

The Chinese State and Soft Power

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Abstract. With the advancement of economic globalization, in today's society where peace and development are the themes of the times, the influence of hard power, such as economic and military power, has gradually diminished. While soft power, represented by culture, political values and foreign policy, has become more and more important. The explanatory power of traditional realist theories has become increasingly weak. Against this background, Joseph S. Nye, a famous master of international relations theory and a representative of the neo-liberal school, first proposed the concept of "soft power" in 1990 in response to the "decline of the United States". "Since then, the concept of soft power has begun to attract academic attention and has gradually entered the public discourse, and has been adopted by scholars and politicians in various countries. Nye made a clear binary division of the concept of power, dividing it into hard power and soft power. According to Nye, hard power manifests itself as tangible material power, a form of control, while soft power is an intangible force of attraction and assimilation. In Nye's idea of soft power, culture, political values and foreign policy are the main resources that constitute soft power, which relies on solicitation rather than coercion and is characterised by intangibility, diffusion, non-monopoly and non-coercion. Since the mid-1990s, Chinese political and academic circles have identified the potential of soft power and have made attempts to highlight its importance. With the rise of China and related events, theories such as the 'China Threat Theory' and the 'Thucydides Trap' have emerged in the international community, suggesting that China's rise could lead to a destabilising and dangerous international situation. The soft power theory has therefore been welcomed by China as a rebuttal to these theories and an attempt to shift the world's focus to the "peaceful rise of China". This paper will reformulate and analyse China's soft power policy through Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, and will focus the discussion on China's rich cultural resources, political values and soft power resources for foreign policy. It is important to note that China's soft power policy can be successful in enhancing China's image, but given the conflicting interests of developing and developed countries. China's policy needs to be carefully crafted and well thought out. At the same time, excessive government guidance and control can enhance soft power, but according to Joseph Nye's theory, civil society should take more responsibility in building soft power.

Keywords: China; Soft Power; Confucius Institutes; Green Technology.

1. Introduction

Due to the rise of globalization and stronger multilateral organizations, "hard power" (power derived from coercion, economic and military strength) is becoming less effective in achieving a country's most important goals (Nye 2004, Kramer 2009, Gallarotti 2010, Yang 2020). Joseph Nye (2008), the scholar who coined the term "soft power", believes the nature of international power could be visualized as a tri-dimensional, tri-level chessboard. The top level is a classic state-centric perspective emphasizing military power and relatively unipolar as a system; that is, the US will likely remain categorically hegemonic for the near future. The second level is defined by economic power, where power is more fluid and evenly distributed between other major world powers. Lastly, the bottom layer is what is known as "soft power", or as Nye defines it, "a series of transnational relations that cross borders outside government control." In the field of International Relations, power is defined as the ability to influence others to get what one wants, and "soft" in the term "soft power" acts as a qualifier to indicate that power in this sense is limited to cooperation rather than coercion. In the span of when the idea of soft power was first conceived, China (PRC) has undergone significant overall growth and has continuously elevated its position on the international stage. When it comes to China and power, much of the spotlight is put on "hard power" in the form of rapid state-driven

expansions in the military and industry; and while this is a worthwhile topic in it of itself, there needs to be a deeper discussion of Chinese soft power: How is the state involved and what are the successes and shortcomings of this soft power?

In recent years, Chinese leaders have recognized soft power to be a practical concept and are active in voicing support for spreading Chinese culture and improving China's image on the international stage. During the PRC's 17th National Congress in 2007, former President Hu Jintao announced that "The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will definitely be accompanied by the thriving of Chinese culture" and "We must enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country." Later, in the 18th National Congress in 2004, General Secretary declared that "We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's messages to the world." (Wilson Center) The CCP recognizes China's soft power potential and has taken necessary measures to unlock it. However, it seems that recently the Chinese state (CCP) has inserted itself into matters that would conflict both with traditional theories and their own outspoken framework of soft power. (2019) Many scholars have referred to this "irregularity" as "Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics", in that Chinese soft power can at times be non-mutual, overly ambitious, authoritative, and resemble that of hard power (Edney 2020).

The purpose of this paper is not to invalidate, support, or correct criticisms on the nature of Chinese soft power or hypothesize the true intentions of the Chinese state. Rather, it is to analyze how and why the CCP has been involved in soft power creation, as well as to ascertain both the successes of this soft power creation as well as its failures. I found that Confucius Institutes (CIs) and green technology are two unique areas that best encapsulate the essence of government involvement in generating Chinese soft power. I have found that a reoccurring trade-off can be distinguished in both these areas that strongly favors fast-tracked developments with some nations at the cost of integrity and trust with others. This paper is comprised of four sections: in sections one and two I explore soft power creation by the state in these two areas, in section three I explore glaring patterns among these initiatives, and finally, in section four, I conclude with my own thoughts on how the state could better manage its soft power creation within these two areas.

2. Confucius Institutes

Confucius Institutes are non-profit international programs in school/university facilities that aim to teach and promote Chinese language and culture to foreign individuals. CIs were initially funded by Hanban, an organization directly affiliated with the Chinese government, and now the Chinese International Education Foundation, an NGO. By the end of 2018, there were 548 CIs with 1,193 smaller Confucius Classrooms (CIs in high schools) (Edney 2020, 133). According to the US Senate Subcommittee of Investigations, China has spent over \$158 million on Confucius Institutes in the US alone from 2006-2009 (US Senate 2022).

Historically, Confucianism has dominated Chinese culture to where it was directly influential in state-building and maintaining a "Chinese status-quo" that transcended across many dynasties. Starting in the Han Dynasty, Confucian principles would forever become a part of the bureaucracy as individuals needed to master them to pass civil service exams in order to become court officials. Confucius' pragmatic outlook on society, in that it saw every aspect of life as consisting of obligations between people and entities – with little regard for the spiritual realm such as the afterlife, gods, and mysticism – made it particularly applicable to government and everyday life. Later, Han Emperor Wu Di declared Confucianism the official state ideology, with no subsequent emperor repealing his decision.

Neo-Confucianism – a reemergence of "new" Confucianism that further emphasizes secularism and rationalism – could be seen as an aspect of ancient Chinese soft power exerted on weaker states in the Sino-sphere. Confucianism, similar to Buddhism, diffused into east Asian societies such as Korea, Japan, and Vietnam and would have profound cultural effects there. Because of how aligned Confucianism was to the very much powerful Chinese state at the time, those aforementioned states

recognized their cultural roots, shared values, and arbitrary inferiority to China. This form of power China held was by no means through military or economic coercion, but was also systematic and yielded corporeal benefits for China in the form of gifts, advantageous trade relations, and diplomatic edge with those nations. This would be known as the “Tributary system”, often also known as the “Confucian world order, but like “soft power”, is another term conceived by western scholars. This is all to say that the current Chinese government continues to see the value of Confucianism as a tool in exerting soft power but with a contemporary addition: Confucius Institutes.

There have been significant limitations to the effectiveness of the CIs. It must be first said that, ironically but perhaps unsurprisingly, CIs have little to teach about Confucianism itself. Rather, they are designed to appeal to the mainstream public with little specialized knowledge on Chinese culture and language, a claim that can be backed by a scholar and former student of CIs (Edney 2020, 143). “Confucius” Institutes are nonetheless a testament to their namesake’s embodiment of Chinese culture and values. Moreover, CIs have not widely changed their content since their conception. Yet, numerous accusations have been made regarding the true intentions of the CIs, ranging from preventing US universities (who host CIs) from making public statements the CCP considers sensitive, intellectual property theft via “foreign agents”, and lack of general transparency, but none of those criticisms are directed towards what students learn at CIs. The abrupt decline of CIs most clearly reflects US’ various concerns: just 18 US-based CIs exist now in 2022 compared to the 118 that once existed in 2019 with an unknown amount internationally (NAS 2022). It is also worth noting that many closed CIs in the US were allowed to reorganize into other mandarin programs deemed appropriate and entirely nonaffiliated with the CCP by the Department of Defense (Horsley 2021). In the context of the argument, the waning of CIs in the US exposes the inherent qualities and flaws of Chinese soft power when driven this intensely by the state.

First and foremost, why was it necessary for the Chinese government to get involved? Mandarin is the most common first (native) language spoken in the world; however, that it is credited to the number of people within China and not their international presence, or lack thereof (Eberhard 2022). On the other hand, the other major world languages, namely English, Spanish, French, Arabic, and even Hindi, are numerous countries’ first languages. It may be wholly unnecessary or overly difficult for the governments of those aforementioned countries to involve themselves in such a way that the CCP does with Mandarin. For instance, while most countries understand the value of implementing English in their school curricula, it is not simply attributed to US soft power. For one, English is universally sought after enough to where the US government does not need to create demand; and for another, the rest of the English-speaking world – UK, Canada, Oceania – propagates the shared language to where no one can take all the credit. Mandarin does not have those conditions, but it is not so facile for it to work as Chinese soft power. People outside China will not learn a language they find difficult, esoteric, or unnecessary for their professional, educational or personal endeavors without any incentives, which is why the Chinese state must artificially create such them. The pervasive use of a language is a direct indicator of an empire or nation’s strength: i.e., a *lingua franca*. While dominant languages don’t disappear and evolve, they can slip into obscurity or fragment. Considering China’s impending demographic implosion leading to significant population decline, the CCP sought to expeditiously increase Mandarin’s presence in the world as it starts to shrink internally. Hence, the state needed to marshal its significant resources to push the proliferation of a secondary language across the globe.

In seeking to expand China’s cultural soft power, the Chinese state’s involvement in CIs presents other significant failures. The closest yet comparable institutions to CIs would be other international schools and cultural institutions around the world: Britain’s British Council, France’s Alliance Française, Italy’s Società Dante Alighieri, and Spain’s Instituto Cervantes (Freeman Spogli Institutes). However, there still exist significant differences between the CIs and the aforementioned institutions, which leaves room for criticism and skepticism of what CIs’ true intentions are. Firstly, CIs inherently differ from those other institutions in that the latter were always NGOs and formed in the late 20th or late 19th century – thus having plentiful time to build rapport and credibility. The expansion of CIs

was undoubtedly made possible by the state's involvement, but this may not be viewed as praiseworthy. While CIs are public and free for those that attend them, this in turn gave Hanban (previously controlled CIs, directly controlled by China's Ministry of Education) near total jurisdiction in the organization of CIs. Namely, many teachers in CIs have been dispatched from China because there are not enough native teachers proficient in the language (GAO, 2019). This is poignantly reflective of the status of CIs in both developed and developing countries. In developing countries, it shows the general lack of demand or priority in studying Chinese. It may be difficult for certain countries, most notably South Africa, to find teachers without Hanban sending Chinese expats (Hartig, 2016). The lack of adequate teachers is also seen to some extent in CIs in developed countries. However, in conjunction with considering the relationship between CIs and US campuses, the greater concern there seems to be security and censorship.

The decline of US-based CIs clearly reflects a weakness of China's state-management of CIs in all places: it is lumped into the greater but mostly unrelated struggles of US-Sino hard power. There is no doubt that US-Sino relations have greatly deteriorated since the conception of CIs. The worsening relations could be attributed to a string of events and disagreements decreasing cooperation in climate change, trade and most importantly, geopolitical disputes. CIs seem rather trivial in comparison, but were attacked nonetheless for their affiliation with the Chinese government. It is important to note because of how outspoken the criticism has been between US and China; the antagonism is not limited to the 2 state actors but seeps into the people and societies of both as well. It could naturally prompt sweeping removals of each other's elements, cultures, and institutions such as CIs on a grassroots level. The breakdown of these shared values, viewed as one of 3 core sources of soft power by Nye, cripples whatever effect it may have (Nye 1990). Although funded by the Chinese state, CIs are not separate institutions but integrated into US college campuses; numerous allegations regarding censorship, security, and other accounts of undue influence have been posed against them. The strength of these claims is another topic and unimportant for that matter, but are inevitably made more pressing by the greater divide between US and China. As such, the decline of US-based CIs could be seen as "collateral damage", but perhaps not quite so considering their direct affiliations to the government.

The failures of CIs do not detract from their successes, although success may be even more abstract to define empirically. As Nye (2004, p. 99) notes, "soft power's effects depend heavily on acceptance by the receiving audience". While it may be simple to identify nonacceptance, as is often the case with the US, acceptance may not be straightforward. If "success" were to be measured as defined by CIs themselves, that is, to promote and teach Chinese language and culture, then CIs are very much successful given what they have accomplished in a relatively short period. According to Hanban, the number of Chinese learners has jumped from 30 million to 100 million in 10 years since the conception of CIs (Liu 2014). However, the state actor once again complicates the equation. It remains unknown whether the Chinese state's concerted efforts in CIs are just that, something sinister, or a second thought. But, does the influx of 70 million learners on paper have practical benefits? Countries have 3 main gains from foreigners who speak their language proficiently and understand their culture; skilled workers might immigrate and permanently reside there, that country may receive increased support/public opinion that can be leveraged, and more individuals, businesses, and investors may be more enticed and help boost the economy. While immigration is stagnantly low and China's image on the global stage has become further polarized at best, China's enormous economic growth – fueled by surges in foreign investment – aligns with that of CIs. In part, the establishment of CIs in over one hundred countries is also a reflection of China's rapid foreign investment and economic cooperation with many different countries.

3. Green Technology

"Green technology" refers to the use of technology and science that reduces a negative human impact on the environment. In past decades, outside of just qualitative observations, there have been

measurable, quantitative metrics of environmental problems discussed in world conventions and general press coverage (Wallace-Wells 2019). Substantial efforts have been made multilaterally to reverse the unchecked industrial consequences of the last century. However, even while most nations may view green technology as inherently good, it does not mean they have all unconditionally accepted it. Firstly, despite renewable energies becoming remarkably more efficient over the years, “unclean” energy such as fossil fuels, natural gas, etc. remain paramount in achieving a nation’s traditional goals of economic growth and exertion of “hard power”. Large-scale mobilizations to green energy are seen in parallel with stagnating GDP growth – a reoccurring trend in developed nations – and even less practical to implement in developing nations. Secondly, nations always claim they bear different levels of responsibility. For instance, the US may claim China releases more carbon emissions overall, but China has claimed the US has released consistently high emissions per capita. (Hua 2021) In the traditional sense of power, it may be unwise for a nation to act altruistically; that is, to accept green technology knowing it would be a lost opportunity cost in the form of economic gain. However, in the sense of soft power, being praised as a “benefactor to humanity” might make up for the state’s economic tradeoff.

The CCP has been front and center in pushing green development and industrialization, gaining a reputation as a forerunner in the environmental movement while maintaining illustrious GDP growth. This has projected a great reputation and image for the state and hence has delivered sizable soft power to the CCP. The central government has promulgated this imposing initiative through a series of laws, policies, and regulations to spur the green economy, guided by three major schemes/mottos: “Circular Economy”, the idea that resource use should be perpetual and sustainable, Ecological Civilization”, that green tech will prioritize and enhance citizens’ lives, and “Beautiful China” (*Meili Zhongguo*), that China’s image to the world will be deservedly improved. (Hanson 2019) Outside of China, through sole investment or joint ventures, the PRC has proactively invested in the new energy sector for the developing world.

The main example of this state-managed green technological revolution is evident in the *One Belt One Road Initiative*. The CCP has used private companies, with which it has a close association (i.e., through state capitalism), as chariots for implementing its initiatives. These companies have constructed many large, domestic wind power plants since 2011, while certain European companies have also actively sought cooperation with Chinese companies in the new energy sector in Europe.

On a more general track, wanting to position itself as a global leader in climate change, China has announced its “3060” climate target, peaking emissions by 2030, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2060. (Grumbine 2021) The PRC consolidates and deploys massive resources in developing clean energy. China leads wind production, generates three times more power from the sun than the US, the next closest nation, double the hydropower of Brazil, the next highest country; and also leads the world in EV battery technology and vehicle sales, with 50 percent of all global EVs purchases and has ranked highest for seven years since 2015 in electric “green” vehicle sales (2021).

China’s many efforts have galvanized other nations to follow suit. For example, Brazil, South Africa, and India learned from China and adopted similar new energy policies, such as the auction and tendering mechanism along with local content requirements. During the UN Climate Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, many perceived China as taking “the driver’s seat on climate”, filling the gap left by the Trump-led US administration’s retreat from international climate agreements.

Notwithstanding the above successes, China’s green technology offensive has had its challenges. First, it has been widely believed that China’s performance is only made possible because of China’s unique political and economic structure, a top-down centralized system led by CCP. The Chinese government pulls together all resources to promote its 3060 strategies, including legal, financing, and economic tools. Thus, as China gains some influencing power through these efforts, such power does not conform to the soft power in which “many of the crucial resources are outside the control of the government.” which characterizes Nye’s definition of soft power (Nye 1990). The idea here is that the PRC may be acting entrepreneurially in its own interest: that of securing supply entrepôts for badly needed resources. Hence its altruism, and consequently its image, is questioned.

Moreover, statistics show that Chinese financial institutions are weak in the BRI in terms of the green technology sector. Unlike cultural soft power and CIs, green technology is common and comparable enough among nations for there to be both theoretical and accepted empirical measurements defining its effect on soft power creation. Researchers at Yale have compiled 32 “factors” in 11 analysis categories for all of the world’s countries – divided into 2 sections of Environmental Health and Ecosystem Sustainability – to form the EPI, or the Environmental Performance Index (Wendling 2020). In this metric, China performs worse overall than 30 countries, including Turkey, Russia, and India.

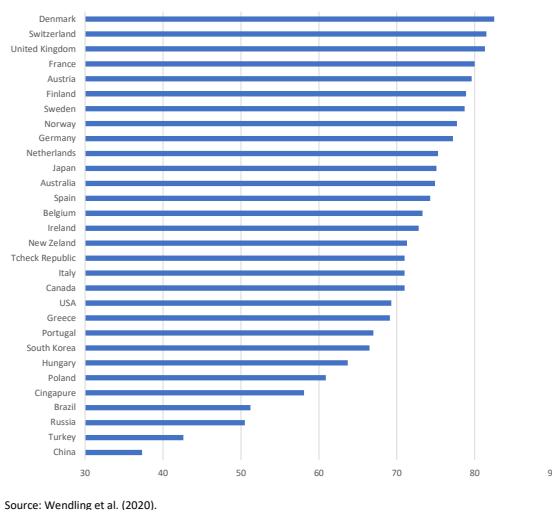


Figure 1. EPIs of 30 countries in 2020, The Closer to 100 the better

Despite all their apparent efforts, why does China’s environmental impact remain deplorable? The answer is quite simple: little to no attempts have been made at cutting down carbon emissions. From 2016 to 2020, China’s carbon dioxide emissions increased from 9720 to 10668 million metric tons (Tiseo 2022). In 2021, as China underwent pandemic recovery efforts, emissions rose by 3.4% and the nation produced its highest-ever annual output in coal (Climateactiontrackers.org 2022). If all countries' energy usage proportionally matched that of China’s, global temperatures would project to increase by 3°C from the norm by 2030, highly incompatible with the Paris agreement’s rate of 1.5°C. (2022) Seemingly, by utilizing green energy as more of a surplus and not as a replacement for the existing nonrenewable, energies, the state does not attack the root of the problem. If the breakdown of the shared goal of climate change reversal and general cooperation with the West continues, China’s soft power in this area will likely continue to diminish.

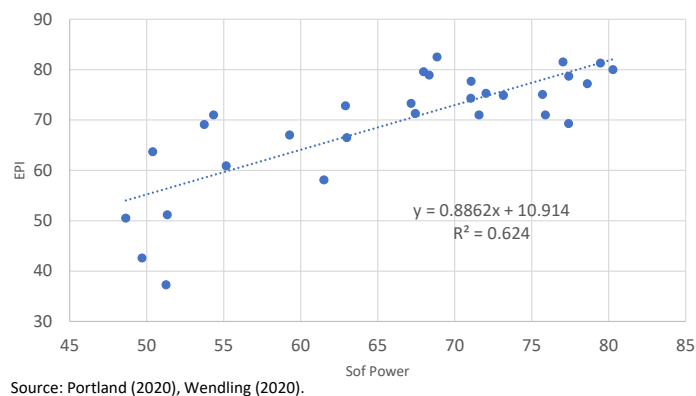


Figure 2. Soft Power Index Versus EPIs of 30 countries

There is a direct correlation between EPI and traditional measurements of soft power (soft power index). China is not necessarily an exception to this rule. Measurements and rankings of soft power can be arbitrary, and there are many credited groups that rank them such as BrandFinance, ISSF, and Monocle. It may be easy to cherry-pick data from any particular one; However, the aforementioned Yale Researchers specifically measured the EPIs from those of the Soft Power 30 and aligns with the timeframe. In context, this measurement of soft power aligns the most logically. According to Portland Communications (2020), a major political consultancy group, China ranked 27 out of 30 countries in the Soft Power 30 index within the same sample used in measuring EPIs.

Table 1. Soft Power 30 Ranking 2014 - 2019

	Sore	2020	2015
France	80.28	1	4
United Kingdom	79.47	2	1
Germany	78.62	3	2
Sweden	77.41	4	9
USA	77.4	5	3
Switzerland	77.04	6	7
Canada	75.89	7	5
Japan	75.71	8	8
Australia	73.16	9	6
Netherlands	72.03	10	10
Italy	71.58	11	12
Norway	71.07	12	18
Spain	71.05	13	14
Denmark	68.86	14	11
Finland	68.35	15	15
Austria	67.98	16	13
New Zeland	67.45	17	16
Belgium	67.17	18	17
South Korea	63	19	20
Ireland	62.91	20	19
Cingapore	61.51	21	21
Portugal	59.28	22	22
Poland	55.16	23	24
Tcheck Republic	54.35	24	26
Greece	53.74	25	25
Brazil	51.34	26	23
China	51.25	27	28
Hungary	50.39	28	
Turkey	49.7	29	
Russia	48.64	30	27

Source: Porland (2020).

Nevertheless, all metrics of soft power, including the above, are imprecise in capturing the will and policies of nations. In the case of China, despite its record on carbon emissions, there is a certain appeal to its use of green technology, particularly to developing African nations. As Sergio Vale (2022) puts it, China's motivation in the environment "has more to do with the economic components of internal decisions than with external image". Many African nations have sought cooperation with China to build infrastructure, some of which could be categorized as green/eco-friendly. Between 2007-2020, China's main 2 oversea banks, the Export-Import Bank & Development Bank, invested \$23 billion into infrastructure on the continent, 8 billion more than all other investors combined. \$23 billion of the total investment, and subsequently a large number of China's investments, are pooled into renewable infrastructure (McDonell 2022). Hydroelectric dam projects constitute most of China's spending on green infrastructure, with the most prominent examples being Nigeria's Mambila hydropower dam which took a \$2.5 billion Chinese loan; Gabon's \$3 billion deal that included other railways, mines, and a port; the ongoing Grand Inga Dam in the DRC which will need a combined \$14 billion from Chinese, Spanish, and Congolese developers; and a notable mention outside of Africa are the Mekong Dams that span across South Asia. (Urban) China's efforts have

had a plethora of benefits. Aside from the growth of hard power in the form of military alliances and trade contracts, more African nations and their people are now willing to side with China intellectually and hold them in higher regard. In July of 2019, UN ambassadors of 37 African countries signed a joint letter to the UNHRC (UN Human Rights Council) defending China's treatment of minority groups such as the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region (The Diplomat); in June of 2020, 53 mostly African countries declared their support for Hong Kong's national security law (Lawler 2020). There are 27 CIs in Africa; in 2012, China's state-run television opened its first African office in Kenya, which is currently called CGTN Africa. (Lim 2018) At its height, there were some 20000 African immigrants who came to study, live, or settle down in China's Guangzhou province (2018).

China's economic cooperation with African states and the varying benefits that come out of it has only possible with the low-interest loans set by the central government. Like CIs, there are relevant criticisms that come with government creation of soft power, including but not limited to predatory loaning, "debt-trap" diplomacy, neo-colonialism in Africa, and destruction of the natural environment, animals, or peoples; however, these criticisms are likely unreflective within Africa as public opinion of China remains high. According to BBC World Public Opinion Poll (2011), 5 among the largest African states view China in a positive light: Kenya at 73%, Nigeria at 85%, Ghana at 72%, Egypt at 55%, and South Africa at 53%, with some small fluctuations over the years.

4. Conclusion

Through examining the purpose, structure, the positive and negative effects of CIs and Chinese green technology, it seems abundantly clear that the Chinese state's involvement in soft power is as intricate as it is polarizing. The CCP's efforts seem to have yielded tangible, rapid development and impressed a positive image upon some developing nations, at the cost of (tradeoff) lost integrity and breakdown of shared values with developed nations, or the West. CIs have served their fundamental purpose in significantly increasing the number of Mandarin speakers and thus Chinese culture in the world, mainly in developed nations, but the CCP's aloofness to its relationship with US-based CIs have caused the buildup of skepticism, security concerns, and subsequent decline of the institution there. With green technology, while China's accomplishments have inspired cooperation in Africa and look even more impressive on paper, the lack of addressing towards carbon emissions has generated doubt in developed nations on China's real motives and if multilateral goals are even accomplishable together. Within both, China's hard power struggle with the US and her allies – which some consider to be the 2nd cold war – in the form of military tension and economic rivalry overshadow the many possibilities that soft power could appeal to those nations at all. Conversely, the prospect of traditional hard power collaboration with China in developing African nations with more political and economic instability could fog any novel soft power creation that could occur. Although hard power and soft power are inseparable at the base level, this aspect seems to be enhanced when the state is more involved.

There are guidelines I would have China follow to improve Chinese soft power, assuming that state involvement will be to the same degree that it currently is. Firstly, it is imperative that the PRC find a way to ameliorate the ongoing hard power struggle between it and the US. Even outside of discussions of soft power, and from a Sino-centric perspective, this tug of war is not one that China will win in the short run, and even less so in the long run. This is easily another topic by itself, but to put it simply, the current geopolitical situation and China's internal problems strongly disfavor China in a struggle for hard power; therefore, China should seek to compete through soft power. In order to accomplish this, as the weaker side, China will likely need to back down militarily (at least temporarily) and establish some sort of mutual understanding and shared political value of peace with the West.

If the above circumstances have been achieved, China should still considerably ratify its CIs. As a fluent Mandarin and English speaker, I understand the immense difficulty an English (or any Latin-rooted language) speaker will experience in learning Chinese, whatever incentive they may have. The

state should naturally increase the number of CIs in South Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, etc. who have a closer shared ancestral tongue and some are already close allies. If tensions cool, this may be extended successfully into Japan or South Korea. In the future, it is not out of the imagination that developments in AI and neuroscience will make deep-learning complex languages like Mandarin much simpler. If that were the case, the CIEF should find ways to make learning Chinese more fun or appealing. Then, if CIs do attract more people, the CCP should seriously consider initiatives that encourage immigration and propagate globalization to reap its full benefits. Indeed, for this to happen, generations of government policies and cultural attitudes would have to change. However, I believe this path is necessary if China wishes to truly be a first-world country and not incur a demographic collapse due to low birth rates.

As for green technology, I believe that China should cut down on its carbon emissions in addition to building green infrastructure internally. It is unknown whether the CCP will honor its promise and we will witness a sharp decline in China's coal usage by 2025. In my opinion, it is in everyone's interest that they follow suit and reinvigorate the shared goal of carbon neutrality; in the process, they will prove the role of the state in protecting ecological civilization. China is likely already heading towards a recession, and although renewable energy won't help them rebound as fast as nonclean energy like coal, it does make the economy more resilient and circular in the long run. The central bank should also consider increasing interest rates as many banks do not have the capacity to make loans. As the recent bank runs, bank protests, and frozen deposits show, China's housing market is severely bloated, and foreign or domestic loans for infrastructure at low-interest rates are not sustainable and will taint the Chinese state's image as a credible loaner if the bubble were to pop.

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