting to the threat of force or economic sanctions (Zhào, 2007, p. 150). Soft power is a new concept in international politics but not new in connotation. In today's era, more and more countries have realized the importance of developing cultural soft power for international competition and are studying soft power theory (Xiào and Zhāng, 2010, p.12).

The People's Republic of China, which has become one of the significant powers of the 21st century, has also increased its efforts on soft power. The topic of China's soft power has gained growing attention in international relations in recent years. As China rises as a global superpower, it has sought to enhance its soft power by promoting its cultural values and economic influence worldwide. Chinese academics have also made some evaluations from the Chinese perspective in their studies on soft power. Chén (2007) points out that the main task of soft power building is to exploit the meaning of value, especially the meaning of universal value. Guō (2007) says in his study that we should examine the concept of soft power as specific to China. Soft power is the opposite of hard power and refers to institutional and cultural power, international recognition, discourse practice, and diplomatic art. He stated that, in essence, it reflects the country's role. The development of soft power in China is viewed as an effective strategy for China to overcome the dilemma of rising great power. Soft power policies are an essential aspect for China to stick to the path of peaceful development and an important indicator for China to achieve its goal. (Mén, 2012, p. 15).

Culture plays a vital role in the history of human social development. Soft power dominated by cultural forms has become one of the determining factors in the growth or decline of power between countries in this era. China's cultural soft power has rich resources (Chén, 2008, p. 87). China, which has thousands of years of history, is trying to integrate its cultural power into the concept of soft power. Moreover, China has attached great importance to cultural diffusion and international exchange in development models in recent years and has actively conducted responsible great-country diplomacy. China's country image, international influence, and prestige have all improved thanks to the effective use of soft power sources. (Zhāng and Luō,

2008, p. 24). At the same time, Chinese culture has a growing global effect thanks to China's soft power. Soft power has a unique role in the cohesion of the Chinese nation because it fosters interchange and communication between China and other civilizations, spreads and forms China's image, and advances worldwide understanding. (Chén et al., 2009).

This study will focus on China's soft power in its culture, foreign policy, and political values. These three instruments are related to Joseph Nye's accepted soft power theory and are categorized with China. It further examines China's soft power instrument. This article evaluates how China perceives soft power and whether it uses soft power instruments effectively. In this context, the first part examines the soft power concept. The second part evaluates China's soft power activities and instruments. The last part discusses China's soft power characteristics and the conclusion.

### **What is Soft Power?**

Joseph Nye, an academic at Harvard University, wrote in 1990; In his work titled "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature American Power," he mentioned soft power and defined *soft power* as making others want what you want, and Nye evaluated this definition as different from the existing thought with the stick and carrot approach (Nye, 1990, p. 31). Nye evaluated soft power as the ability of a country to attract others with its culture, political values, foreign policies, institutions, and similar instruments (Nye, 2004). Soft power, which emphasizes power over ideas rather than military and economic power, has become much more critical with globalization, which has increased its influence in every field and includes the information revolution (Nye, 2004, p. 37). On the other hand, heavy costs caused by military force and economic power (Keohane and Nye, 1987, p. 733) are among the other factors that increase the importance of soft power.

According to Nye, soft power transfers a country's values, wealth, opportunities, Etc., to another country. From this point of view, soft power is also expressed as the power to determine the behavior of others by persuading or charming them without any threat or barter. When actors use soft power, instead of choosing to use money or the pressure factor, they see it as an important way to direct people to shared values, adopt them, and contribute to reaching these values (Nye, 2004, p. 14-15). Legitimacy and establishing international institutions have also gained importance in attracting common values or generating soft power through attraction. This way, the use of high-cost traditional economic and military power elements is eliminated or minimized (Keohane and Nye, 1987, p. 733-734). The soft power concept we mentioned has been tried to be implemented in many countries such as America, England, France, Turkey, and China, and soft power policies are still being actively maintained today. In the globalizing world, the most influential actors do not create threats; on the contrary, the actors who create opportunities and attractions occupy a powerful world stage.

As a result, even though the role and significance of soft power have increased due to the globalizing and evolving world order, the success of this power is contingent on how effectively nations use soft power. The study examined the perception of Joseph Nye's concept of soft power by the People's Republic of China. China's soft power elements were discussed within the scope of culture, foreign policy, and political values.

### **China and Soft Power**

Before the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), China remained outside the discursive elements of Western international relations studies and methodological approaches and was far from this discipline. Recognition of international relations by Chinese scholars has been late (Wang, 1999). Chinese scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s could study Western IR theories when translations were done (Zhang, 2000). After Joseph Nye introduced the soft power concept in 1990, it started to be recognized rapidly in China. Even in 1992, Chinese He Xiaodong translated the book *The Chinese Military Translation Press translated Bound to Lead*

into Chinese and published it. Soft power has gained traction among a large number of young academics. In early Chinese literature, mental power versus material power was frequently referred to as soft power versus hard power (Zhu, 2002, p. 20).

In parallel with China's increasing international position, soft power policies have also increased. This increase is changing the negative perception of China that has been spreading since the 1970s. This negative image; is seen as a perception of a country that is not interested in regional crises, is aggressive, and has difficulty establishing relations (Kurlantzick, 2007, p. 6). The first article on soft power in China was written by Wang Huning, a political theorist, in 1993. This study; was published under the title *Culture as a National Power: Soft Power*. Wang, in his work, in the theory that Joseph Nye talks about the sources of soft power, prioritizes culture among the elements of culture, political values, and foreign policy. Wang argued that if a state has an appreciated cultural property and ideological structure, it will be followed by other countries as an example. It has been stated that there is no obligation for countries to use the element of hard power instead of soft power, and it has been evaluated that the efficiency of hard power is low but also has more costs (Glaser and Murphy, 2009, p. 12).

In the late 1990s, China's interest in soft power grew even more. There are several important reasons for China's increasing interest in soft power. The first reason is the rapid development of the Chinese economy and the increase in its economic position in the global market. The second reason is that China understood the need to develop relations with neighboring countries, especially Asian countries. Finally, China understood that using hard power in issues such as the South China Sea could not achieve its goals and tried to activate its soft power policies. (Gil, 2008, p. 171).

The concept of soft power in China started to take place on the agenda of Chinese executives and policymakers intensively with Hu Jintao's coming to the presidency in 2002. Between 2004 and 2007, China's top leaders, including Hu Jintao, emphasized in several high-level meetings that China should strive for soft power. President Hu, at the central committee meeting in 2006, stated China's international status; He mentioned the importance and necessity of including the soft power factor and the economy, science, technology, and defense elements (Hu, 2006). China's pursuit of soft power projects has taken many different forms since it was formally introduced as a national strategy by Hu Jintao in 2007. Chinese scholars quickly began researching the subject, and many followed or adapted Nye's theoretical framework, as a result of which they identified culture as the center of soft power.

### **China's Soft Power Instruments**

China is known as a country with a rooted traditional culture and civilization history in Asia. It feeds its soft power from this rich culture. (Huang and Ding 2006, p. 26). It is possible to come across China's soft power implementation activities during the Han Dynasty. During this period, China's enemies threatened its borders, and China sought alliances with its enemies. To establish an alliance, it is shown that Chinese princesses, called diplomat brides, are sent as brides (Reese, 2000). These brides, who were sent, took valuable dowry with them, and thus both, peace was established with the enemies, and commercial relations developed thanks to peace.

Historically, China's military strategies have favored diplomatic moves over military confrontation. China's strategic culture believes in "winning a war before fighting." The famous Chinese commander Sun Tzu stated in his masterpiece *The Art of War* that it was preferable to attack the enemy's mind rather than attacking the enemy directly. (Tzu) This thought shows that concepts such as soft power are present in China's historic arena.

As the power struggles preceding the establishment of the People's Republic of China continued, the Chinese Communist Party evaluated this period to gain the support of its people

and the international community. One of the most concrete examples of this period is the hosting of journalist Edgar Snow by the Chinese Communist Party. Thanks to the series of articles Edgar Snow prepared during his visit, the CCP had the opportunity to receive news about itself directly from the world. At the same time, during the power struggle with the Kuomintang, he reversed the black propaganda they had applied to him and used public diplomacy, which is a soft power tool (Snow, 1968).

The Chinese administration has produced policies that were created primarily within the framework of the historical attractiveness of the state within the scope of cultural instruments. The basis of today's Chinese cultural policies; creates philosophies such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Confucianism has long been a dominant concept synonymous with "Chinese civilization" (Hu, 1997, pp. 348-351). Especially after the Mao period, starting from the 1980s and returning to this philosophy, it is seen that Confucianism is primarily included in the discourses of Chinese politicians. The "Confucius Institutes," which were established in parallel with this and spread rapidly on a global scale since 2004, appeared as the rhetoric of Chinese leaders turned into action. In order to promote its own culture in the international arena, Confucius College and Confucius Institute, which provides education within the framework of Confucianism, have been established in many countries through the 'Hanban' managed by the Chinese National Office responsible for teaching Chinese (Arıboğan, 2001, pp. 212-213). In addition, the Chinese government today sees soft power as primary power and seeks to impose a much better image of China on nations, regions, organizations, and individuals. In addition, the Chinese government uses Chinese culture as an essential component of the international competitive environment to attract other nations. Therefore, the recent resurgence of Confucianism and the establishment of Confucian Institutes worldwide can be viewed as a component of China's soft power, culture, and foreign policy.

Regarding "soft power," China has much potential in the cultural arena. China has vast cultural resources that make the country a cultural powerhouse. A global survey from 1999 found that Chinese culture and tradition were considered distinctive. The country's 5,000 years of history have resulted in a wealth of distinctive and appealing cultural assets, including the Chinese language (characters and calligraphy), Chinese philosophy, films, music, arts, architecture, cuisine, medicine, and martial arts (Li and Worm, 2011, p. 75).

Chinese cuisine, an essential element in spreading the culture of China, is also expressed as culinary diplomacy. Another form of Chinese soft power tool is marketing things that reflect their culture, and Chinese food comes first. With the effect of globalization, many different states' food can be eaten in many countries so that people can have information about different cultures. As a result, Chinese cuisine is spreading worldwide, and the number of restaurants is increasing rapidly (Pekcan, 2016, p. 216).

A new outsourcing plan was created to transfer China's culture to the world and bring its cultural products to the fore, which was included in the "National Plan for Cultural Development" prepared in 2006. National festivals were organized to promote and highlight Chinese cultural products. Based on this, the year of China has been declared in many countries, and its cultural elements have been introduced. China has organized several organizations to promote its culture to the outside world. For instance, considerations regarding the Chinese image are also highlighted in the Outline of the National Plan for Cultural Development for 2006–2011; "to actively participate in the creation of relevant international regulations and to strengthen China's discourse, to encourage many civil and government organizations to cultural exchange with foreign countries, to strengthen the exchange of social sciences and philosophy on the international platform, to strengthen the global impact of Chinese culture and philosophy, to ensure academic exchanges and development and support" (Outline of the National "11th Five Year Plan" Period Cultural Development Plan, 2006). As can be seen, China has given importance to various activities to introduce itself to the outside world by keeping the cultural



element at the forefront within the scope of soft power activities and has repeated this in its discourses.

Since 1984, the Chinese government has used the Olympic Games to demonstrate the country's cultural strength. The 2008 Beijing Olympics is one of the most important events it has done to showcase China's cultural heritage as another cultural element and to improve its image in the world and the perception of China in a positive way. In the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Chinese historical and cultural heritage was blended by one of the well-known Chinese directors, Zhang Yimou, who presented high technology and attracted great attention. In the Olympics, the concept of harmony, the essential element of Chinese culture, was emphasized by quoting Confucius from time to time. The Olympics, in which a total investment of approximately 50 billion dollars was made, was an event where China exhibited its economic power and gave essential signals to the world about its image (Preuss, 2007, p. 41).

The most important event after the Olympics was the Expo held in Shanghai in 2010. Shanghai, China's economic, financial, and cargo center, had the right to host the 2010 World Expo. The Expo was the most significant event ever held in a developing country, with approximately 84 million attendees and over 350 thousand visitors daily from May 1 to October 31, 2010. One hundred ninety-three nations and 48 international and regional organizations have registered (Shanghai Bureau of World Expo Coordination Executive, 2010). More than 200 essential groups, including heads of state from abroad, participated in the Expo. In addition, VIP guests, especially welcomed by Chinese leaders, created many opportunities for China to develop public diplomacy (d'Hooghe, 2015). At the same time, there are more than a hundred Confucius Institutes and more than a thousand Confucian schools and classrooms worldwide to spread the Chinese language and culture. A cultural power rivalry emerged between China and Western states, showing its effect as a soft power conflict. It is seen that China has not only used the Confucian element in its current traditional culture to attract its East Asian neighbors as a source of soft power but also to influence international communities more extensively. Culture, one of the sources of soft power, also closely relates to communication. The media is used to spread the countries' cultural resources abroad and expand their culture's international influence. When the concept of soft power is evaluated in terms of the states' cultures, it is based not only on attractiveness but also on solid propaganda methods and capabilities. The concept of propaganda is not seen as a negative concept in China. When evaluated in terms of the Chinese language, propaganda; is considered a concept with a positive approach, which has a positive purpose in its basis, such as informing the public, shaping ideas, and advertising (Wang, 2008, p. 259).

China actively exhibits its media elements to impact world public opinion positively. In this context, it effectively uses official media elements such as CCTV (China Central Television) channel/ CGTN (China Global Television Network) and Xinhua, which are essential media organs on the international platform. In order to increase the effectiveness of media tools, 1.5 billion dollars were transferred from its budget to each media organ. The motto of these media was "your window on China and the world" (Kalathil, 2011, p. 6). In the mentioned context, the aim is to create a different option against the dominance of the Western media and thus to use the media element in its favor actively. In line with this purpose, China aims to establish an alternative bloc to the Western media by cooperating with the media organizations of the countries where its diplomatic relations are intense. For this, while providing financial support to some countries, it sometimes provides support to train qualified personnel in these countries. We can say that these supports mostly tend to establish a cultural superiority over the media of Latin American countries, South Asian countries, and African countries (Douglas and Mosher, 2010, p. 4). With its modern pop music and Chinese films, China penetrates South Asian countries, exports films to these countries, and provides significant incentives for this. It has also sponsored many international organizations and festivals within the cinema scope, thus

ensuring that Chinese films take place in these organizations and supporting them (Kalathil, 2011, p. 6-7).

The Chinese Public Diplomacy Association, a national nonprofit, was established in Beijing in 2012 to enhance China's soft power. The purpose of the association is to develop China's public diplomacy, strengthen mutual understanding and friendship with other nations, give China a civilized, democratic, open, and innovative image, and create an international environment conducive to China's peaceful development (China Public Diplomacy Association, 2016). Additionally, To plan cultural gatherings, events, and exchanges, the China Cultural Industry Association (CCIA) was founded in 2013. The China Cultural Industry Association (CCIA), with the goal of "creating platforms, providing services, increasing coordination, and providing innovative development," strives to strengthen the soft power of Chinese culture and promote positive globalization. In addition, it aspires to be a social organization with a global perspective on Chinese culture (China Cultural Industry Association). After Hu Jintao, Beijing's interest in soft power increased when Xi Jinping assumed the presidency. In 2014, Xi stated that China's soft power could only be developed if the country possessed global communication capabilities and the ability to establish a robust communication system. Moreover, he stated that he believes that by increasing the creativity of the new media, it can take on the role of promoting China in the world and that China's voice, China's stories, and characteristics should be well told to the whole world (Xi, 2014). Under Xi's rule, China has launched many new global ventures. These; "Chinese dream," "Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road," and "Belt-Road" projects are seen as. Chinese foreign policy has been heavily dependent on economic diplomacy. China uses its economic ties with other countries to strengthen its political and strategic relations (Zhang, 2015). Soft power has also been tried to be used effectively in foreign policy. In 2014, Xi and Prime Minister Li Keqiang traveled to more than 50 countries. They made significant loans and signed important trade and investment agreements. This situation shows that the economy is also effective as a foreign policy tool of soft power. Furthermore, China's diplomatic and development programs are only a subset of a much larger plan to boost its soft power in the media, arts, education, sports, and other areas. The amount of money China spends on these activities is unknown, but analysts estimate that the annual budget for "foreign propaganda" is around \$10 billion (Shambaugh, 2015, p. 100).

According to Nye, a country's soft power also depends on its internal power; how a country implements its political values can increase its image and legitimacy, which is essential for achieving desired foreign policy objectives (Nye, 2004, p. 56). International and local performances are also taken into account regarding Chinese political values. In this context, some principles and policies gain importance regarding China's international political values and relations with other nations. Based on Hu Jintao's words about soft power, we see that the concept of a "good-neighborly and friendly surrounding environment" takes place within the scope of political values. In addition, to establish friendly international relations, China follows the policy of peaceful coexistence and not interfering in the internal affairs of other nations, thus forming the political values framework of China's soft power (Li and Worm, 2011, p. 70).

China consistently adheres to the principles of peaceful coexistence and noninterference in the internal affairs of other nations in the international arena, where it strives to maintain a friendly and peaceful image. China argued that all countries should be treated equally and their ways of life should be respected, regardless of their size or wealth. It also asserts that the two primary concerns of the modern world should be peace and development, with developing nations having development as their top priority. China has stated that all nations should undertake shared but differentiated responsibilities to address global issues such as climate change. At the same time, China asserts that developing nations must meet their international obligations, such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions from developed nations, to meet their own development needs. China seeks to maintain international security standards through dialogue and cooperation and insists that the United Nations Security Council is the primary international

security mechanism. It proposes that diplomatic and political means should be the primary means of resolving international conflicts (Li and Worm, 2011: p. 78). One of China's most important soft power policies is the peacekeeping troops it uses in foreign policy. China has been involved in 25 UN peacekeeping missions over the past three decades. China's peacekeepers have built or repaired more than 17,000 kilometers of roads in the operation areas. It also destroyed more than 14,000 mines and unexploded bombs. It has transported more than 1.2 million tons of supplies, providing medical support and care to the wounded in operation areas. With these medical aids, China has rescued more than 246,000 people and performed more than 450 patrols and escorts. (PLA development steady and peaceful). These projects are an essential aspect of soft power by officials and analysts in Beijing. The activities of China's peacekeeping troops and foreign aid have increased the positive image of China (Foot, 2014, p. 1093).

China's peaceful rise is also known as peaceful development. China's policy of peaceful rise requires it to increase its regional and global power and influence and reassure other nations during this process. With its peaceful ascension policy, China does not prefer to engage in a military conflict with the great powers in the international arena (He and Feng, 2014). In order to eliminate the feeling of insecurity, China maintains friendly relations with its neighbors and helps them develop its economy while doing joint business with its neighbors because a perception of Chinese threat can occur among vulnerable countries. Therefore, this perception should be destroyed (Zhao, 2012, p. 195-197).

### **Chinese Characteristics of Soft Power**

Within the framework of its cultural values, China is a country that is not alien to the concept of soft power. Chinese leaders have recognized the difficulties and cost of hard power in influencing and changing the behavior of other countries. They realize the necessity of the soft power concept to support their national interests in the global world. China has started to take some initiatives in this direction. Soft power has started to offer China's interests several advantages while also attempting to foster a peaceful international environment that will allow for the country's continued economic development and promote itself as a responsible and positive player in international politics. Latin America, Africa, and Central and South-West Asia are among the areas where China has the most influence through soft power. These regions have also integrated into China's soft power policies (Gil, 2008, p. 117). In order to attract these countries with its foreign policy, political values, and economic carrots, China uses the concept of soft power and follows policies in this direction.

Although many Chinese academics have studied Joseph Nye's original idea of soft power within a specific framework, many have gone beyond it. While analyzing China's soft power, it was thought that this concept should be diversified and developed with China's practices (Honghua, 2007). The point that makes the soft power debates in China different is this; The soft power that Nye mentioned was seen as a primary tool, but China's approach to soft power was evaluated holistically. Domestic and foreign policy are considered together when developing soft power. For instance, establishing a "harmonious society" at home and a "harmonious world" in foreign policy is viewed as a comprehensive whole that maintains China's soft power (Glaser and Murphy, 2009, p. 20).

Soft power has a vital position in terms of China's national interests. Many Chinese academics agree that soft power must be implemented in Chinese policy. It is essential to promote Chinese culture abroad, use public diplomacy activities effectively, and develop economic and political values to make them attractive to Chinese and international audiences. Furthermore, Chinese scholars and the general public have developed some considerations with Nye's soft power theory. The subject of how China can increase and use its soft power shows the development and increase when looking at historical periods. Today, we see that these efforts are gaining



momentum. China should spare no effort to support its own traditional culture; furthermore, development models, participation in the international system, and international image and cultural advantages are considered ways to increase China's soft power (Mén, 2012, p. 15).

In the past, China has given importance to its economic growth and has made some related initiatives. However, as a result, there are some negative aspects. At the beginning of these, Factors such as income inequality, environmental degradation, and corruption became evident and started a discussion on China's development strategy. This situation may affect China's soft power activities and damage its foreign impression. Because For China to introduce itself to the world and be a country that will inspire other people, it must first be able to provide these to its people (Glaser and Murphy, 2009, p. 20). Soft power once contributed significantly to the growth of China's great power in the 20th century; the future peace and development process is an essential part of soft power diplomacy (Guō, 2007, p. 43).

Another critical point is that the cultural tool Nye mentioned has taken an important place in China. The cultural factor is significant in domestic and foreign policy. Focusing on culture, China has given importance to developing its soft power. In his foreign policy, we see that he strives to activate his soft power through Confucius institutes, media, cultural exchanges, cultural initiatives, and organizations that focus on cultural diplomacy.

## CONCLUSION

Soft power can not only be considered in the context of instruments owned by the state but also ensures that the culture, history, and values of a country are primarily adopted by its society, and these values are effectively used in the policies of the actors. Soft power is also heavily involved in China's diplomatic strategies and foreign policy towards other countries worldwide. Its interest in soft power is advancing toward realizing its national interests, and for this purpose, It provides the use of many instruments, including culture, language, art, aid, and investments. China is trying to correct its negative image, which it had in the past, with its soft power. Furthermore, China is trying to positively increase its image with many organizations, cooperation, and promotional activities; and wants to take a strong position in the international arena. China under Hu moved beyond Asia-Pacific diplomacy and began communicating with broader geographies. During the Xi period, many organizations and international cooperation efforts are seen. As a result, China has also made progress in communicating with developing countries and great powers and achieving foreign policy goals in different parts of the world.

China has evaluated and applied Joseph Nye's definition of soft power with a holistic approach. When soft power is analyzed as culture, foreign policy, and political values, China uses them as an inseparable whole. Culture, which is the most important element of soft power, is seen as a concept that China is not foreign to, and it is seen that it has been used effectively in Chinese history. However, China effectively uses cultural factors in its soft power policies. Furthermore, a peacefully developing China should especially focus on building and developing its own cultural soft power.

China has continued to work with the cultural element as the most vital soft power tool and has a positive image in many countries. However, this positive image has not been a complete success for China. This is because Chinese domestic policies and values do not allow too much intellectual freedom by the Communist Party and have some reservations (Nye, 2004, p. 89).

Some academics argue that China's internal political values are the foundation of its soft power, even though Western scholars frequently criticize them for their lack of democracy, human rights violations, and freedom repression. However, China needs to be more liberal and inclusive to further develop its soft power. In addition, reviewing its policies on human rights and media censorship and making some reforms will have positive results for China. When these essential issues change and improve, China's soft power efforts can become even more successful and influential in the international area.

It may not be possible for China to convince everyone that China's rise should be supported. However, the international arena is a natural step forward for alleviating concerns, reducing opposition, and making new friends. Although Chinese values and attractiveness do not attract some nations, even the disappearance of negative thoughts about China can be evaluated as a moderate success of China's soft power policies. On the other hand, China should increase the proximity and influence of Chinese culture to continue strengthening cultural construction and foreign cultural exchange.

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