

ΚΕΔΙΣΑ  ΚΕΔΙΣΑ

ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΔΙΕΘΝΩΝ ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΩΝ ΑΝΑΛΥΣΕΩΝ
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC ANALYSES

Chinese dragon coaxing the Greek dolphin: Chinese soft power tools in Greece

Sara Sivkova

Research Paper no. 71

ΚΕΔΙΣΑ  KEDISA

**ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΔΙΕΘΝΩΝ ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΩΝ ΑΝΑΛΥΣΕΩΝ
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC ANALYSES**

Board of Directors

Dr Andreas Banoutsos, *Founder and President*

Dr Panagiotis Sfaelos, *Vice President and Director of Research*

Vasilis Papageorgiou, *Secretary General*

Argetta Malichoutsaki, *Financial Director*

Evangelos Diplaras, *Member*

Evangelos Koulis, *Member*

Anastasia Tsimpidi, *Member*

© 2022 Center for International Strategic Analyses (KEDISA, All Rights Reserved)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publisher

Chinese dragon coaxing the Greek dolphin: Chinese soft power tools in Greece

By Sára Sivková

Introduction

The People's Republic of China (below referred to as 'China') is a remarkable country, that was able to get rid of its label of 'developing country' and rise as a miraculous economic Chinese dragon. Chinese economic miracle shows how a country can transform from a receiver of economic aid to an investor of international importance. According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Chinese Outwards Foreign Direct Investment (COFDI) and China-provided development aid have increased significantly after 2001 worldwide. COFDI is present not only in the developing countries of the African and Asian continent also in Latin America and the European continent as well, especially in Hungary, Romania and Greece. This unprecedented transformation of China from the receiver of investment into a distributor of wealth brings many questions about its economic success and Chinese intentions overseas.

It was in September 2013 when Chinese president Xi Jinping first introduced his vision in Kazakhstan addressing the public with the idea of renewing the ancient Silk Road in a modern coat. Xi Jinping introduced his strategic and development vision of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI or sometimes addressed as One Belt One Road Initiative - OBOR). This new Silk Road project should, similarly to its historical counterpart, connect nations and their economies. The main projects will focus on building of infrastructure and economic corridors connecting the Eurasian continent through trade and cultural exchange, while there is a general expectation that these projects will improve Chinese image abroad¹.

In the European part of the Belt and Road Initiative vision, there is one particular country with great importance for this ambitious Chinese project, the Hellenic Republic (Greece). Greece has a unique geographical location that can be used as an essential transportation hub where the terrestrial and maritime part of the Silk Road meets. The location factor is not the only appealing feature for the Chinese investors which Greece can offer, there is also its membership in European Union (EU) and through it the access to the all-EU markets².

During the worldwide economic crisis starting in 2008 many countries worldwide were facing great financial disruption, Greece included. The financial crisis increased Greece's public

¹ Turcsanyi, R., Kachlikova, E. 2020. The BRI and China's Soft Power in Europe: Why Chinese Narratives (Initially) Won. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 49(1), 58–81.

² Blanchard, J., Flint, C. 2017. The Geopolitics of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative. *Geopolitics*. 22. 223-245.

negative opinion on the EU and its member states as Sofia Vasilopoulou (2018)³ explains in her article. The Greek government decided to look for non-EU partners to diversify its investors' portfolio and lessen its financial dependence on the EU alone. It was late in 2008 during the crisis when Greece was forced to privatize its state-owned enterprises to lessen the financial burden on the state budget and one of the privatised companies was the national Piraeus port, which was in the focus of Chinese company COSCO⁴. Since 2008 the level of cooperation between Greece and China started to rise and their cooperation was not only on the business part but on the cultural one as well.

According to some academics, the Chinese interests overseas are to increase their influence all over the world by combining the hard and soft power approaches⁵. Therefore, the main research question of this article is: In what way does the use of Chinese soft power in Greece manifest? And the second question will focus on whether the use of Chinese diplomatic incentives (hard and soft power combined) does influence Greek foreign policy approach in the international organizations?

The rising power of China can bring awe from the Chinese ambitions to challenge the US in the position of a super-power as the academics Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu (2011) warn⁶. However, the Chinese interests overseas are so far such that China is focusing on increasing its positive image worldwide by using both the hard power tools especially the economic incentives and the soft power tools like building the institutions for the cultural exchange in foreign countries. One of the essential features of Chinese soft power tools is pioneering its positive media image by pointing out the economic success thus the use of Chinese hard and soft power overseas is interconnected. The author of this study decides to use the typology from Joseph S. Nye (2005) who is the first researcher who used the term 'soft power' in the 1980s⁷. Even in the new millennium Mr Nye keeps on researching the use of the diplomatic incentive in the international relations environment and he keeps on improving his definition of soft power in diplomacy. Therefore, the author of this article believes that Mr Nye's definition is the best for the use of this article, especially thanks to Mr Nye's constant revisions of his concept of the soft power that will be discussed below.

The first part of this article will discuss the terms of the hard and soft power in the international relations context by following Joseph S. Nye framework. This framework is essential to outline what could be and what could be not considered as the soft power tool in diplomacy. Following will be discussed in what ways the Chinese soft power tools are used in Greece to facilitate the Chinese positive image. In order to provide the complete analysis of Chinese soft power tools in Greece, the author will use a wide range of academic articles, books, information from the official websites and the articles from news media like The Guardian, Reuters, Foreign Affairs, etc.

³ Vasilopoulou, Sofia. 2018. The party politics of Euroscepticism in times of crisis: The case of Greece. *Politics*, 38(3), 311–326.

⁴ China's COSCO acquires 51 pct stake in Greece's Piraeus Port, Reuters, August 10, 2016

⁵ Godehardt, Nadine, and Paul J. Kohlenberg. 2020. "China's Global Connectivity Politics. A Meta-Geography in the Making." In the *Multidimensionality of Regions in World Politics*

⁶ Schweller, R., Pu, X. 2011. After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline. *International Security*, 36(1), 41-72.

⁷ Nye, Joseph S. 2005. *Soft Power: The means to success in the world politics*. ISBN 1586483064

The conclusion answers the above-spoken questions, where the combination of the Chinese soft and hard power tools truly improves Chinese image in Greece, whereas the hypotheses of the author is such that the bilateral relations between Greece and China improved in the last decade significantly especially thanks to the soft power tools used to promote Chinese image on the Greek soil.

The hard and soft power

In order to specify the term ‘soft power’, the evolution of perception of this term in academics needs to be introduced. Starting with Joseph S. Nye as a pioneer for a new perception of the state power for influencing states to obtain favourable results. The concept of soft power can be challenging to define as will be introduced below.

The notion that there exist more than just two types of state power is older than it might appear even though it was Mr Nye who gave name to the new type of power, there were other academics who notes that there is more to state power other than military or economics. The author Edward H. Carr, one of the most important representatives of the realism theory in international relations, mentions in his essay (1968)⁸ that international power could be represented by three categories: military power, economic power and what he calls the power over opinion.

At the start of the 1990s, Joseph S. Nye brings a new concept of state power, in which he presents the use of diplomatic incentives as an alternative to the purely military and economic ones (the hard power tools). Such a new concept of state power is called “soft power” and it should complement the above-mentioned ones by using the positive incentives in the international relations field⁹. In his later article (2002)¹⁰ for The Guardian periodic Nye suggests, that the times when the super-powers were putting emphasis on the military power only is long gone and the military means needs to retire to make room for the economic incentives and a new type of diplomacy. In this article, Nye introduces new trends in international relations, where information technologies and this new “soft power” are the future of modern diplomacy. In this new more globalized world, starting the war conflict is the tool of brutes instead of civilised nations which can discuss and make concessions if needed.

Mr Nye’s early division from the 1990s included only two types of state power, there was the hard power which is represented by military power and economic means and the second one was the soft power which included public diplomacy and attraction as incentives. Nonetheless, according to Joseph S. Nye’s later publication (2005)¹¹, the origin of state power can be divided into three separate domains – military power, economic power and soft power. In Nye’s new framework military power and economic power should be perceived as individual type of power. Furthermore, Nye suggests that all of the three above-mentioned demarcations use specific tools which countries use to enforce their will on others, see Table 1.

⁸ E.H. Carr. 1968. *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, New York: Harper & Row, page 108

⁹ Nye, Joseph S. 1990. “Soft Power.” *Foreign Policy*, no. 80, pp. 153–171.

¹⁰ Nye Jr. Joseph S., “Why Military Power Is No Longer Enough,” *The Guardian*, March 2, 2002

¹¹ Nye, Joseph S. 2005. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. The Perseus Books Group

Power types	Behaviours	Primary Currencies	Government policies
Military power	Coercion Deterrence Defence	Threat Force	Coercion diplomacy War Alliance
Economic power	Inducement Coercion	Economic incentives Taxes Custom charges	Providing aid Bribery Sanctions
Soft power	Attraction Agenda setting	Political values Culture Policies Institutions	Public diplomacy Bilateral and multilateral relations

Table 1 – Joseph S. Nye, Three types of power (2005, 31), author's own display

The first two above-mentioned types of the origin of state power can be explained using the current international relations theories, namely the realist theory and the liberalist theory of international relations and their point of view on the origin of state power. According to the traditional realist theory of international relations (represented by the authors Morgentau or Waltz), military power is the underlying explanation for the question of where does state power comes from. The realist theory explains that the use of military power to enforce one state's will on another state is the most natural type of incentive for states. (Drulák, 2010, 54, 55)¹² The realist theory of international relations is an improved successor for the geopolitics' Organic Theory of States, where nations seek nourishment in the form of gaining territory in order to survive. According to the Organic theory, the nature of states is similar to the human beings, thus humans same as states are organisms that seek to live and must fight for their survival.¹³ The original Organic theory of the state is nowadays outdated, however, some of its ideas penetrate into the later realist theory. Therefore, the later theory in the relations between states is strongly based on premises "eat or be eaten" which, according to the realist scenario, makes the world spin. That is why the military power still plays an important role in the realist vision because the eventual military conflict might be inevitable.

On the other hand, the traditional liberal theory authors (Angel, Mitrana, Keohane) suggest that the institutions and economic incentives might be more alluring tools than the military

¹² Drulák, Petr. 2010. Teorie mezinárodních vztahů, Praha: Portál Karolinum, vydání 2 (e-kniha 2012), ISBN 978-80-7367-721-3

¹³ D. Storey. 2009. Political Geography, International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, Elsevier, Pages 243-253, ISBN 9780080449104

means. As the liberal authors introduce the economic sanctions or disability to enter specific markets could be more stimulative motivation to force states to obey the international community. (Drulák, 2010,72,73) Though, it might be questionable to what extent does the economic inconvenience motives states to submit or whether this approach could be evaded by looking for alternative markets. This type of economic incentives was applied in multiple diplomatic affairs, however, its real effectiveness could be questioned especially by looking at the examples of EU sanctions against Russia applied in 2014 as an answer to the illegally-annexed Crimea and Sevastopol¹⁴ or the 2014 sanctions against Iran, which were applied to “persuade Iran to comply with its international obligations” by the EU as restrictive measures against Iran¹⁵.

To explain what soft power is and what tools it uses to enforce one state’s will, there are no prior international relations theories to help explain this phenomenon completely, that is why Nye (2004, 8, 11) brings his own definition. Soft power as a concept is a product of the values that one country or organisation embraces in its culture which is manifested in its policies and its relations with others. Joseph S. Nye suggests that soft power includes three sources of state power – culture (where can be used the similarity of one state culture or where the culture could appear as agreeable); political values (where can be used the similarity of political regime and political values); foreign policy (where can be used the legitimacy of rule and moral character of the state).

It was in 2004 when author Suzanne Nossel¹⁶ introduced a new additional term in the state power portfolio, the “smart power” in the context of American diplomacy. This new term of smart power is a combination of soft power and hard power tools. Thanks to Ms Nossel’s thoughtful argumentation Mr Joseph S. Nye decided to reconsider his original theses. As a reaction to Nossel’s article Nye (2006)¹⁷ rethinks his previous research and publishes a new book dedicated to this combination of the hard and soft power approaches in the practice of United States foreign policy. Nonetheless, Nye keeps on emphasizing that the concept of soft power should have a unique position in the research of state power and it should be studied separately from the hard power tools.

The first occurrence of Mr Nye’s framework was used for analysing the US’s foreign policy acts, however, it didn’t take a lot of time before the soft power concept was implemented in the study of other countries’ foreign policy in the international environment. There are multiple applications of this framework, for example for Japan’s foreign policy introduced by Lam Peng Er (2007)¹⁸, South Korean use of soft power explained by Sook Jong Lee (2010)¹⁹, India’s recent case study of the propagation of Bollywood movies overseas as part of soft

¹⁴ EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁵ EU restrictive measures against Iran, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/iran/>

¹⁶ Smart power, by Suzanne Nossel, Foreign Affairs, March 2004

¹⁷ Nye, Jr., Joseph S. 2006. Smart Power: In Search of the Balance Between Hard and Soft Power. Review of Hard Power: The New Politics of National Security, by Kurt M. Campbell and Michael E. O’Hanlon. Democracy: A Journal of Ideas, 2 Fall 2006.

¹⁸ Lam, P.E. 2007 Japan’s Quest for “Soft Power”: Attraction and Limitation. East Asia 24, 349–363.

¹⁹ Lee S. J. 2011. South Korean Soft Power and How South Korea Views the Soft Power of Others. In: Lee S.J., Melissen J. (eds) Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan

power tactics by author Adrian Athique (2019)²⁰, Canada and its diplomatic incentives brought by Evan H. Potter (2009)²¹ and this framework was broadly introduced in the Chinese case as well.

Soft power in Chinese foreign policy

Mr Alan Hunter (2009)²² describes in his article that the concept of using diplomatic incentives in China is estimated to date back to ancient times. In his article, he introduces that soft power tools can be seen since the era of the Warring States dating back to the 5th century BC through Chinese historical military text from author Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. Therefore, the use of soft power in Chinese diplomacy is not a new concept but a renewed one. The latest discussions inside China about the use of soft power are connected to the use of culture as the main tool to pioneer Chinese image overseas. The re-use of culture in Chinese foreign policy was first published by Mr Wang Huning in 1993.²³ He was one of the first pioneers for such a use of culture in modern Chinese diplomacy. It was thanks to his effort that many Chinese academics and politicians believe that the use of Chinese culture is a key strategy to improve Chinese image overseas.²⁴ There are multiple authors who decided to follow Mr Wang's research, for example, author Yu Xintian (2008, 13-22) who introduces the analyses of the soft power of China in its diplomacy towards African countries.

Of course, the use of culture as a sole tool of the soft power in China met with opposing opinions as well, for example, the author Yan Xuetong (2007)²⁵ opposes that political incentive especially the ideology might be a more appealing tool in soft power repertoire for China. Such use of political favourability and ideology could promote China in countries that share the same political regime and agenda. Nonetheless, the spectrum of countries with a similar political regime as China are scarce in number and the use of culture in Chinese foreign policy remains as the leading promotion plan. The use of soft power in the foreign policy of China was long time complicated due to the negative image of China, which escalated with the Tiananmen Square incident (1989) and later was complicated by the fear of

²⁰ Athique, A. 2019. Soft power, culture and modernity: Responses to Bollywood films in Thailand and the Philippines. *International Communication Gazette*, 81(5), 470–489.

²¹ Potter, Evan H. 2009. *Branding Canada: Projecting Canada's Soft Power through Public Diplomacy*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

²² Hunter, Alan. 2009. Soft power: China on the global stage. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2(3): 373–398

²³ Wang Huning, 1993. Culture as National Strength: Soft Power, *Fudan Journal (Social Sciences edition)*, (3), 91–96

²⁴ Sun, Wanning. 2020. Vessels of Soft Power going out to Sea, in *Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: China's Campaign for Hearts and Minds*, ed. Kingsley Edney, Stanley Rosen, Ying Zhu, ISBN: 978-1-138-63165-6

²⁵ Yan Xuetong. 2007. *Zhongguo ruan shili youdai tigao (The path for China to increase its soft power)*, *Zhongguo yu shijie guanCha (China and World Affairs)*, no. 2:2

the unprecedented economical rise of China as John J. Mearsheimer (2007)²⁶ warns in his article.

In order to improve its image overseas, China needed to adapt new foreign policies focusing on facilitating the positive perception of the Chinese state and culture. One of such policies was the “China’s peaceful rise” (sometimes called “China’s peaceful development”) as Ms Bonnie S. Glaser and Mr Evan S. Madeiros (2007)²⁷ explain in their article. There was another strategical concept implemented in Chinese domestic and foreign policy and that one is called a “Harmonious society”. The author Mingjian Li (2008)²⁸ emphasize that the connection of domestic and foreign policies is one of the strong features in the Chinese soft power repertoire and that is why the Chinese soft power policies are partly implemented in the domestic environment as well.

In his recent study, the author Li Xing (2020)²⁹ brings new findings in which he introduces that soft power could be intensified by the non-intentional way thought increasing Chinese prestige in the international organisations’ ratings. According to Mr Li’s article, there appears a merge of hard power and soft power tools – especially the economic success. The economic success story of China brings fertile land for China and its promotion in the international environment. Therefore, soft power facilitation could be perceived as a by-product of economic incentives and motivations.

Author Guozuo Zhang (2017, 29)³⁰ describes in his publication that the fall of the Chinese empires is directly connected to the fall of Chinese culture. He introduces the Chinese culture as a direct tool of the soft power in China and its diplomacy. This author (Zhang, 2017, 39) identifies cultural soft power in China on three levels. First is the macro level Chinese culture, which refers to the culture in its most general point of view it refers to the spiritual side of the culture as a whole, as Mr Zhang describes it: “At the macro level, culture leaves its footprints when it exists in the human mind”³¹. Second is the culture at the medium level which includes multiple categories under the human science department connected to China’s development, be it the economy, ideology or sociology studies, all of these looks at Chinese culture in its original way. All the medium level cultural manifestations are connected to the oral and visual customs and traditions. All of the possible ideologies or knowledge could be put in this category. The third is the micro-level of culture in China being transferred through concrete knowledge of the above-mentioned human science fields – like more specific customs, laws, art, policies, etc. The micro-level culture is introduced by Zhang (2017, 40) as a concept that includes the knowledge of different social science fields studied in dept. Mr Zhang agrees with Joseph S. Nye with his definition of three main aspects of soft power – culture, political

²⁶ Mearsheimer, John J. 2007. China's Unpeaceful Rise, *Current History*; Apr 2006; 105, 690; Research Library pg. 160

²⁷ Glaser, Bonnie S., Medeiros, Evan S. 2007. The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of "Peaceful Rise". *The China Quarterly*, (190), 291-310

²⁸ Li, Mingjiang. 2008. China Debates Soft Power. *Chinese Journal of International Politics*. 2.

²⁹ Li, Xing. 2020. China’s Pursuit of Soft Power: Norm Diffusion as a Soft Power Mechanism. *Advances in Applied Sociology*, 10

³⁰ Zhang, Guozuo. 2017. *Research Series on the Chinese Dream and China’s Development Path*, Social Sciences Academic Press, vol. 1

³¹ Zhang, Guozuo. 2017. *Research Series on the Chinese Dream and China’s Development Path*, Social Sciences Academic Press, page 39

values and foreign policy, however, he emphasizes, same as other Chinese authors, that in Chinese foreign policy the cultural concept is the most dominant one.

The author Wanning Sun (2020, 82, 83)³² introduces four main channels through which Chinese soft power is being reproduced. There are the means of direct communication like different media (namely the China Daily, CCTV, Xinhua News Agency, CGTN, Reuters, etc) and the second channel under the direct communication tools are the Chinese internet and social media mostly the WeChat, Tencent, Weibo, etc. Then there are two indirect channels of the soft power distribution overseas and those are the foreign reporters and correspondents and the international media present in China.

China is constant in its efforts to create a unified identity of its nation on the domestic side and simultaneously on the international side. The Chinese model is using the socialist ideology as a unifying feature while building its domestic capacities as the authors Glaser and Madeiros (2007, 24)³³ explain. Therefore, the domestic success of Chinese culture and socialism combined should eventually appeal to the international community. The use of soft power in Chinese foreign policy can be manifested through building the Confucius Institutes around the world. These Institutes are focused on the active promotion of Chinese culture and media. To explain Chinese ideologies and culture, these Institutes are the flagships for Chinese soft power overseas³⁴.

The author Mustafa Yağcı (2018)³⁵ emphasizes that the Belt and Road Initiative can belong to these soft power tools as well. He argues that the nature of the Belt and Road Initiative is focused on the economic development and the cultural exchange combined and claims that it is a win-win scenario for all the participating parties. The Belt and Road, according to this author, combines a successful use of Chinese hard power and soft power tools under one project, where economic diplomacy is the middle path for Chinese foreign policy efforts.

The examples of Chinese soft power in Greece

China is nowadays one of the most important non-EU exporters for Greece in the export and import and foreign direct investment. (Data World Bank and China Global Investment Tracker - CGIT) Nonetheless, the bilateral relation of Greece and China was for a long time on neutral bases, this situation improved only in 1972 when Greece decided to acknowledge the “One China” policy. (The One China policy refers to the international acknowledgement of the People’s Republic of China as the sole Chinese government there is, making the Taiwanese government officially illegitimate.) Of course, the Sino-Greek bilateral relations still remain half-hearted even after the 1970s.³⁶ Things started to change in the new century with the 2006 Strategic Partnership between Greece and China being signed, it was one of the

³² Sun, Wanning. 2020. Vessels of Soft Power going out to Sea, in *Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: China’s Campaign for Hearts and Minds*, ed. Kingsley Edney, Stanley Rosen, Ying Zhu

³³ Glaser, Bonnie S., Medeiros, Evan S. 2007. The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of "Peaceful Rise". *The China Quarterly*, (190)

³⁴ Paradise, J. F. 2009. China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing’s Soft Power. *Asian Survey*, 49(4), 647–669.

³⁵ Yağcı, Mustafa. 2018. Rethinking Soft Power in Light of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 15, No. 57, 2018

³⁶ Kourkouvelas, L. 2013. Détente as a Strategy: Greece and the Communist World, 1974–9, *The International History Review*, 35:5, 1052-1067

first greater steps towards building the Sino-Greek further cooperation³⁷. According to the author De Corre (2018)³⁸ the situation improves even more in 2008 when Chinese investors (COSCO) decided to invest in the Piraeus port and the Chinese investors start to be more focused on Greece. With this new Chinese intention to invest in the Hellenic republic there needed to be applied new soft power strategies to soften Greek opinion on China to facilitate the market entry for Chinese firms. These new strategies to promote Chinese image in Greece were adapted by combining the direct and indirect soft power tools which were mentioned above in the theoretical part – namely the use of Chinese media and internet, foreign correspondents and international media.

The China-CEE (Initiative 16+1)

One of the soft power tools of China in Greece is the Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern Europe Countries (sometimes referred to as China-CEE, China-CEEC or 16+1 Initiative). This China-CEE is sometimes addressed as 16+1 (previously 17+1) however, due to possible change of the number of member states it will be addressed as the China-CEE to avoid later inexactness. The most recent change in the name (16+1) was due to Lithuania decision to leave this initiative in March 2021³⁹. This China-CEE initiative was established in 2012 with a focus on economic cooperation and cultural exchange between China and the Central and Eastern European countries. Greece entered this initiative later in 2019.

Apart from the economic cooperation programs, main focus of this initiative is to promote inter-cultural exchange and that is why this initiative encourages students from Greece to join in one of the Scholarship programmes. These programmes lure the partner-country students to join in the intercultural exchange programs by applying for one of the Chinese university scholarships. In total there are three types of scholarships that students might be awarded. The first type of scholarship programme is the CSC (Chinese Scholarship Council) programme. This programme awards students with a Chinese government scholarship and it can be applied to both English-taught programmes and Chinese-taught programmes. The applicants are not limited by their study field as long as it is being taught in one of the Chinese universities and there are multiple Chinese universities that offer such English-taught programmes.⁴⁰ The second type of scholarship is offered to the students who are interested in the Chinese taught programmes, the Confucius Institutes are providing scholarship for those who are interested in being the future Chinese language teachers. This scholarship is conditioned by successfully passing HSK Chinese language proficiency exams on a high level.⁴¹ The last type of scholarship is the scholarship from specific universities that might offer international students their scholarship programs. This type of scholarship requires more initiative from the applicant's side and they can be both applied for the English-taught and the Chinese-taught programmes.

³⁷ Greece external relations briefing: Greece's current relations with China, China-CEE Institute policy article, August 3, 2021, by Evelyn Karakatsani

³⁸ De Corre, P. 2018. A Divided Europe's China challenge, East Asia Forum, November 2019

³⁹ Lithuania mulls leaving the China's 17+1 forum, expanding links with Taiwan, LRT (Lithuania National Radio and Television) 2/3/2021, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1356107/lithuania-mulls-leaving-china-s-17plus1-forum-expanding-links-with-taiwan>

⁴⁰ Official website of Chinese Scholarship Council, <https://www.chinesescholarshipcouncil.com>

⁴¹ Official website of Athens Business Confucius Institute, International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarship Programme, <https://www.confucius.aueb.gr/index.php/en/education/study-in-china/confucius-institute-scholarships-for-chinese-language-studies-in-china>

Confucius Institute

Under the China-CEE initiative dictate there were established several Confucius Institutes all over the Europe. There are two such institutes in Greece, except the Athens Business Confucius Institute in Athens founded already in 2009, there was recently established the Confucius Institute in Thessaloniki in December 2018 in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The Confucius Institutes are educational centres for inter-cultural exchange. Their main agenda abroad is to promote China and improve Chinese image, that is why under the Confucius Institute there are being organised multiple seminars, workshops and exhibitions every year. Just recently there was an online conference to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Athens Business Confucius Institute⁴².

Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI or OBOR) is an international initiative that emphasizes the promotion of economic and cultural cooperation. By entering this international initiative, the member states can gain many advantages like financial aid and help with the construction of the connectivity channels and the economic corridors. There are many gains from entering into the BRI for its member states and even Greece started to take into consideration to join this ambitious initiative as authors Zhang Lihua and Vasilis Trigkas (2015) explain⁴³. The decision to enter this initiative was made also with the expectation of increasing the connectivity channels and promoting tourism flow in Greece. Nonetheless, the evaluation of the pros and cons of entering the initiative took longer than expected and Greece entered the BRI only later in 2018 by signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China as is written on the official website of the OBOR Europe⁴⁴. Although the BRI is considered mostly as one of the hard power tools it includes some of the soft power features as well, for example, the propagation of Chinese culture and mutually beneficial trade deals overseas along with international cooperation.

The Sino-Greek cooperation continues even during the Covid19 pandemic situation and many sinologists emphasize that Greece might be a facilitator between Beijing and Brussel⁴⁵. The author George Tzogopoulos (2021)⁴⁶ explains that the relations between Beijing and Athens are based on mutual understanding especially when it comes to the disputed territories. This author emphasizes that the struggle with Cyprus territories may be viewed as similar to the disputed territory in the South China Sea and he suggests that the similarity of grievances might motivate Greece to support China in the UN Council meetings, like the one in 2016⁴⁷ or later in 2017.

⁴² 10 Years Athens Business Confucius Institute: The future of prosperous collaboration, Online conference, 30/6/2021, <https://www.aueb.gr/en/content/10-years-athens-business-confucius-institute-future-prosperous-collaboration-online-web>

⁴³ Can China's New Silk Road End Greece's Economic Tragedy? Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, May 11, 2015, by Zhang Lihua, Vasilis Trigkas

⁴⁴ One Belt One Road Europe, <https://www.oboreurope.com/en/greece-bri/>

⁴⁵ Tzogopoulos, George. 2020. Greece, China and the 17+1 Initiative, Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy Policy Paper, November 27

⁴⁶ Greece's pragmatism vis-a-vis China, International New York Times, Kathimeriki, July 14, 2021, by George Tzogopoulos

⁴⁷ EU Issues South China Sea Statement Ending Discord Within Bloc, The Wall Street Journal, July 17, 2016, by Laurence Norman

The effects of the Chinese soft power use in Greece

As was discussed above in the Sino-Hellenic bilateral relation, multiple programs exist to facilitate trade, diplomatic ties and cultural exchange between these two entities. Furthermore, their cooperation is continuing even today, despite the Covid19 pandemic situation. There are plenty of ways in which the Chinese soft power influences the Greek foreign policy, especially by looking at Greece supportive rhetoric towards China during the international community meetings⁴⁸. There are plenty of cases when Greece openly supported China in the international despite the will of the EU. Some academics later argues that this is a consequence of the use of Chinese soft power inside the EU as part of the deliberated “wedge strategy”. A strategy that is supposed to undermine the unanimity and the ability to act of international units. The author Izumikawa (2013)⁴⁹ explains that the “wedge strategy” might be of two types. One is reward-based and the other is coercive-based. In the Greece’s case, we can witness use of both of them.

One of the examples of Greece backing China during the international court could be found in 2016, the UN Council meeting, which was held to once and for all decide on the manner of the South China Sea territorial claims. The UN Tribunal decided in the favour of the Philippines, which, similar to China, claimed the disputed maritime area in the South China Sea. Prior to this decision, there was a long process of lobbying from both sides to appeal to its allies to support them in the international tribunal. It was obvious that the Philippines, a long-term US ally will look for support on the other side of the Pacific and their ally the EU. Nonetheless, the support from the EU was not unanimous and it took a long time before the EU was able to accept the UN Resolution on the South China Sea territorial dispute. The sole reason for this setback from the EU side was due to a split of opinion inside the EU, three member states decided to oppose this unanimous statement against Chinese claims, namely Hungary, Croatia and Greece, unsurprisingly all members of the Chinese-lead Belt and Road Initiative.

Another example of Greece deviating from the all-EU decision-making process is in 2017 when Greece decided to boycott the EU statement on China human rights abuse during the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Greek Foreign Ministry spokesperson commented the situation as an “unconstructive criticism of China”⁵⁰.

It was later in 2019 when new Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis expressed in public his “appreciation for China’s support when Greece was hit by the financial crisis” and that the two countries will continue their cooperation⁵¹. Mr Mitsotakis re-assured the public that the priorities for Greece are to stay in the international organization such as NATO and EU, however, he puts special emphasis on the Sino-Greek bilateral relation. According to the Greek Prime Minister, the European sanctions against China are an exaggerated gesture and

⁴⁸ The EU, the South China Sea, and China’s successful wedge strategy, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, October 13, 2016, by Theresa Fallon

⁴⁹ Yasuhiro Izumikawa (2013) To Coerce or Reward? Theorizing Wedge Strategies in Alliance Politics, *Security Studies*, 22:3, 498-531

⁵⁰ Greece blocks EU statement on China human rights at U.N., Reuters, June 18, 2017, by Robin Emmott, Angeliki Koutantou

⁵¹ Greece external relations briefing: Greece’s current relations with China, China-CEE Institute policy article, August 3, 2021, by Evelyn Karakatsani

he stands firmly behind his Beijing partner in promoting the Belt and Road Initiative as Ms Evelyn Karakatsani explains in her recent study (2021).

The bilateral relation between Greece and China started to grow stronger after 2008 with the interconnection of Greece's largest port with Chinese company COSCO. The Sino-Greek relation is being facilitated by the combination of hard power and soft power tools. It is thanks to the Chinese systematic effort to promote itself as a solid trade partner and thanks to the propagation of Chinese culture in Greece, that we can see positive results in the Greek foreign affairs attitude. According to the data from the Chinese Embassy in Greece⁵², the cooperation between Greece and China keeps going well even during the Covid19 pandemic. There are multiple promotion projects and intercultural exchange programs like the Symposium 2020 on Sino-Greek relations that was held online during the pandemic situation.

Unfortunately, there is a negative feature to the use of Chinese soft power, which might lead to the disparity inside the EU, as many worldwide sinologists and academics warn, like Igor Rogelja and Konstantin Tsimose (2020)⁵³, Sophia Meunier (2014)⁵⁴ or Mr Baas Hooijmaijers (2019)⁵⁵ the use of Chinese power might bring a discord into the EU structures. And of course, as was mentioned above, there is a rising alarm of the academics concerning the Chinese use of soft power in Europe as a tool to apply the wedge strategy as the author Nicola Kasarini explains in her paper (2013).

Simultaneously, there might be a rising disturbance for the Sino-Greek relation from the EU side. At the start of 2021, there started to be a concern about disruption to the Sino-Greek bilateral relation from the side of the European Union due to a new round of sanctions against specific Chinese entrepreneurs. These sanctions were met with the tit for tat sanction from the Chinese side focused on specific European politicians and entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, as the article from Ms Silvia Amar (2021)⁵⁶ discuss this disagreement between China and the EU will not significantly affect the bilateral relation of Greece and China in the long term. Of course, one needs to ask whether this Greek decision to back its Chinese ally will not eventually lead to the alienation of Greece and the EU.

Conclusions

The aim of this essay was to describe and analyse the Chinese soft power approach in Greece. The first research question was focused on finding in which way does the use of Chinese soft power in Greece manifest. Based on the above literary review we can answer this question with specific cases from the practice of the use of soft power in Greece. The Chinese soft power is being extended through the propagation of Chinese culture because this is the most favourable way how to facilitate Chinese image overseas and as was discussed above it is part of the Chinese foreign policy tactics. In case of Greece, the Chinese soft power could be

⁵² Official website of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Hellenic Republic, <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cegr/eng/>

⁵³ Rogelja, I., Tsimonis, K. 2020. Narrating the China Threat: Securitising Chinese Economic Presence in Europe, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Volume 13, Issue 1, Spring, Pages 103–133

⁵⁴ Meunier, S. A. 2014. Faustian bargain or just a good bargain? Chinese foreign direct investment and politics in Europe. *Asia Eur J* 12, 143–158

⁵⁵ Hooijmaaijers, B. 2019. Blackening Skies for Chinese Investment in the EU? *Journal of Chinese Political Sciences* 24, 451–470

⁵⁶ Greece is not abandoning China even though others are, ambassador says, CNBC, June 24, 2021, by Silvia Amaro

found especially in the propagation of cooperation between China and Greece in form of a memorandum, memberships in initiatives like the China-CEE or the Belt and Road Initiative, furthermore, there are specific Chinese institutions established in Greece specialized on promotion of bilateral trade and cultural exchange, whereas the Confucius Institutes are one of the main tools in Chinese soft power portfolio.

There needs to be mentioned the issue specifying the soft power. Even though this term “soft power” is broadly described in Joseph S. Nye’s books and articles, it remains challenging to describe what can and cannot be considered as the soft power tool, due to frequent overlapping of the soft power tools with the hard power tools or their intertwine nature. Multiple authors also struggle with the demarcation of the soft power definition like the authors Zhang (2017)⁵⁷ or Yağcı (2018)⁵⁸. The use of Chinese soft power tools is such a complex topic that it would fit on multiple books content for there are constantly new tactics and diplomatic incentives being invented, which are significantly changing our understanding of the soft power definition.

The second research question was focused on whether the use of Chinese diplomatic incentives (hard and soft power combined) does influence the Greek foreign policy approach in the international organizations. The answer to this question is affirmative, the use of Chinese soft and hard power tools does influence Greece’s foreign policy decision-making on some level. This finding can be proved by looking at the Greece behaviour in the international meetings, specifically the 2016 UN Council meeting held to resolve the disputed South China Sea naval area claims, where Greece with other countries in the EU decided to stand behind China, or later in 2017 when Greece decided to boycott the EU statement on the human rights abuse in China during the UN Human Rights Council court in Geneva. Of course, there needs to be taken into consideration other factors other than the Chinese soft power influence, like the similarities of cases of China’s and Greece’s grievances, for example, in the case of the disputed area in the South China Sea being somewhat comparable to the Cyprus disputed areas.

Nevertheless, there needs to be emphasized that if the Greek party did not feel any sympathy towards China at all, it would probably be less active in its advocacy in international organizations like the UN and the EU. It is my opinion that the most far-sighted tactic in diplomatic affairs would be denying giving statements in international affairs and playing the “safe swiss card” of remaining purely neutral. Despite that Greece once again in 2021 decided to oppose the EU during the 2021 sanctions against Chinese firms and Greece decided to prioritize its bilateral relation with China instead. Therefore, the question arises on how long Greece will be able to play it “safe on both sides”, respectively how long can Greece balance between these two influential players, the EU and the People’s Republic of China. It is quite possible that sooner or later Greece will have to choose one side.

⁵⁷ Zhang, Guozuo. 2017. Research Series on the Chinese Dream and China’s Development Path, Social Sciences Academic Press, vol. 1, ISSN 2363-6866

⁵⁸ Yağcı, Mustafa. 2018. Rethinking Soft Power in Light of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Vol. 15, No. 57, 2018, pp. 67-78, DOI: 10.33458/uidergisi.518043

Bibliography

- Athique, A. 2019. Soft power, culture and modernity: Responses to Bollywood films in Thailand and the Philippines. *International Communication Gazette*, 81(5), 470–489.
- Blanchard, J., Flint, C. 2017. The Geopolitics of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative. *Geopolitics*. 22. 223-245. 10.1080/14650045.2017.1291503
- Carr., E.H. 1968. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, New York: Harper & Row, strana 108
- Casarini, N. 2013. The EU-China partnership: 10 years on. European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06823>
- De Corre, P. 2018. A Divided Europe's China challenge, *East Asia Forum*, November 2019, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/11/26/a-divided-europes-china-challenge/>
- Drulák, Petr. 2010. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*, Praha: Portál Karolinum, vydání 2 (e-kniha 2012), ISBN 978-80-7367-721-3
- Glaser, Bonnie S., Medeiros, Evan S. 2007. The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of "Peaceful Rise". *The China Quarterly*, (190), 291-310., from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20192771>
- Godehardt, Nadine, and Paul J. Kohlenberg. 2020. "China's Global Connectivity Politics. A Meta-Geography in the Making." In *the Multidimensionality of Regions in World Politics*, ed. Paul J. Kohlenberg and Nadine Godehardt (Abingdon/New York, NY: Routledge, forthcoming), ISBN: 9780429319853, 191–215
- Hooijmaaijers, B. 2019. Blackening Skies for Chinese Investment in the EU? *Journal of Chinese Political Sciences* 24, 451–470. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-019-09611-4>
- Hunter, Alan. 2009. Soft power: China on the global stage. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2(3): 373–398. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pop001>
- Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. 2013. To Coerce or Reward? Theorizing Wedge Strategies in Alliance Politics, *Security Studies*, 22:3, 498-531, DOI: 10.1080/09636412.2013.816121
- Lam, P.E. 2007 Japan's Quest for "Soft Power": Attraction and Limitation. *East Asia* 24, 349–363. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-007-9028-6>
- Lee S. J. 2011. South Korean Soft Power and How South Korea Views the Soft Power of Others. In: Lee S.J., Melissen J. (eds) *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230118447_8
- Li, Mingjiang. 2008. China Debates Soft Power. *Chinese Journal of International Politics*. 2. 10.1093/cjip/pon011. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/31202353_China_Debates_Soft_Power

- Li, Xing. 2020. China's Pursuit of Soft Power: Norm Diffusion as a Soft Power Mechanism. *Advances in Applied Sociology*, 10, 278-297. doi: 10.4236/aasoci.2020.107017.
- Kourkouvelas, L. 2013. Détente as a Strategy: Greece and the Communist World, 1974–9, *The International History Review*, 35:5, 1052-1067, DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2013.820772
- Larsson, R., Brousseau, K. R., Driver, M. J., Mikael Holmqvist, Veronika Tarnovskaya, Kenneth Bengtsson, & Per-Arne Sandström. 2003. International Growth through Cooperation: Brand-Driven Strategies, Leadership, and Career Development in Sweden [and Executive Commentary]. *The Academy of Management Executive* (1993-2005), 17(1), 7–24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4165924>
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2007. China's Unpeaceful Rise, *Current History*; Apr 2006; 105, 690; Research Library pg. 160
- Meunier, S. A. 2014. Faustian bargain or just a good bargain? Chinese foreign direct investment and politics in Europe. *Asia Eur J* 12, 143–158. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-014-0382-x>
- Nye, Joseph S. 1990. "Soft Power." *Foreign Policy*, no. 80, pp. 153–171. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1148580.
- Nye, Joseph S. 2005. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. The Perseus Books Group, 2005. ISBN 9781586483067
- Nye, Jr., Joseph S. 2006. Smart Power: In Search of the Balance Between Hard and Soft Power. Review of *Hard Power: The New Politics of National Security*, by Kurt M. Campbell and Michael E. O'Hanlon. *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, 2 Fall 2006.
- Paradise, J. F. 2009. China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power. *Asian Survey*, 49(4), 647–669. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2009.49.4.647>
- Potter, Evan H. 2009. *Branding Canada: Projecting Canada's Soft Power through Public Diplomacy*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Rogelja, I., Tsimonis, K. 2020. Narrating the China Threat: Securitising Chinese Economic Presence in Europe, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Volume 13, Issue 1, Spring, Pages 103–133, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poz019>
- Schweller, R., Pu, X. 2011. After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline. *International Security*, 36(1), 41-72. Retrieved July 19, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41289688>
- Storey, D. 2009. Political Geography, *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Elsevier, strany 243-253, ISBN 9780080449104
- Sun, Wanning. 2020. Vessels of Soft Power going out to Sea, in *Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: China's Campaign for Hearts and Minds*, ed. Kingsley Edney, Stanley Rosen, Ying Zhu, ISBN: 978-1-138-63165-6

- Turcsanyi, R., Kachlikova, E. 2020. The BRI and China's Soft Power in Europe: Why Chinese Narratives (Initially) Won. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 49(1), 58–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868102620963134>
- Tzogopoulos, George. 2020. Greece, China and the 17+1 Initiative, Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy Policy Paper, November 27, <https://www.eliamep.gr/en/publication/ελλάδα-κίνα-και-πρωτοβουλία-17-1/>
- Vasilopoulou, Sofia. 2018. The party politics of Euroscepticism in times of crisis: The case of Greece. *Politics*, 38(3), 311–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395718770599>
- Wang Huning, 1993. Culture as National Strength: Soft Power, *Fudan Journal (Social Sciences edition)*, (3), 91–96.
- Yağcı, Mustafa. 2018. Rethinking Soft Power in Light of China's Belt and Road Initiative, *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 15, No. 57, 2018, pp. 67-78, DOI: 10.33458/uidergisi.518043
- Yan Xuetong. 2007. Zhongguo ruan shili youdai tigao (The path for China to increase its soft power), *Zhongguo yu shijie guan cha (China and World Affairs)*, no. 2:2
- Yu Xintian. 2008. The Role of Soft Power in China's Foreign Strategy, *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, March 13, 2008
- Zhang, Guozuo. 2017. Research Series on the Chinese Dream and China's Development Path, Social Sciences Academic Press, vol. 1, ISSN 2363-6866