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From Soft Power to “*wenhua ruan shili*”:  
Theory and Practice in the Chinese Discourse on Soft Power

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## ABSTRACT

### From Soft Power to “*wenhua ruan shili*”: Theory and Practice in the Chinese Discourse on Soft Power

With the introduction of Joseph S. Nye’s theory of soft power in the 1990s, the analysis of power relations within the field of today’s world politics reveals that their nature is changing and that attraction wielded to generate desired outcomes is becoming increasingly relevant as one of its components. The study establishes this theory as a frame for the investigation of the discourse on China’s use of soft power in its ascendance as a world power, which currently permeates academic and political spheres around the globe. In this dissertation, a specific attempt is made to understand how China views its own soft power, placing particular attention on the cultural aspect of it, and stressing the features that differentiate the Chinese interpretation of soft power from the Western discourse. Through an interdisciplinary examination of Chinese leaders’ official speeches, policy documents, news and media, and academic papers and volumes, it will thus be shown how the original soft power concept has been reinterpreted, modified, and expanded since being incorporated in the Chinese context. The related debate, which started in the early 1990s, when the theory made its first appearance in intellectual circles, being presented at first through translations of Nye’s works and discussed from a theoretical perspective in scholarly articles, has gradually penetrated the policy-making and leadership levels. Since the Hu Jintao era and, even more assuredly, in the current Xi Jinping era, the theory of soft power has been concretely included within China’s national strategy, as signaled by the incorporation into the political jargon of not only the wording “*ruan shili* 软实力” (soft power), but also the innovative concept of “cultural soft power” (*wenhua ruan shili* 文化软实力). The latter shows that the PRC has been able to create its own unique approach to soft power, one in which the appeal generated by culture, both domestically and internationally, represents the core.

The canvas on which to illustrate these features, the circumstances in which they emerge, and their implications, is built following a two-pronged approach, in light of China’s grand strategy; this draws a connection between the versatile functions that soft power has in the Chinese context, inasmuch as it presents a vast range of applications, embracing both the domestic and international spheres, and some of the most relevant policy programs promoted by the Chinese government. As well, attempting to organize the abundant knowledge available on popular perceptions on China’s internal and external behavior, the study explores both international and autochthonous literature on Chinese soft power, but makes a conscious effort to focus primarily on works elaborated by Chinese scholars, in both English and Chinese, to better interpret the Chinese view. Aiming to dig deeper into the theory and practice of Chinese soft power, a vast array of Chinese sources is translated and analyzed in an attempt to progress from the idea of “China’s soft power” to that of “Chinese soft power”. Thus, the research develops around the task of examining the nature of the latter, exploring the historical background, process of study and evolution, formalization, popularization, and implementation of the concept of soft power in China.

Today, the definition of what cultural soft power means, both in and for China, is, however, still being negotiated. This also touches upon the analysis of attempts made to translate the term “soft power” into Chinese and the implications that the choices made have on its interpretation and overall role. In a terminological perspective, the examination of the

formulations that have entered into the intellectual and political soft power jargon is pivotal in revealing important nuances of meaning; together with the derivative terms that, formed on the basis of “*ruan shili*”, populate the public discourse, this shows the evident originality and wider breadth of the Chinese discourse on soft power. All in all, the presence of a “made-to-measure” interpretation of soft power emerges, highlighting the emphasis placed on culture as an inborn advantage that can be exploited for both an internal and an external betterment of China’s status. This introspective interpretation is supported by the presence of elements related to the relevance of identity and culture-building in China’s ancient doctrines and in the official discourse of successive generations of Chinese leaders. The evolution of the formulations “*wenhua ruan shili*” and “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili* 提高国家文化软实力” (enhance the country’s cultural soft power), which have become part of the official jargon in contemporary China, is one that merges China’s past and present realities into a vision that is both promoted and practiced by Chinese academics and Party-State officials alike. Focusing on specific phases of this process, spanning in particular from 1990 to 2015, but keeping in mind the relevance of China’s cultural and political history, the present work attempts to address the task of looking more closely at how China attempts to develop its theory and practice of cultural soft power. In this sense, the examination of the development of cultural strategies and policies aimed at enhancing China’s cultural strength completes the analysis of the institutional commitment to both laying the bases that guide the intellectual and public debate and developing a system of actions aimed at reaching the desired soft power goals, as part of a collective effort.

The dissertation concludes with a case study that displays some of the most peculiar characteristics of the practice of China’s cultural soft power in recent years; through the analysis of a specific cultural policy, the language policy, attempts to regulate language habits within China, while at the same time promoting the Chinese language abroad, are described in light of their potential contribution to the enhancement of China’s cultural soft power.

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## Introduction

### *The temporal setting*

The present study attempts to analyze the concept of “soft power” from a Chinese perspective. As this theory was developed and popularized by American scholar Joseph S. Nye in the 1990s, the primary temporal setting of the research spans from 1990, when the term was first coined, to 2015. There are, however, two secondary timeframes to which it will be useful to refer on various occasions throughout the study. The first represents an important turning point in the history of contemporary China and was initiated with the Third Plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Di Shiyi Jie Zhongyang Weiyuanhui Di San Ci Quantu Huiyi* 中国共产党第十一届中央委员会第三次全体会议) in December 1978. This date marked the promulgation of a new development strategy, encapsulated in the policy of “reform and opening-up” (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放) and advocated by paramount leader Deng Xiaoping 邓小平, after his return to the leadership of the Communist Party of China (*Zhongguo Gongchandang* 中国共产党, CPC)<sup>1</sup> following the death of Mao Zedong 毛泽东 in 1976. Starting from the late 1970s and early 1980s, the rapid economic growth that the People’s Republic of China (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo* 中华人民共和国, PRC) has experienced until today, together with the country’s ever-increasing important role on the global stage, can be considered the long-term consequence of the process of reform and opening-up, which entailed remarkable changes for both China’s domestic and foreign policies<sup>2</sup>. Organically integrating “domestic reform” (*guonei gaige* 国内改革) with “external opening” (*guowai kaifang* 国外开放), the process of reform and opening-up reflected the Chinese leadership’s understanding that, on the background of a changing world, domestic and international affairs were inseparably entangled with each other, while the policies formulated showed China’s ability to “sing with the tide raised by globalization” (*yu quanqiu hua de langchao xiongyong xiang changhe* 与全球化的浪潮汹涌相唱和) and create the basic conditions for grasping, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a “new period of strategic opportunity” (*xin zhanlue jiyu qi* 新战略机遇期) for the country (Men Honghua 门洪华 2005, pp. 287-288). A speech delivered by Deng Xiaoping in 1984 summarizes the vision the politician had of China and the world, envisioning the reform of the economic system and the opening-up to the outside world as necessary preconditions to develop the country and promote a foreign policy of world peace: “China’s foreign policy is independent and truly non-aligned. [...] In short, we sincerely hope that no war will break out and that peace will be long-lasting, so that we can concentrate on the drive to modernize our country” (Deng Xiaoping 1984).

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<sup>1</sup> Also abbreviated as CCP (Chinese Communist Party). Although the acronym CCP is conventionally used outside of China, the present writer has chosen to use CPC, the official name adopted by a variety of Chinese English-language sources, including the state media.

<sup>2</sup> Buzan (2014, p. 384) defines the transformation occurring at that time as a shift from Mao Zedong’s “revolutionist strategy” to Deng Xiaoping’s strategy of reform and opening-up that radically changed “China’s perception of itself, the world, and its place in the world”.

With the beginning of the period of reform and opening-up, China's grand strategy<sup>3</sup> underwent great changes. Under the guidance of Deng Xiaoping, the second generation of CPC leaders advocated for "peace and development" (*heping yu fazhan* 和平与发展), while in the sphere of foreign policy, innovation was represented, in the 1980s, by what has been called an "independent foreign policy for peace" (*duli zizhu de heping waijiao zhengce* 独立自主的和平外交政策) (Men Honghua 2005, p. 199). According to Goldstein (2005, p. 25), behind this new grand strategy there was the belief on Deng Xiaoping's part that China's economic development could take advantage of an international environment that, abandoning bipolarity for multipolarity, would be less threatening and more open to opportunities for China's modernization.

This conviction became even more real after the end of the Cold War, the second timeframe in which the present study is set. It is in this period, and especially in the second half of the 1990s, that the logic of China's grand strategy was defined, completing a process that started in the early 1980s and that combined continuity in the country's basic foreign policy with the new challenges posed by the end of the Cold War (Goldstein 2005, p. 17 and p. 20). In the post-Cold War period, dramatic changes affected the structure of the international environment and global power relations. China's grand strategy was also touched by these changes, in particular in relation to some distinct yet related aspects. First, when the bipolar opposition between the United States and the Soviet Union, which had characterized the Cold War period, dissolved, China was left with no clear distinction between which countries were enemies to fight against or friends to ally with, as had been the case in the past; second, China's sought-after goal to build a more favorable international environment that would facilitate its rise to the status of a great power seemed now to be somehow obstructed by the development of unipolarity in favor of the United States; and finally, the prospect of China's rise had already started to worry its Asian neighbors and the United States (Goldstein 2005, pp. 22-26). Against this background, Deng Xiaoping's advocacy for a policy of independence, peace, and stability was again emphasized in the mid-1990s, while by the late 1990s this approach was enriched with components of great power diplomacy, aimed at establishing partnerships and portraying China as an indispensable international actor, and international activism, aimed at reassuring the global audience that China was and would continue to be a responsible and co-operative player (Ibid., pp. 25-30).

This brief review of China's grand strategy from 1978 and across the post-Cold War period helps to delineate the background against which China's rise was able to occur at the turn of the new century. It is precisely under the described circumstances, which embrace both China's transformation and that of the world as a whole, that the theory of soft power put forward by Joseph S. Nye in 1990 opened a new perspective on the analysis of the nature of

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<sup>3</sup> Here, the term "grand strategy" is intended, as explained by Goldstein (2005, pp. 17-19), as the "central logic" or "regime's vision" as to how to combine capabilities and international conditions in order to serve national interests. It is "the distinctive combination of military, political, and economic means by which a state seeks to ensure its national interests", with the adjective "grand" deriving from the reference of the concept to "the guiding logic or overreaching vision about how a country's leaders combine a broad range of capabilities linked with military, economic, and diplomatic strategies to pursue international goals" (Ibid.). According to Buzan (2014, p. 385), having a grand strategy is "about articulating a set of core aims, or ends, that define the national interest in terms of both domestic goals and how state and society are to relate to the wider world, and relating those ends to the means that the state and society has available". The author further argues, as will be discussed in the present work, that another issue for China, because of its authoritarian structure, is how to strike a balance between the role of civil society as the base of soft power and that of the state as the grand strategy's main agent (Ibid., pp. 385-386).



power in global politics, that is the power of attraction wielded to generate desired outcomes in others. As a new, less threatening, and softer, yet increasingly effective, weapon in the arsenal of any potential great power, between the 1990s and the present day, the concept of soft power has been embraced by China's intellectual and political elites, and favorable conditions have matured for the growth and development of a distinct Chinese discourse on soft power.

### *The study's tasks and overall goals*

The tasks involved in this project are many and numerous questions come to the researcher's mind when first embarking on this mission. What is soft power, and what is its importance today? Why is there so much discussion among scholars, policy-makers, and the media about China's soft power? Why is soft power relevant to China's current situation? Is the Chinese interpretation of soft power any different from that of the West? What resources does China have to project its soft power, and what does the Chinese leadership say and do about it? What motivates China to promote its soft power, and ultimately, is there such a thing as "soft power with Chinese characteristics"? These are just some of the questions that have inspired and guided the present analysis.

In order to present an insightful description of Chinese soft power, the first task that needs to be carried out is that of providing a definition of the soft power theory and an overview of how this fits into the discussion related to China's rise and today's changing world order. The study establishes this theory as a frame for the investigation of the discourse, or eventually the *discourses*, related to China's soft power. In this regard, the study takes its lead from the definition and analysis of a preliminary hypothesis which posits that China has proved capable of seizing strategic opportunities that have facilitated its domestic growth and international ascent to the position of a great power. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China has indeed risen, and in its renewed role of a world's leading superpower it is able to make use of a range of tools that include traditional means of power, such as economic strengths and military capabilities, but also, and more importantly, soft power resources. When analyzing power within the field of today's world politics, it is important to keep in mind that its nature is changing and that soft power, as a counterpart of hard power, is becoming increasingly relevant as one of its components. A review of Joseph S. Nye's pioneering works expounding upon the concept of soft power will thus prove extremely useful, as studying the scholar's original conceptualization constitutes an important preliminary step to further expand the field of research into the Chinese context. Attention must then be paid to the features that differentiate the Chinese interpretation of soft power from Nye's discourse, which constitute the assumptions the present study poses and intends to prove. Being subsequently confirmed, they also constitute part of the resulting findings. Overall, the study posits that China has its own unique vision of soft power, one in which the appeal generated by culture represents the core of the related discourse, as indicated by an innovative concept that has come to be known as "cultural soft power" (*wenhua ruan shili* 文化软实力).

The second task that needs to be addressed is that of defining the research problem. A critical analysis of the excerpt drawn from the political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Di Shiqi Ci Quanguo Daibiao Dahui* 中国共产党第十七次全国代表大会), delivered in 2007 by former Chinese President and General Secretary of the CPC Hu Jintao 胡锦涛, in which the official view of the concept of soft power in the Chinese

context is presented, serves the purpose of defining the bases for the problem formulation. Drawing inspiration from this policy document, a number of observations will be made to provide a basis for the establishment of the following assumptions: in China, the mainstream vision of soft power places emphasis on culture, in particular traditional culture, as the core; surpassing the boundaries of international relations, soft power is also very much part of China's domestic policy; and enhancing soft power takes on the shape of a government project. These assumptions will thus be explained as constituents of the research problem and corroborated by evidence drawn from Western and Chinese sources, receiving further confirmation in the analyses carried out throughout the study.

As the debate on Chinese soft power does not develop in a void, but rather in a complex nexus of views on China's domestic and foreign policies, the third task the study attempts to tackle is that of describing the scope of analysis of the dynamics related to China's soft power theory and practice. By placing the examination of the resources, applications, and purposes of China's soft power within the boundaries of the country's grand strategy, and organizing the abundant knowledge available on popular perceptions on China's internal and external behavior, the study draws a connection between the functions soft power has in the Chinese context and some of the most relevant policy programs promoted by the Chinese government. Thus, the study's conceptual framework of reference, the definition of which finds its foundations in the analysis of the multifaceted role of culture within China's strategic discourse and the important concept of "*zonghe guoli* 综合国力" (comprehensive national power, CNP), constitutes a canvas on which to illustrate the discourse on Chinese soft power, the circumstances in which it emerges, and its implications, in the light of China's grand strategy. What will emerge from an analysis of this kind is the versatility of China's soft power inasmuch as it presents a vast range of applications, embracing both the domestic and international spheres.

One of the first issues that needed to be addressed in the process of researching what has become such a popular topic both in China and worldwide, as is the case with soft power, was navigating through an overabundance of contributions, mainly in English and Chinese, extensively debating China's soft power from a variety of points of view and drawing from different "schools of thought". Besides selecting the most reliable sources available, a conscious effort has been made to primarily focus on works elaborated by Chinese scholars, in both English and Chinese, to better interpret the Chinese view on soft power, from both an international and a local perspective. Thus, together with the definition of the conceptual framework of reference described above, a comprehensive review of the literature on China's soft power that embraces both materials produced by Western and Chinese authors has proved useful to form a background against which it is possible to dig deeper into the Chinese discourse on soft power theory and practice. The fourth task of the present work, therefore, is carried out in a way that links the international perspective on Chinese soft power, expressed through Western and Chinese publications in English, with a more local perspective, expressed through Chinese publications in Chinese. The analysis of volumes, scientific papers, and news articles in Chinese, available in print, in the press, or online, however, represents a key factor in the entire research process, in an attempt to overcome the linguistic barrier that often creates an obstacle to a better understanding of China's behaviors, ambitions, and strategies. Moreover, this level of analysis digs even deeper into the realm of the Chinese discourse on soft power, touching upon its richness and variety, which appear to have led to its detachment from its Western counterpart. As consensus on what cultural soft power means for China is still not clear, the analysis of the

specific terms that have entered into the intellectual and political soft power jargon is pivotal to revealing important nuances of meaning.

In this regard, in terms of goals pursued by this research, besides shedding light on the distinctiveness of the Chinese interpretation of soft power, symbolized by the concept of “*wenhua ruan shili*”, a secondary, general aim is to present an insightful and original analysis of the topic of China’s soft power that can also inspire future in-depth studies. Given the extent and variety of this research area, in order to identify specific aims and limit the scope of the project, a preliminary definition of the main parameters that have guided this writer’s work process is required. Through the analysis of what constitutes Chinese soft power, the study’s primary intention is not one of providing a definite conclusion to the discussion of the topics considered. Far from constituting a point of arrival in the analysis of Chinese soft power, and the domestic and international dynamics that go along with it, the underlying purpose of the present work is to open the path towards a more attentive and thoughtful analysis of these aspects. Besides the positive results derived from a deeper understanding of the soft power discourse in relation to the Chinese context, the research process has, in fact, brought to light a lack of clarity in the scholarship addressing this topic. Chinese soft power has not always been adequately analyzed by the available literature, especially in the West, and confusion still exists among scholars studying it. This does not seem to be due to a lack of seminal books and scientific journals addressing this issue, as the production of materials on soft power has been flourishing in recent years, especially in English and Chinese. Conversely, the abundance of resources is perhaps the reason why the resultant product of certain analyses is at times confused and somehow limited, impairing the understanding of what soft power means in the Chinese context<sup>4</sup>.

In this light, the study can be considered as divided into two parts based on the specific aims it pursues. On the one hand, the first part, described above in terms of four different, yet related, tasks is largely theoretical and aims to look at the analysis of contemporary China through the perspective of soft power. It attempts to combine international and local views on the discourse on China’s soft power. Against this backdrop, by giving voice to Chinese sources discussing soft power as a concept in general and offering a glimpse into autochthonous analyses of soft power in relation to the Chinese context, the study then attempts to overcome the setback that arises when what the Chinese people have to say about how they view the soft power of their own country is disregarded<sup>5</sup>. This, at times, follows the fashion of labeling

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<sup>4</sup> When discussing soft power in relation to China, its vision, resources, and purposes, the expressions “China’s soft power” and “Chinese soft power” are both used interchangeably in the related literature. Although following the same custom, due in part to stylistic reasons, the present author will present, in the conclusions to this work, some reflections on the possibility to apply a potential, subtle distinction to the overall discourse.

<sup>5</sup> The present author would like to express her gratitude to Professor Alessandra Lavagnino at the University of Milan for the precious help and support offered throughout this research process. Among the many useful pieces of advice suggested, drawing the attention of the present author to the writings of leading Chinese thinker Zhang Weiwei 张维为 and the many commentaries about his work has largely enriched the study’s endeavor and resulting findings. In regard to the need to give voice to Chinese authors to describe China’s own story, reference can thus be made to the words expressed by well-known China expert Martin Jacques when reviewing the forthcoming translation of Zhang Weiwei’s most recent volume, *The China Horizon: Glory and Dream of a Civilizational State* (*Zhongguo Chaoyue: Yi Ge “Wenmingxing Guojia” de Guangrong yu Mengxiang* 中国超越: 一个“文明型国家”的光荣与梦想), the third of a best-selling trilogy published in China which expounds upon the nature of China’s “civilizational state”, the future of the country in light of its rise, and the global impact that the model proposed by China could bring about when surpassing that of the West: “Zhang Weiwei is the confident and highly articulate voice of the new China. [...]

everything that does not fit into the traditional assessment of China's rise as "soft power". To use the words of one scholar (Breslin 2011, p. 3), one can say that soft power today "is a topic that is discussed from different perspectives in different places for different reasons", with the risk of making the whole concept rather meaningless. In this sense, the translation into English of relevant excerpts drawn from sources available solely in Chinese is carried out with the hope that they will be of help to readers who are interested in the study of contemporary China through the lenses of soft power but may not be familiar with the Chinese language.

On the other hand, the second part, which will be described below in light of the remaining tasks and goals of the present research, aims to dig deeper into the theory and practice of soft power in the Chinese context. Continuing to give voice to Chinese sources, it attempts to describe what is meant by "*wenhua ruan shili*" today, also providing more practical examples of Chinese cultural soft power at work. More precisely, this part of the research develops around the tasks related to examining the historical background, process of study and evolution, formalization, popularization, and implementation of the concept of soft power in the Chinese context. Overall, it examines how Joseph S. Nye's conceptualization has been absorbed and incorporated into China's intellectual and strategic domains, undergoing progressive re-elaboration based on China's past and present realities. An attempt will be made to describe what can be considered the primordial seeds of soft power in China's antiquity, the influence of traditional values on China's vision of itself, state governance, and inter-personal and inter-state relations, and the first phases of the absorption of the soft power concept into the discourse of Chinese academics and strategists in the period between 1990 and 2007. Addressing the task of looking more closely at how China attempts to develop its soft power in practice, the present work also focuses on the evolution of the formulations "*wenhua ruan shili*" and "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili* 提高国家文化软实力" (enhance the country's cultural soft power) as part of the official discourse of the CPC's leadership in contemporary China, examining the period between 1990 and 2007, but also taking into consideration historical vicissitudes as well as more recent developments. Besides the guiding role of the CPC and its official jargon in deciding the general orientation of the Chinese discourse on soft power, the analysis carried out also covers the process of evolution of the cultural soft power theory into a national strategy promoted at a practical level through cultural policies. Thus, the Chinese leadership's response to the need for a more clear-cut definition for a soft power theory more suitable to the Chinese context appears to have resulted into the formalization of a national strategy, and the call to "enhance the country's cultural soft power" is described within the context of a national project carried out collectively and aimed at the overall improvement of China's domestic and international state. The more recent developments in the theory and practice of cultural soft power between 2007 and 2012 are then considered in this light.

All in all, the presence of a "made-to-measure" interpretation of soft power, precisely that of "*wenhua ruan shili*", will emerge, supported by the presence of elements related to the relevance of identity and culture-building in China's ancient doctrines and in the official

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Hitherto the most widely read authors on China in the West have been Westerners. It is imperative that Westerners become familiar with the key Chinese writers" (cited in World Scientific 2016a). This echoes the urgent need for "good Chinese story-tellers to provide the Chinese perspective", and facilitate the understanding of China's rise, "the biggest story of our time", expressed by another leading thinker, Kishore Mahbubani, when commenting on the second volume of the trilogy, *The China Wave: The Rise of a Civilizational State* (*Zhongguo Zhenhan: Yi Ge "Wenmingxing Guojia" de Jueqi* 中国震撼:一个"文明型国家"的崛起) (cited in World Scientific 2016b). More will be said about the vision of China as a "civilizational state" (or "civilization-state") in Chapter 1.

discourse of successive generations of CPC leaders. Focusing on the period between 2012 and 2015, the latest developments in the Chinese discourse on cultural soft power will also be taken into consideration, paying particular attention to the views of the current leadership. Attempting an answer to the question as to whether or not it is possible to talk about “soft power with Chinese characteristics”, the analysis will continue to place emphasis on the degree of innovation symbolized by the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*”, while also examining terminological aspects related to the use of the formulation “*ruan shili* 软实力” as the Chinese equivalent considered most appropriate for the rendition of the English term “soft power” in the Chinese context. In this sense, the examination of the terminology used in the academic, official, and media discourses on Chinese soft power throughout the years, which has proven to be enlightening throughout the entire research process, will continue to be useful, as the choice of a specific formalized vocabulary bears witness to the nature of the strategies adopted to build and enhance this rather new, yet effective, expression of China’s power.

Through an examination of the development of cultural strategies and policies aimed at enhancing China’s cultural strength, the analysis of the more recent developments in the Chinese discourse on cultural soft power highlights that in China the level of cultural awareness and confidence is increasing. Among the specific cultural policies put forward by the Chinese government in recent years, the case study presented in this thesis focuses on one specific area: the language policy. Positing that, among the resources available to China to build and increase the country’s cultural soft power, the promotion of *putonghua* 普通话, the official language of the PRC, is exploited as a useful instrument to achieve strategic goals both at home and abroad, the aim here is to show how the field of Chinese language standardization and promotion constitutes a clear display of the most peculiar characteristics of Chinese cultural soft power at work.

Finally, a short visit to Hong Kong, Guangzhou, and Shanghai in April 2014 also allowed the present researcher to collect materials and gather first-hand information through informal discussions with scholars and experts in the fields of international relations, media and communication, and language education, further continuing this constructive exchange by email in the years that followed. When relevant, these insights will also be included in the present dissertation.

### *Technical notes*

Some clarifications about translations and transliterations are in order. Unless otherwise specified, the Chinese text reported in this dissertation, including that running through the body, has been translated into English by the present author; when the length of the text reported allows it, Chinese characters have been transcribed following the rules of the Pinyin system of transliteration, the official phonetic system used in the PRC, but avoiding the use of tones. Unless they are part of longer excerpts, Chinese characters have been reproduced only in the first occurrence, either in the text or the footnotes, maintaining the transcription throughout the text; translations have been extensively provided for the reader’s convenience. To avoid confusion, Chinese names have generally been reproduced including both surname and name in Pinyin, appearing with surname first followed by name as is customarily done in the PRC. When possible and necessary they are followed by the corresponding characters, but only in the first occurrence throughout the text and the footnotes. As for the bibliographic references

throughout the text and footnotes, for the sake of avoiding ambiguities, names of Chinese authors generally include both surname and name, unless sufficiently indicative or internationalized, and maintaining consistency with the source and the method chosen. Abbreviations and acronyms generally accompany their extended phrases in one instance, to be then used throughout the text and footnotes. In regard to referencing and citing, the present author has chosen to follow the method of in-text citations, employing the “author date” system and linking them to the full reference list at the end of the work. Bibliographical notes are thus limited throughout the text but fully developed in the reference list. Here, sources are indicated in alphabetical order, including organizations, institutions, government agencies, and other bodies as authors, followed by the date. In the case of Chinese sources, consistency has been maintained with the text, when possible and necessary characters and translations, the latter either provided by the source or by the present author, have been provided throughout, but repetitions have been avoided within a single entry.

## 1. Designing the study

Following the rapid development of its economy, China is ready to take on the role of a global power. This chapter addresses the need to comprehend the great changes that are affecting today's world from the perspective of China's growing power. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a power shift is occurring and the epicenter of the world's balance of power is moving from the West to the East, making China stand out on the global stage. Even though the PRC's economic strength is the first aspect that comes to mind when discussing China's rise, in a world in which economy, politics, and culture permeate each other, the changes that are occurring do not only derive from China's hard power but also from its growing soft power. After exploring this preliminary hypothesis, in order to lay the basis for the analysis of soft power in the Chinese context, three assumptions are posed, the main features of the research design are defined, and the research methods and materials are described.

### 1.1 A preliminary hypothesis

At the end of March 2014, the news website Xinhua Wang 新华网 (Xinhuanet), the online version of Xinhua News Agency (Xinhua She 新华社), reported the following statement:

拿破仑说过，中国是一头沉睡的狮子，当这头睡狮醒来时，世界都会为之发抖。中国这头狮子已经醒了，但这是一只和平的、可亲的、文明的狮子。

(Xinhua Wang 2014b)

Napoleon once said that China was a sleeping lion and that when this sleeping lion woke up the whole world would shake. This lion, China, has awoken, but it is a peaceful, amiable, and civilized lion.

(Translated by the present author.)

These are the words spoken by Chinese President and General Secretary of the CPC Xi Jinping 习近平 in a speech delivered in Paris for the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France. It is undeniable that the world is indeed shaking under the pressure that comes along with the changes brought about by the increasingly prominent presence of China on the global stage. Although pundits have been quick, and perhaps rightly so, in detecting in Xi Jinping's use of the "awakening lion" metaphor, attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte, the subtle intention to be more assertive in telling the rest of the world that China is a powerful global player (Ng and Chen 2014; Sridharan 2014)<sup>6</sup>, it cannot be ignored that the lion he depicted is "peaceful, amiable, and civilized" (*heping de*、*keqing de*、*wenming de* 和平的、可亲的、文明的) (Xinhua Wang 2014b). It is indeed a "good" lion, one could say, but a lion that is fully aware of its own power. Thus, the image of China that the President wishes to communicate to the world rests upon the awareness that the PRC is not just a major global power, but one that upholds the values of peace, friendship, and civilization.

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<sup>6</sup> Historians are still divided on the authenticity of the quote attributed to Napoleon (Ng and Chen 2014; Sridharan 2014).

As a matter of fact, the global expansion that China has been experiencing in recent years, in all regards, cannot be ignored. Following the miraculous development of its economy, in the last 30 years China has become an increasingly important player in the international arena. This rapid achievement of economic strength and the growth of China's overall potential have helped the country expand its participation in the global dynamics, in economic, political, diplomatic, military, and also cultural terms. This has been widely noticed, and scholars have started to talk about a future world ruled by the PRC.

Perhaps, the loudest voice in the chorus hailing the imminent escalation of China's power is that of British scholar and journalist Martin Jacques. In the second edition of his highly acclaimed *When China Rules the World* he argues that with the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008 the world started to witness a shift in power from the West, in particular the United States, to China, which is paving the way towards a new world order, or more precisely the "Chinese World Order" (Jacques 2012, pp. 585-586). Although recognizing that the phrase "China rules the world" is a metaphor that does not entirely correspond to the reality of the global balance of power, as no country can literally "rule" the entire globe, the message is clear: China has the ability to become the world's leading power, sustained, most significantly, by its strong economy (Ibid., p. 490). Throughout his bestselling book, Jacques (2012) discusses several aspects in China's rise that are undermining some of the most deeply-rooted beliefs in the Western mind: first and foremost, the West is wrong to think that there is only one kind of modernity and that sooner or later China will need to become more Western-like in order to succeed. Consequently, the West should put a definite end to the paradigm that equates globalization to Westernization and acknowledge China's own originality because that might be the very element responsible for changing the world (Ibid., p. 564). Secondly, this radical change is brought about by the impact that China will have on the world, which is not only measured in economic, but also in political, cultural, and ideological terms: in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as stated by Jacques (2012, p. 243), the world will be led by a great power with "a totally non-Western history and tradition". Elements of China's millenary tributary system will re-emerge regionally, while globally, the mentality of a nation-state that is also a civilization-state, supported by a long history and deeply-rooted culture, will become more evident (Jacques 2012)<sup>7</sup>. How, then, should the world, in particular the West, react to such a scenario? For Jacques the answer is clear: "[t]o appreciate what the rise of China means, we have to understand not only China's economic growth, but also its history, politics, culture and traditions" (Jacques 2012, p. 243).

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<sup>7</sup> More will be expounded upon about these aspects throughout the study. For the sake of the present discussion, and in order to elaborate on the idea of a "civilizational state" presented in the introduction to this thesis, it is relevant to report the analysis provided by Jacques (2012, pp. 17-18) of the concepts of "civilization-state" and "nation-state" in regard to China's status: even though today people tend to define China as a nation-state, aligning the country's status to that of the other nations in the world, defining China as a civilization-state would be more appropriate for a country whose identity was formed long before acquiring the status of nation-state over the last century, differently from the West. Referring to a history which lasted five thousand years, the Chinese define themselves through "civilization" rather than "nationhood" (Ibid., p. 18). In regard to the tributary system, and its potential reemergence in East Asia, Jacques (2012, pp. 374-375) explains that, differently from the Westphalian system, but not in a mutually exclusive way, this "international concomitant of China's identity and existence as a civilization-state" was primarily based on a hierarchical relationship. Common to the two systems is a cultural component represented by hegemony and soft power: in the case of China, minorities of overseas Chinese and a shared Confucian heritage reinforce the already present and constant attractive force of Chinese culture in East Asia, Northeast Asia, and other areas, facilitating the persistence of a "tributary state mentality" also in the present day (Ibid.).



One aspect that is already being affected by China's renewed position in the world is the approach to foreign policy. Jacques (2012, p. 593) highlights how the pragmatic approach of the past is being replaced by "a new-style foreign policy" which taps into China's own history, traditions, and culture. Generally speaking, he further argues, the rise of China has generated two different responses in the Western audience: both share the erroneous belief that, by will or by force, China will take the road to becoming more Western (Ibid., pp. 561-562). But, while the first is characterized by what can be called an "economic wow factor", which measures China's power in terms of economic achievements, failing to recognize the importance of politics and culture and foreseeing a future in which China will be more similar to the West, the second expects China to fail, unless it adopts the Western model (Ibid.).

In brief, the scenario depicted by Martin Jacques is one in which China will be able to exercise major global influence on its own terms and in many different aspects. In this sense, China's will have at its disposal a variety of forms of power to be able to exercise its growing international influence, the most important of which is its economic power (Jacques 2012, p. 610). It is precisely China's economic wealth that is providing the foundations for an increase in its capacity to exercise not only military power, but also cultural and ideological influence, namely its soft power (Ibid.). By considering aspects such as infrastructure, parenting, and education as components of an expanded view of soft power, Jacques (2012, pp. 609-616) shows how a developing country, as China still is, can effectively influence the West. There is in fact no reason whatsoever, at least in principle, why China should not be able to exercise influence on other cultures in the same way as the West did in the past (Ibid., p. 613). This is also confirmed by an article which was published in 2009 on the English-language version of the webpage Renmin Wang 人民网, the People's Daily Online, the online counterpart of the newspaper that constitutes the official organ of the Central Committee of the CPC (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui* 中国共产党中央委员会), namely the *Renmin Ribao* 人民日报 (*People's Daily*). By singling out some specific aspects belonging to China's tradition, the message the article wishes to convey is that Chinese culture can be of significant benefit to the entire world. Its introduction reads: "It is said that China will be the leader of the world in the 21st century. Apart from economic strength, China will also contribute four other key values to the world, namely; family, harmony, assimilation with innovation as well as efficiency" (People's Daily Online 2009).

Based on these premises, it can be assumed that along with China's ever-growing economic potential there will come other capabilities, among which is the wielding of cultural influence and soft power. As stated by Shambaugh (2013, p. 207), in the process of searching for the status of a global power China has been exposed to the importance of international image and soft power. This can also be seen in the words pronounced by former President and General Secretary of the CPC Hu Jintao on the occasion of the celebration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the CPC:

要着眼于推动中华文化走向世界，形成与我国国际地位相对称的文化软实力，提高中华文化国际影响力。中华民族创造了源远流长、博大精深的中华文化，中华民族也一定能够在弘扬中华优秀传统文化的基础上创造出中华文化新的辉煌。

(Xinhua Wang 2011)

It is necessary to focus on pushing Chinese culture towards the world, form cultural soft power well-suited to China's position in the world, and increase the international influence of Chinese culture.

The Chinese people created a well-established and profound Chinese culture and the Chinese people are also certainly capable of bringing about a new splendor for Chinese culture based on carrying forward the outstanding traditional Chinese culture.

(Translated by the present author.)

The following pages will present some elements useful to confirm this initial hypothesis: China has risen and it is quickly gaining the status of world superpower. The analysis which follows will briefly touch upon traditional aspects of power, namely economic and military strengths, but also look at soft power in the context of China's rising power.

## 1.2 Traditional aspects of China's rise: economic and military power

Looking at the ranking of the 10 most powerful countries in the world, reported by the website Maps of World (2015), and based on the Global Presence Index 2014<sup>8</sup>, China ranks fourth, after the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, and ahead of France, Russia, Japan, the Netherlands, Canada, and Italy. In particular, scoring relatively low in the technological, energy security, and foreign affairs categories, China is seen as a country, the most populous in the world, that continues to expand its global sphere of influence primarily thanks to its economic and military power (Maps of World 2015). Based on the International Futures model<sup>9</sup>, many believe that China will soon become the world's most powerful country, overtaking the United States as early as 2030 (Ibid.). In a similar way, a long-term global governance assessment, issued in 2010 by the United States' National Intelligence Council (NIC) and the European Union's Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) identified 2025 as the year when the relative political and economic clout of many countries will shift, according to an International Futures model measuring GDP, defense spending, population, and technology for individual states (NIC and EUISS 2010, p. 11). These data are confirmed by the results of a survey conducted in 2014 by the Pew Research Center which, examining global public opinion concerning the United States, China, and the international balance of power, recorded that in most countries, those of the European Union leading the group, people believed that China had either already surpassed or would surpass the United States in the future as the world's leading superpower (Pew Research Center 2014, pp. 32-33). More specifically, to support this view was a median of 49% across the 44 countries surveyed, while a median of 34% across those same countries believed that this would never happen (Ibid.). The same report also detected a shift towards China as the perceived superpower in the previous six years, as across 20 countries surveyed in both 2008 and 2014, a median of 41% in 2008 said that China would replace or had already replaced the United States as sole superpower, but in 2014 the percentage saying China was or would be the world's leading power reached 50% (Ibid., p. 34). Half of the Chinese people surveyed were confident that China would surpass America, with an additional 9%

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<sup>8</sup> The Elcano Global Presence Index measures the projection in the world of 80 countries based on three dimensions: the economic presence (exports of energy products, primary goods, manufactures, services, and foreign direct investment), the military presence (troops deployed in international missions and bases overseas, together with military projection equipment), and the soft presence (migration, tourism, performance in sports competition, culture, Internet access, international patents, articles in scientific journals, foreign students, and development assistance (Real Instituto Elcano 2015).

<sup>9</sup> The International Futures (IFs) model is a comprehensive forecasting modeling system which uses the best understanding of global systems to produce forecasts for 186 countries to the year 2100 (University of Denver 2013).

claiming that this had already occurred (Ibid., p. 33). In pure economic terms, among the 44 countries surveyed in spring 2014, the widespread opinion was that the United States still had the world's leading economy, but that China was rapidly catching up, having become the world's second-largest economy after surpassing Japan and being on the verge of surpassing the United States in overall economic strength in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP)<sup>10</sup> (Ibid., pp. 34-35). In December 2014, the news that the Chinese economy had already overtaken that of the United States, in terms of PPP, made the headlines of many financial reports (Arends 2014; Chan Szu Ping 2014, 2015; Worstall 2015). The estimates were released by the International Monetary Fund in October 2014 and, as reported by Arends (2014)<sup>11</sup>, showed that “when you measure national economic output in ‘real’ terms of goods and services, China will this year produce \$17.6 trillion — compared with \$17.4 trillion for the U.S.A.” and that “China now accounts for 16.5% of the global economy when measured in real purchasing-power terms, compared with 16.3% for the U.S.”. On balance, economy experts had been predicting this economic power shift for quite some time: in 2013 a report by PwC indicated that China would overtake the United States as the largest economy by 2017 in PPP terms and by 2027 in market exchange rate terms (PwC 2013, p. 1). Another calculation by *The Economist* (2014a) identifies 2021 as the year when China will overtake the United States as the world's biggest economy and the magazine even invites the readers to predict online, by means of an interactive chart, when this prediction will materialize.

As indicated by the data presented above, China's economic strength is indeed the first aspect that comes to mind when discussing China's new role as a global superpower. Considering the speed at which China's economy has been growing for the past three decades, one cannot deny the vast capabilities of China's economy and its marked impact on the global economic system. Chinese authors Li Jingzhi and Pu Ping (2014, p. 81) state that, today, China's economy represents an essential part of the world's economy, a consequence of China's economic strategy and an important step along the path of the country's “peaceful development”<sup>12</sup>. This new status as a key member of the global economic system was marked in November 2001 by China's entrance into the World Trade Organization (WTO), which connected the country with the world's economy in a closer way (Ibid.). The authors stress that economic development means for China to complete the process of modernization, which was initiated in 1978, in a sustainable, fast, healthy, and coordinated way, an area in which the results achieved so far are remarkable: the annual growth rate of China's economy between 1979 and 2010 was around 10%, with GDP values growing from approximately 147.3 billion dollars in 1978 to four trillion dollars in 2008 (Ibid.). In a similar way, identifying China's rise to the position of a great power with the country's remarkable economic achievements, one reporter calls China's apparent surpassing of the United States in terms of economic power “a geopolitical earthquake with a high reading on the Richter scale”, referring to the fact that throughout the course of history political and military power have always been dependent on economic power, as the destinies of historical world superpowers, such as Britain, France, and Spain, have shown (Arends 2014).

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<sup>10</sup> A definition of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is provided by the *Financial Times* which reads as follows: “Method of currency valuation based on the premise that two identical goods in different countries should eventually cost the same” (Financial Times, ft.com/lexicon, n.d.).

<sup>11</sup> The author refers to the IMF's World Economic Outlook Database, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2014/02/weodata/index.aspx>.

<sup>12</sup> The concept of “peaceful development” will be explained in Section 3.3.

Quite often, scholars and pundits debating China's rise have been preoccupied with the "threat" that such an extraordinary power may pose to the leadership of the West and today's world order. For instance, Huang Yanzhong and Ding Sheng (2006, p. 28) point out that the alternative political-economic model employed by China in recent years (the so-called Beijing Consensus)<sup>13</sup> has been perceived by many as a potentially serious threat to Western ideology. With China's rise at the center of the debate, the economic and military aspects of China's developing power have dominated the analysts' discourse. According to Gill and Huang (2006, p. 17) the growing power of China has been almost completely associated with the military and economic aspects of its rise. Similarly, Huang Yanzhong and Ding Sheng (2006, p. 22) believe that insufficient scholarly attention has been devoted to analyzing how China could employ intangible resources to obtain the outcomes it wants in international affairs. Moreover, according to Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 10), the debate around China's emerging power and the way it will impact global stability in the future has been one of the most intense in international relations circles. The discussion around China's hard power, the ability to use economic and military measures to coerce other nations, however, has prevailed over that of its soft power, the ability to attract others rather than coerce them, an aspect which has been receiving attention only in recent years (Ibid.). In this sense, the idea that China is a threat is solely based on an evaluation of its hard power, its military and economic resources, and not on a complete analysis of its overall national power, considering, as is advisable, the development and wielding of soft power (Ding Sheng 2010, p. 258).

It is also interesting to note that Chinese author Zhou Xinyu 周鑫宇, a scholar in the field of political science and international relations, raises the question as to why foreign audiences are afraid of China (*tamen zenme hui pa Zhongguo* 他们怎么会怕中国) in a book entitled *Zhongguo, Ruhe Ziwo Biaoda* 中国, 如何自我表达 (*How Does China Advocate Herself*), and states that when Chinese people discuss foreign affairs with foreigners they always have to be prepared to talk about issues related to the "China threat theory" (*Zhongguo weixie lun* 中国威

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<sup>13</sup> As reported by Cho and Jeong (2008, p. 461), the expression "Beijing Consensus" was coined and made popular by Joshua Cooper Ramo, a senior advisor to the investment firm Goldman Sachs and adjunct professor at Tsinghua University, in 2004 and has received international recognition ever since. "China is writing its own book now. The book represents a fusion of Chinese thinking with lessons learned from the failure of globalisation culture in other places. The rest of the world has begun to study this book", writes Ramo (2004, p. 5). The "book" the author refers to is China's approach to development, in both economic and political terms, which is increasingly being taken as example by those developing countries which no longer find in the Western model (the so-called Washington Consensus) a suitable development path. In Ramo's words: "[...] China's new ideas are having a gigantic effect outside of China. China is marking a path for other nations around the world who are trying to figure out not simply how to develop their countries, but also how to fit into the international order in a way that allows them to be truly independent, to protect their way of life and political choices in a world with a single massively powerful centre of gravity. I call this new physics of power and development the Beijing Consensus" (Ramo 2004, pp. 3-4). In brief, the Beijing Consensus believes in keeping a pragmatic approach to reform, rather than taking a "shock-therapy leap", achieving equitable growth, committing to innovation, experiment, and flexibility, rather than uniformity, defending national borders and interests, and "using economics and governance to improve society" (Ibid., pp. 4-5). As the Washington Consensus, it contains ideas that are not only related to economics, but also politics, quality of life, and the global balance of power, and can be summarized into three theorems: China's development model is based on innovation; sustainability and equality are the main priorities; and foreign policy seeks self-determination (Ibid., p. 5 and pp. 11-12). More will be expounded upon about the concept of Beijing Consensus in Section 3.2.

胁论) and the “theory of China’s responsibility” (*Zhongguo zeren lun* 中国责任论)<sup>14</sup> (Zhou Xinyu 2014, pp. 132-144).

These aspects become even more apparent when one considers some of the events happening at the time of writing, when an interesting phenomenon could be observed in the media’s reporting on China. The almost simultaneous occurrence of two major global events, namely China’s “Black Monday”, which took place on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and represented China’s biggest one-day stock market fall since 2007, and the staging in Beijing of a military parade marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, held on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, triggered the publishing of a plethora of news articles eager to discuss China’s real economic and military situation. The abundance of comments on a potential arrest of China’s economic machinery, and on the tremendous consequences this would have for global markets, partially faded away when the media’s attention turned to China’s extraordinary military parade. With both China’s economic slowdown and the prowess of its military apparatus in the spotlight, China’s image and projection of future ambitions displayed in the media appeared to be quite contradictory. The cover of *The Economist*’s August 27<sup>th</sup> print edition, where, under the ominous metaphorical sentence “The Great Fall of China”, a red-painted Great Wall is drawn in a downhill orientation reminiscent of a crashing stock market<sup>15</sup>, is not only in sharp contrast with some of the covers chosen by the magazine in the past to praise China’s power<sup>16</sup>, but also somehow clashes with the representation of a more confident and assertive China portrayed in news articles describing Beijing’s military parade. Titles such as the one chosen by *The Wall Street Journal*, “China Flexes Its Military Muscle at World War II Parade”, seem to hint at China’s growing military capabilities displayed by the People’s Liberation Army (*Zhongguo*

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<sup>14</sup> According to Cho and Jeong (2008, p. 459), before the Chinese leadership made specific reference to soft power, that is, as will be further discussed, prior to the Hu Jintao era, concepts such as the “responsible power theory” argued against the perception of China as a rising power which would be destructive to the global order, claiming that China was a responsible power willing to accept accountability in the international system. Similarly, the “China opportunity theory” (*Zhongguo jiyu lun* 中国机遇论) and the “China contribution theory” (*Zhongguo gongxian lun* 中国贡献论) were intended as countermeasures to the “China threat theory” and “China collapse theory” (*Zhongguo bengkuai lun* 中国崩溃论) (Ibid.). Men Honghua (2005, pp. 12-22) discusses these theories, in particular the “China threat theory” and the “China collapse theory”, in the framework of the negative international response that the increase experienced by China’s influence on the structure of power and interests in East Asia and the entire world has received over the course of the last 25-50 years. Conversely, the “China contribution theory” and “China opportunity theory” focus on the advantages that derive from China’s economic development for Asia and the entire world, insofar as it provides widespread business and trade opportunities. Commentaries such as the one published in 2012 on the website People’s Daily Online, which urges the Chinese people to respond calmly to the “China threat theory”, continuing to promote international cooperation, building a favorable national image, following the road of peaceful development, and developing the country’s national strength (Shi Qingren 2012), show that refuting the “China threat theory” is still an important task on the mind of Chinese policy-makers and leaders. As a “special historical symbol in China’s development process”, the “China threat theory” is bound to accompany China’s rise as a great power as it is caused by the rapid growth of the country’s economic and military strength, which scares Western countries into thinking that a strong China will challenge the existing international status (Ibid.). But the Western powers’ attempt to limit China’s rise by means of such theory has produced not only containment but also stimulation, which means that China will ultimately be able to overcome this obstacle (Ibid.). The relevance of these aspects will emerge on various occasions throughout this work.

<sup>15</sup> The cover and the contents of this issue of *The Economist* can be found online at: <http://www.economist.com/printedition/2015-08-29>. It is interesting to note that the article that bears the same title appearing on the cover somehow downplays the consequences that the negative turn in the Chinese market will have on the global economy (The Economist 2015).

<sup>16</sup> See for example: *The Economist*, March 25<sup>th</sup> 2006, “How to make China even richer” and, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014, “What China wants” (The Economist 2006, 2014b).

*Renmin Jiefangjun* 中国人民解放军, PLA) in the course of the massive parade that, involving 12 thousand troops, five hundred pieces of military armament, and two hundred aircraft, sent a message of national strength and unity of the CPC to the domestic audience (Page and Wong 2015). The unprecedented event was presided over by Xi Jinping, the General Secretary of the CPC, President of the PRC, and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (*Zhongyang Junshi Weiyuanhui* 中央军事委员会, CMC), who reiterated China's benevolent intentions with the announcement that the PLA would be reduced by three hundred thousand personnel and that China would never seek hegemony or expansion at the harm of other countries (Ibid.). But Xi Jinping's reassurance and the message of peace that, according to an article in the *China Daily* (Zhang Chunyan 2015), lies behind the show choreographed in Tiananmen Square, failed to stop attentive observers from speculating on the Chinese leadership's true purposes. An opinion piece published on the website of the *South China Morning Post* shortly before the parade, goes as far as comparing Beijing's display of military power to a "major error of judgment" which will not go down well with China's neighbors and the rest of the world (Tsang 2015). According to the author, who condemns the CPC's choice of words when referring to the parade as "the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China's victory in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression" as a propaganda operation, what is supposed to be a message of shared responsibility and world peace is indeed the revelation of China's true intentions of being perceived as the leading military power in Asia in the post-war scenario, at the expenses of Japan (Ibid.).

For all these reasons, even from a more critical point of view as that adopted by one of David Shambaugh's studies which only considers China a "partial power" still lacking many strengths to become a true global power, one cannot deny that "China is the world's most important rising power" (Shambaugh 2013, p. 4). Arguing that China's international activities still revolve around its own economic growth, Shambaugh (2013, pp. 7-8) posits that, although possessing many characteristics of a global power, China does not act as one, but only as a global actor based on the distinction that "true global powers *influence* other nations and events". Evaluating whether or not these assumptions correspond to reality goes beyond the purpose of this work. Though, as pointed out by Pang Zhongying (2009, p. 127), it can be said that China has successfully entered into the global economy and that this has led many members of the global community to assess China as a "miracle" and a "rising great power" in the geopolitical sphere. To use Shambaugh's words (2013, p. 5), "China's global impact is increasingly felt on every continent, in most international institutions, and on many global issues". Consequently, it is unquestionably necessary to interpret the new world order that is taking shape following China's international ascension. As Shambaugh (2013, p. 5) states, "for the past three decades, observers have watched how the world has impacted China; now the tables are turning and it is necessary to understand how China is impacting the world".

For its part, China has realized that its focus on hard power, especially economic strength, has damaged its capacity to project soft power (Glaser and Murphy 2009, p. 20). For instance, as early as 2002, political leader Liu Yunshan 刘云山, the Chairman of the CPC Central Guidance Commission for Building Spiritual Civilization (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Jingshen Wenming Jianshe Zhidao Weiyuanhui* 中国共产党中央精神文明建设指导委员会) and at the time Head of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the CPC (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Xuanchuanbu* 中共中央宣传部), in a study of the political report to the 16<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Di Shiliu Ci Quanguo*

*Daibiao Dahui* 中国共产党第十六次全国代表大会), noted that, in designing the blueprint for the complete realization of a “moderately prosperous society” (*xiaokang shehui* 小康社会)<sup>17</sup>, the report clearly stresses the extreme importance of cultural construction, to which the Party’s guidelines attribute a strategic position (Liu Yunshan 2002). Although, as noted by Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 15), the term “soft power” was not yet employed, the power of culture was clear in the minds of the Chinese leaders. An extract from Liu Yunshan’s statement deserves quoting at length:

当今世界，文化与经济、政治相互交融、相互渗透。文化的力量，不仅深深熔铸在民族的生命力、创造力和凝聚力之中，而且越来越成为综合国力和国际竞争力的重要组成部分。国家的发展和强盛，民族的独立和振兴，人民的尊严和幸福，都离不开强大文化的支撑。

(Liu Yunshan 2002)

In today’s world, culture, economy, and politics are mutually mixed and permeate each other. The power of culture is not only profoundly fused inside the vitality, creativity, and cohesiveness of the nation, but is also becoming an increasingly important component of overall national strength and international competitiveness. The country’s development and prosperity, the nation’s independence and revival, and the people’s dignity and happiness are all inseparable from the support of a strong culture.

(Translated by the present author.)

The power of culture is reiterated in terms of the advantages that it can bring first and foremost for China, but also for the rest of the world:

作为世界上最大的发展中国家，我们必须高扬自己的文化理想，高举自己的文化旗帜，在世界文化交流和竞争中把我国建设成为文化强国，使中国特色社会主义文化不仅在中国人民中间，乃至在全世界人民中间都具有强大的吸引力和感召力。

(Liu Yunshan 2002)

As the biggest developing country in the world, we [China] must raise high our own culture’s ideals and hold high the banner of our own culture, to make our country a great cultural power in the world’s cultural exchanges and competition, enabling socialist culture with Chinese characteristics to have [exercise] a strong attractive force and power to inspire not only among the Chinese people but also among the people of the whole world.

(Translated by the present author.)

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<sup>17</sup> Wang Wen and Jia Jinjing (2015) explain that, currently, the blueprint for the achievement of a “moderately prosperous society” includes six essential requirements: 1) achieving significant progress in the transformation of the economic development mode; 2) doubling the 2010 GDP and per capita income of urban and rural residents while maintaining balanced, harmonious, and sustainable development; 3) ensuring a larger contribution of technological progress to economic growth; 4) promoting the coordinated development of industrialization, informatization, urbanization, and agricultural modernization; 5) completing the regional coordinated development mechanism; and 6) promoting reform, opening-up, and international competitiveness through the cultivation of new advantages for the nation’s economic development. These six requirements combine economy with political, cultural, societal, and ecological advancement and are designed to create a better living environment and a “beautiful China”; the fulfillment of their “five-in-one” overall layout means that China will have become a moderately prosperous society (Ibid.).

As culture achieves an increasingly significant role as resource of soft power, reaching the same level of importance as traditional hard power resources, it comes as no surprise that among the many issues discussed in one of the most important events in the Xi Jinping era, namely his official state visit to the United States in September 2015, there was also the hypothesis of a future increase in cultural affinity between China and the American superpower, as testified by the launch of the “1 Million Strong” initiative, a program that aims to bring the total number of learners of Mandarin Chinese in America to one million by the year 2020 (Allen-Ebrahimian 2015). This and other topics related to the global spread of the Chinese language and culture will be discussed in greater detail in the course of the present work, in particular in Chapter 8.

The brief description presented thus far has served as an introduction to the chapters that will follow and has helped to articulate and confirm an initial hypothesis: China has awoken and is ready to live up to its renewed status of global superpower. Nowadays, all eyes are on China, while, as pointed out by Pascucci (2011, p. 107), the world’s center of gravity has moved from the West to the East. The West, paralyzed, on the one hand, in the grip of a financial and economic crisis which started in 2008 and shows only little sign of relenting, and threatened, on the other hand, by the violent uprising of an unstable Middle East, is no longer in a sole dominant position. Western countries turn to Asia in general, and China in particular, in an attempt to shed light on what the future of the world will be. Thus, as the global landscape is changing, attentive observers cannot avoid asking themselves what the new role of China will be. This role will unfold in ways that are not merely limited to economic and military aspects, and attention will have to be paid to the other resources that China possesses to exercise its influence in the world. As stated by Zhang Xiping 张西平 (2015), in fact, a country’s power is not only measured in terms of the strength of its economy (*jingji* 经济), politics (*zhengzhi* 政治), or military (*junshi* 军事), but also, and even more so, on the basis of the influence it can exercise in the world in terms of culture (*wenhua* 文化) and values (*jiazhi guannian* 价值观念).

### 1.3 China’s rising power and soft power

In the study of the dynamics which participate in China’s rise to the position of a great power, a concept that has become quite popular in recent years finds its place: the concept of soft power. According to Deng Yong (2009, pp. 63-64), the fact that a theory originally applied to a reigning power as that of the United States would become popular in the analysis of China’s rising power is remarkable, given the difference in status between the two countries and the different resources, means, and objectives of their soft power. In fact, as pointed out by Ding Sheng (2010, p. 265), the main concern in the mind of the creator of this concept was how to retain and reinvigorate America’s hegemony in the world, in the changing global dynamics of the post-Cold War era. Nevertheless, long after the end of the Cold War, the concept of soft power continues to be in the spotlight in the Western discourse, as demonstrated by a Google search conducted at the time of writing, generating over 56 million webpages containing the term “soft power”.

In order to better understand these assumptions, and introduce the overall theme of this research, a few words are imperative to briefly discuss the theory of soft power which was originally put forward by American political scientist Joseph S. Nye, University Distinguished



Service Professor and former Dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government<sup>18</sup>, in his 1990 book *Bound to Lead: the Changing Nature of American Power*. In his volume, as well as in other writings, Nye questions the status of American power after the end of the Cold War, in the context of a new world order without the defining threat of the Soviet Union (Nye 1990a, 1990b). In his well-known volume, he first tackles the difficult task of defining "power", a concept that, he says, is "like love", "easier to experience than to define or measure" (1990a, p. 25). He defines power as "the ability to achieve one's purposes or goals" or "the ability to do things and to control others" (Ibid., pp. 25-26). Power is also the ability "to get others to do what they otherwise would not" (Nye 1990b, p. 154). To analyze the concept of power, he elaborates on the definitions given by Robert A. Dahl, Hans J. Morgenthau, Klaus Knorr, and Ray Cline and argues that according to the behavioral definition of power it is essential to know the preferences of others if one wants to measure power in terms of changed behaviors (Nye 1990a, p. 26). For political leaders, however, power is better defined in a more concrete way, as the possession of resources, including, among others, population, territory, natural resources, economic size, military forces, and political stability (Ibid.). According to Nye, however, the issue of power measurement truly revolves around "power conversion", which he defines as "the capacity to convert potential power, as measured by resources, to realized power, as measured by the changed behavior of others" (Ibid., p. 27). Another issue to be addressed is that of the "changing sources of power", which Nye saw as being in the process of abandoning the traditional emphasis on military force to move closer to an assessment of international power based on factors such as technology, education, and economic growth, *in lieu* of increasingly less important factors such as geography, population, and raw materials (Ibid., p. 29). Nye puts forward the idea of soft vs. hard power arguing that "[g]etting other states to change might be called the directive or commanding method of exercising power" (Ibid., p. 31). "Command power can rest on inducements ('carrots') or threats ('sticks')", he further argues (Ibid.). Yet, there is also another aspect that is sometimes referred to as the "second face of power", which is "an indirect way to exercise power" (Ibid.). Nye's definition of this aspect deserves quoting at length:

A country may achieve the outcomes it prefers in world politics because other countries want to follow it or have agreed to a system that produces such effects. In this sense, it is just as important to set the agenda and structure the situation in world politics, as it is to get others to change in particular situations. This aspect of power—that is, getting others to want what you want—might be called indirect or co-optive power. It is in contrast to the active command power behavior of getting others to do what you want. Co-optive power can rest on the attraction of one's ideas or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences that others express.

(Ibid.)

He further argues:

The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions. This dimension can be thought of as soft power, in contrast to the hard command power usually associated with tangible resources like military and economic strength.

(Ibid., p. 32)

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<sup>18</sup> For a complete description of his life and academic achievements see the author's website: <http://joenye.com/>.

Nye describes power as comprising both a hard and a soft aspect; soft power is the dimension of power expressed through the ability to get others to want the same outcomes one wants. This aspect of power does not require the use of “carrots” or “sticks” and is associated with intangible resources, while command power is usually associated with tangible resources. “Soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power”, he further argues (Nye 1990a, p. 32). The utility of soft power lies in the fact that:

If a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow. If it can establish international norms that are consistent with its society, it will less likely have to change. If it can help support institutions that encourage other states to channel or limit their activities in ways the dominant state prefers, it may not need costly exercises of coercive or hard power in bargaining situations.

(Ibid., pp. 32-33)

The universalism of a country’s culture and its ability to establish a set of favorable rules and institutions that govern areas of international activities, Nye concludes, are crucial sources of power (Ibid., p. 33). In relation to the hegemony of the United States, with the “proof of power” being “not in resources but in the changed behavior of nations”, the question that Nye poses is not as much related to whether or not the country will be able to enter the twenty-first century as a superpower as it is to the extent by which it will be able to get other countries to do what it wants (Ibid., pp. 174-175).

Over the years, Joseph S. Nye has continued to develop his theory at the basis of which was the realization that with the beginning of the post-Cold War era the nature of power in world politics had begun to change. Generally speaking, power was seen as becoming less transferable, or fungible, less coercive, and less tangible due to modern trends and changes in political issues that were affecting the nature of power and the resources producing it, making co-optive power and soft power resources, such as cultural attraction, ideology, and international institutions, more important than in the past (Nye 1990a, p. 188, 1990b, p. 167). Intangible forms of power, such as national cohesion, universalistic culture, and international institutions were also acquiring more relevance due to the changing nature of international politics (Nye 1990b, p. 164). In a changed world, traditional means of power, namely economic and military power, may be less effective than a “more attractive way of exercising power” that a country can use to get other countries “to *want* what it wants” instead of “*ordering* others to do what it wants” (Ibid., p. 166). Thus, in Nye’s opinion, the real issue for the United States, or for any other world power, is how power is changing in world politics, with soft power acquiring more and more importance. Nowadays, for a country in search of global power status, it is necessary to tap into soft power resources, as the key to change the behaviors of others lies in the ability to attract them towards the same desired outcomes. In this sense, as Nye points out when he continues to elaborate on the concept of soft power in his successive volume on the topic, entitled *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, soft power is “attractive power”, in behavioral terms (Nye 2004, p. 6). Many of the points he makes in this well-known book are similar to the ones made in his previous masterpiece, but the analysis of soft power is more thorough and the setting closer to the present day. Once again, Nye starts from the definition of power, repeating one of the metaphors used in his 1990 volume: “Power is like the weather. Everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understand it” (Nye 2004, p. 1). He highlights that in the global information age of today, “winning hearts and minds” is more

important than ever before but political leaders still struggle to incorporate soft power dimensions into their strategies (Ibid.). He takes into consideration the different ways in which power can be conceptualized, in terms of changed behavior of others or the possessions of resources, and emphasizes the importance of the context in which power is exercised (Ibid., pp. 1-5). In particular, he points out that to effectively change the behavior of others, one needs to evaluate the context in which the relationship takes place (Ibid., p. 2). There are several ways to affect the behavior of others: you can coerce them with threats, you can induce them with payments, or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want (Ibid.). “Getting others to want the outcomes that you want” is soft power; it “co-opts people rather than coerces them” (Ibid., p. 5). Once again, an association is made with people’s everyday life, comparing the power of attraction and seduction to the ability to shape the preferences of others typical of soft power:

A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it. In this sense, it is also important to set the agenda and attract others in world politics, and not only to force them to change by threatening military force or economic sanctions.

(Ibid.)

Nye uses the image of a spectrum along which the types of behavior between command and co-option are aligned, from coercion to economic inducement, to agenda setting, to pure attraction; but this relationship is imperfect: military strength and economic prowess can be attractive in the eyes of other countries and become sources of soft power (Ibid., pp. 7-8). Most importantly, the American scholar elaborates on the intangible resources that can generate soft power for a country: “its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority) (Ibid., p. 11).

Since the present research places its focus on China’s rise and impact on the global community through the lenses of what has come to be known as “cultural soft power”, the first soft power resource mentioned by Nye takes on particular relevance. Nye defines culture as “the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society” and states that “[w]hen a country’s culture includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that others share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationships of attraction and duty that it creates” (Nye 2004, p. 11). Recognizing the complexity of the issue at hand, Nye warns that as powerful as it can be, culture still has some limits. In his words: “Of course, Coke and Big Macs do not necessarily attract people in the Islamic world to love the United States” (Ibid., p. 12). In fact, Nye seems to be aware of the potential limitations of the concept of soft power. He specifies that there are conditions under which attraction will more likely generate desired outcomes: popular culture, for instance, is more likely to attract people and produce soft power in contexts where there are cultural similarities rather than in situations where cultures are totally dissimilar (Nye 2004, pp. 15-16).

There is also one last point that is relevant for the purpose of this discussion: the role of governments in enhancing soft power. Nye states that civil society is the main source of soft power and that in a liberal society a government “cannot and should not control the culture” (Nye 2004, p. 17). This leads the present discussion to introducing some of the findings that will be proved and analyzed in-depth in the following chapters. Firstly, one of the key differences

that will emerge between the original conceptualization of soft power by Joseph S. Nye and its Chinese interpretation lies precisely in the fact that in the Chinese context soft power strategies take on the shape of a government project. Secondly, the idea behind the Chinese concept of soft power places emphasis on culture as the core of soft power in general, and on traditional Chinese culture in particular, striking another difference with Nye's conceptualization, which mainly takes into consideration American pop culture among a variety of other soft power resources. Thirdly, the most salient difference between the American and Chinese discourses on soft power pertains to the field in which they are applied. For Nye, soft power is a face of power that complements hard power in the power games of world politics. Conversely, it will be demonstrated that, in the Chinese context, soft power is also very much an important part of China's domestic policy.

These aspects constitute the three main assumptions that, discussed and demonstrated throughout the present research, the study intends to prove. Chapter 2 will explain the reflections upon which their proposal is based.

#### 1.4 Framing the research field

The present research has come across an abundance of literature, in both English and Chinese, produced after the year 1990 and mostly in the last decade, concerning China's soft power. This confirms that in addition to the economic and military aspects of power, which have been briefly introduced in the previous sections, there is yet another component which scholars are called upon to consider when discussing China's position in the world today. It is indeed soft power.

Interestingly enough, this softer aspect of power emerges, at times, also in relation to the topics discussed thus far, in particular in the case of China's economic power. In this regard, Jacques (2012, p. 610) observes that soft power mostly rests on the fundamental precondition of having economic power because the people's desire is usually to be similar to those that are wealthier, and economic wealth allows for the development of greater soft power resources. Consequently, Jacques disagrees with Nye's approach to power, which perceives hard power and soft power as "separate compartments" (Ibid.). This is the reason why, for instance, following a devaluation of the Chinese Yuan, a consequence of the troubles faced by China's economy at the time of writing, at least one news reporter (Francis 2015) tried to discern the reasons behind this economic maneuver, focusing on the need for China to keep alive the attractiveness its markets exercise on foreign buyers and pointing to the high cost soft power has for China. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, soft power and international affairs experts often agree in pinpointing a strong link between China's allure in the global arena and its economic strength, at times even comparing China's soft power with the power of money (Troyjo 2015).

Thus far, it has also been shown that China's aspiration to become a great cultural power can be considered legitimate and in line with its renewed position as a global player. China's economic strength is considered a precondition for its cultural influence, as "a virtuous circle of expanding influence tends to develop" around a country's rise (Jacques 2012, pp. 548-549). Yet, China's cultural power still remains in the background in comparison to its economic and military clout. Although one cannot deny that economic, and also military might, can generate

attractiveness, the present research places greater emphasis on the importance attributed to the appeal generated by culture within the discourse on China's soft power.

As Martin Jacques suggests, the global changes brought about by China are transforming the world in a much more fundamental way than happened with the rise of other new global powers before (Jacques 2012, p. 579)<sup>19</sup>. Generally speaking, it can be argued that the uniqueness of the impact that China's rise has on the world derives from the country's awareness of the peculiar features of its own nature as a civilization-state, as briefly discussed in Section 1.1<sup>20</sup>. For instance, taking the case of the promotion of the Chinese language worldwide, Jacques focuses on the presence of an embryonic competition between English and Mandarin for the status of global *lingua franca* and points out how these two language and cultural systems are in fact widely different: the first is an alphabetic vehicle of a single spoken language that has grown through overseas expansion and conquest, while the latter is a pictographic written vehicle for many different spoken languages which has widened its presence through territorial growth (Ibid., p. 546). It can thus be assumed that even in the field of language promotion, as will also appear to be the case for traditional cultural values, one can detect yet another symbol of the uniqueness of the manner in which the rise of China is affecting the world. These are aspects that will be discussed in greater detail later on, however, drawing on this uniqueness and following the suggestion proposed by Jacques (2012, p. 564) that “[u]nderstanding China will be one of the great challenges of the twenty-first century”, the present analysis posits that it is also necessary to better understand China's approach to soft and cultural power.

By paying attention to culture as a resource of soft power, the study will show how in recent years China has been developing strong cultural awareness and how this is reflected in the new cultural policies put forward by the government. It will thus be shown that China has its own unique approach to soft power, one that has come to be called “cultural soft power” (*wenhua ruan shili*) and is a vision of culture and identity-building in which the overall policy aims at building a sense of belonging to the country among the Chinese people, national cohesion, cultural identity, and linguistic unity, while at the same time increasing the attractiveness of Chinese culture to the world and expanding China's cultural soft power externally.

In the Chinese intellectual and political circles, culture is envisioned as the soft power resource “of choice” because of the role it plays as a means to enhance the country's appeal and influence on the global stage, but also, and more importantly, as a means to meet China's

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<sup>19</sup> Jacques (2012, pp. 564-579) detects eight key characteristics of Chinese modernity that pertain to both its internal structure and the impact this will have on its relation with the outside world: 1) China is a civilization-state more than a nation-state in the traditional sense; 2) the legacy of China's tributary-state system is likely to influence its relationship with East Asia; 3) Chinese people have a particular attitude towards race and ethnicity regarding themselves to be a single race, the Han Chinese, as a single race and describing the non-Han Chinese as separate nationalities instead of races; 4) China is continental in scale; 5) Chinese polity has a highly specific nature embodied in the fact that the rulers of the Chinese Empire were never required to share power with other competing institutions; 6) the speed of the country's transformation characterizes Chinese modernity; 7) the CPC has been ruling since 1949; 8) China combines the characteristics of both a developed and a developing country and this will be the case for many years to come.

<sup>20</sup> To complete the analysis of this aspect, which will nevertheless permeate the entire thesis, it is interesting to note that the expression “*wenmingxing guojia* 文明型国家”, translated in English as “civilizational state”, is used in the works written by Chinese author Zhang Weiwei, and mentioned in the introduction to this study, with reference to China's proposal of its own logic for development, which, shaped on the basis of the characteristics of the country's own traditions and historical and cultural roots, nowadays presents a challenge to the West and its values (World Scientific 2016a, 2016b).

domestic demands. Closely linked to the construction and development of a “system of socialist core values” (*shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi* 社会主义核心价值观)<sup>21</sup> that, tapping into China’s long history, rooted traditions, ideology, political institutions, and social structures inherited from the past, are able to adjust to the PRC’s present reality, China’s soft power discourse appears to be inseparable from the discourse on identity and culture-building as well as that on cultural strength and cultural appeal. Every task of the present analysis is thus carried out paying particular attention to how culture is envisioned and utilized in relation to the Chinese theory and practice of soft power.

The deployment of cultural soft power, which will appear to occur in ways that are directed both outwardly and inwardly, is thus examined in light of the value attached to culture as a factor that can attract the international public but also, perhaps more importantly, as a force to which the Chinese people are drawn domestically; an arena around which people can rally to find inspiration and take pride in their country and in the Chinese national character. In this sense, traditional culture is envisioned as a particularly powerful tool in China’s cultural soft power toolkit.

To conclude this overview of the main features of the research design, it must be pointed out that, as seen thus far, crossing and overlapping numerous different yet related research areas, this project pertains to many fields of study, ranging from analyses related to China’s international relations and global politics to aspects concerning domestic strategies and, in its more practical aspect, cultural policies and socio-political dimensions of language standardization and promotion. The most suitable way to tackle a research of this kind has been the choice of an interdisciplinary approach that looks at China’s soft power from different perspectives. More specifically, the research method chosen can be defined as a “two-pronged approach”, in view of the fact that attention has been paid not only to aspects pertaining to the field of international relations and global politics, but also to the dynamics that characterize China’s internal conditions. This two-pronged approach has been applied in an interdisciplinary manner and draws upon studies that highlight the presence of these two levels in the way soft power is interpreted in the Chinese context.

Twofold is also the corpus of materials chosen as the examination has taken into consideration both Western volumes and journals, or publications written by Chinese scholars in English for a foreign audience, and contributions in Chinese targeted to the domestic public, or Mandarin-literate readers. Therefore, throughout the entire research process, a conscious effort has been made to maintain a binary stance, in order to bring to the surface, and then

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<sup>21</sup> A more in-depth description of what is meant by the expression “*shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi guan* 社会主义核心价值观” (socialist core value system or socialist core values) will be provided in Chapter 7. For the present discussion, it will suffice to specify that the idea of building a system of socialist core values is presented as an important thought stressed in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007 and a major task put forward by the CPC after having summed up the historical experience and evaluated the current circumstances (Xu Zhigong 许志功 2008). Against a background in which culture intertwines with every other aspect, the proposal of this idea possesses an “extremely strong realistic focus and a significant practical meaning” (*ji qiang de xianshi zhenduixing he zhongda de shijian yiyi* 极强的现实针对性和重大的实践意义) (Ibid.). Generally speaking a system of core values is constituted by values that occupy a leading position in a society’s life, being able to ensure stability and development, and in the case of China this means that the leading ideology of Marxism occupies the highest level (Ibid.). As will be expounded upon in Chapter 7, in more recent years, socialist core values have been specifically defined as “national goals of prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony; social goals of freedom, equality, justice and the rule of law; and individual values of patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship” (Xinhua News Agency 2013).

merge, characteristics of both the Western discourse on Chinese soft power, in English, and the Chinese discourse on soft power, in Chinese. It is in between these two macro areas of analysis that the ever-growing number of Chinese publications in English finds its location as a useful instrument employed by China to popularize the Chinese point of view on domestic and international issues worldwide<sup>22</sup>. However, it must be kept in mind that, nowadays, China's press and publishing industry offers an increasingly rich and variegated range of volumes and scholarly writings which, elaborated by Chinese experts of national and international politics, targets the ever-increasing inquisitive Chinese audience, thus largely enriching the Chinese intellectual panorama of the topics considered here. Embracing Western publications in English, Chinese publications in English, and, more importantly, Chinese publications in Chinese, the multiple levels of analysis described give shape to two complementary perspectives on China's soft power: an international perspective, the *discourse on Chinese soft power*, and a local perspective, the *Chinese discourse on soft power*, both functional to obtaining an accurate understanding of what soft power means in China and for China. In line with the first perspective, attention has been paid to the examination of China's soft power on the backdrop of its ascent on the global stage, navigating through a vast amount of materials produced by scholars, policy experts, journalists, and China-watchers from all around the world. This process has also included data analyses, through the examination of pools and surveys concerning the attitudes towards China and its rising power and the perception of China's image worldwide. Conversely, in line with the second, more local, perspective, emphasis has been placed on the analysis of China's own discourse on soft power, through the examination of discussions on soft power within Chinese academic circles and their confluence into the CPC leadership's official discourse, programs, and strategies. In this sense, the analysis will also take on the task of looking more closely at the terminology used in the Chinese discourse on soft power, in order to show its differences from the Western perception of what China's soft power really is. As well, policy documents, news and commentaries released by the state-media, and speeches delivered by political leaders have provided very useful first-hand information.

The binary stance that characterizes the present research is reflected also in the case study considered – an example of Chinese cultural soft power at work. The analysis intends to explore the idea that the standardization and promotion of the Chinese language potentially constitutes a resource of cultural soft power both at home and abroad. On the premise that language promotion can constitute a key instrument through which culture is expressed to the outside world, it comes as no surprise that, as a fundamental part of its culture, China's language can be an effective resource of soft power, through its promotion worldwide. This is proved by the great success achieved globally by the Confucius Institutes (*Kongzi Xueyuan* 孔子学院), a clear,

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<sup>22</sup> These are part of the operations summarized by Li Shi (2013) with the expression “public diplomacy through media” to describe the initiatives strongly promoted by the Chinese leadership in recent years to influence public opinion in other nations, in the perspective of public diplomacy. The effort exerted in this field by the Chinese government has been significant, with the development, for instance, of the global media presence of four state-owned media organizations: the Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI), and the English-language newspaper *China Daily* (Ibid.). As will be further described, public diplomacy is a useful instrument to enhance the country's soft power, as it works towards the establishment of a positive image abroad, an essential precondition to form a friendly international environment which can facilitate China's economic and political ascent (Ibid.). In particular, the present work will focus, in Chapter 7, on what Li Shi calls the “power of discourse” of Chinese media, also aimed at rebutting the negative image of China's affairs often depicted by Western news reporting (Ibid.).

yet at times controversial, symbolic outcome of China's efforts to enhance the efficiency of its cultural soft power abroad. However, the study presents two arguments: firstly, it argues that the promotion of the Chinese language abroad makes it necessary for China to present to the world a harmonious and cohesive cultural and linguistic environment. Secondly, it argues that language can become a tool to increase national cohesion and infuse into the people a sense of identity and belonging. In practical terms, this is expressed through China's language policy, which aims at enhancing language uniformity as a key component of the country's cultural construction.



## 2. Problem formulation and thesis structure

As the political report to 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in October 2007 represents the official debut of the concept of soft power on the stage of Chinese politics, this chapter draws inspiration from Hu Jintao's call to enhance China's cultural soft power contained in his keynote speech in order to define the research problem and explain the related assumptions. Describing the intertwining dynamics within the scope of the exertion of China's soft power as a "feedback circuit", the foundations of the present analysis can be found in a comprehensive nexus in which culture is at the core and its resourcefulness can be wielded both domestically and internationally, thanks also to the active role of the Chinese government.

### 2.1 Enhancing the role of culture as part of China's soft power: Hu Jintao's political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC

In October 2007, former Chinese President and General Secretary of the CPC Hu Jintao delivered his political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC. Among the various issues discussed, a new topic made its first appearance in the political discourse of the Chinese leadership: "*ruan shili*" (soft power). The following pages will focus on Hu Jintao's speech, which can be found in its entirety on the Xinhua Wang news website, in a section specifically dedicated to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress. This will serve the purpose of presenting the official view of the concept of soft power in the Chinese context, as introduced by the former President, and define the bases for the present analysis. Speeches by government officials and policy documents will constitute a focus of this entire work, also including Hu Jintao's keynote speech to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Di Shiba Ci Quanguo Daibiao Dahui* 中国共产党第十八次全国代表大会) in November 2012 and successive speeches given by incumbent President Xi Jinping.

The extract that contains the leadership's definition of how soft power is interpreted in China is part of the section entitled "*Tuidong shehuizhuyi wenhua da fazhan da fanrong* 推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣" – "Promoting Vigorous Development and Prosperity of Socialist Culture", the seventh chapter of Hu Jintao's keynote speech, which calls for promoting the development of "advanced socialist culture" (*shehuizhuyi xianjin wenhua* 社会主义先进文化) and reads as follows:

当今时代，文化越来越成为民族凝聚力和创造力的重要源泉、越来越成为综合国力竞争的重要因素，丰富精神文化生活越来越成为我国人民的热切愿望。要坚持社会主义先进文化前进方向，兴起社会主义文化建设新高潮，激发全民族文化创造活力，提高国家文化软实力，使人民基本文化权益得到更好保障，使社会文化生活更加丰富多彩，使人民精神风貌更加昂扬向上。

(Xinhua She 2007)

The English version of the speech translates Hu Jintao's words as follows:

In the present era, culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength, and the Chinese people have an increasingly ardent desire for a richer cultural life. We must keep to the

orientation of advanced socialist culture, bring about a new upsurge in socialist cultural development, stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation, and enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests, enrich the cultural life in Chinese society and inspire the enthusiasm of the people for progress.

(Xinhua News Agency 2007)

Given the length of the section drawn from Hu Jintao's speech and considered here, the full transcription, both in Chinese and English, will be provided as an Appendix to this work. For the sake of clarity, a summary of the most important issues addressed by the Chinese leader will be presented below.

To begin, it is important to point out that attention must be paid to the terminology used by the former President. Throughout the present writing, the expressions considered most relevant will be selected as "keywords" or "watchwords" so as to depict an image of the soft power discourse in China that is as complete as possible. In this regard, the discussion must take its lead from a preliminary observation of the terms employed by the Chinese leading government official to discuss China's soft power. By employing the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" (enhance the country's cultural soft power), Hu Jintao calls for strengthening the role of culture as part of China's soft power. He describes culture as playing an increasingly crucial role as an "important source of national cohesion and creativity" (*minzu ningjuli he chuangzaoli de zhongyao yuanguan* 民族凝聚力和创造力的重要源泉), as an "important factor in the competition for comprehensive national power" (*zonghe guoli jingzheng de zhongyao yinsu* 综合国力竞争的重要因素), and as a response to the growing demands of the Chinese people for a "rich spiritual and cultural life" (*fengfu jingshen wenhua shenghuo* 丰富精神文化生活). Emphasis is placed on culture interpreted as "advanced socialist culture" (*shehuizhuyi xianjin wenhua*) and the methods suggested to enhance it are extremely detailed. As reported online (Xinhua She 2007), they include:

1. "Building a system of socialist core values" (*jianshe shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi* 建设社会主义核心价值体系) and "strengthening the attractiveness and cohesive force of socialist ideology" (*zengqiang shehuizhuyi yishi xingtai de xiyinli he ningjuli* 增强社会主义意识形态的吸引力和凝聚力): by leveraging the system of socialist core values, which represents the essence of socialist ideology, the guiding position of Marxism (*Makesizhuyi* 马克思主义) is reiterated but adapted to Chinese conditions; people will be united around the common ideal of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi* 中国特色社会主义) and inspired by means of "national spirit with patriotism as the core" (*yi aiguo zhuyi wei hexin de minzu jingshen* 以爱国主义为核心的民族精神) and the "spirit of the times with reform and innovation at the core" (*yi gaige chuangxin wei hexin de shidai jingshen* 以改革创新为核心的时代精神); theories of Marxism and socialism with Chinese characteristics will be publicized and socialist core values will be introduced into all stages of national education and the entire process of spiritual and cultural construction, so that they can become something that the people "seek on their own initiative" (*zijue zhuiqiu* 自觉追求); research in the field of philosophy and social sciences will be promoted, with rewards of an international caliber for scholars achieving outstanding results.

2. “Building a culture of harmony” (*jianshe hexie wenhua* 建设和谐文化) and “cultivating civilized customs” (*peiyang wenming fengshang* 培养文明风尚): to provide the people with spiritual (*jingshen* 精神), or intellectual, support, the work of the press, publishing, radio, film, television, literature, and art must be developed and “correct guidance” (*zhengque daoxiang* 正确导向) provided; Internet culture must be developed and managed; healthy social trends must be fostered, and patriotism (*aiguo zhuyi* 爱国主义), collectivism (*jitizhuyi* 集体主义), and socialist ideology (*shehuizhuyi sixiang* 社会主义思想) promoted; values such as social ethics (*shehui gongde* 社会公德), professional codes of conduct (*zhiye daode* 职业道德), family virtues (*jiating meide* 家庭美德), and individual morality (*ge ren pinde* 个人品德) will be promoted; ideological and political work (*sixiang zhengzhi gongzuo* 思想政治工作) must be strengthened and improved, and ideological and moral education (*sixiang daode jiaoyu gongzuo* 思想道德教育工作) carried out well among young people.

3. “Carrying forward Chinese culture” (*hongyang Zhonghua wenhua* 弘扬中华文化) and “building a common spiritual home for the Chinese nation” (*jianshe Zhonghua minzu gongyuan jingshen jiayuan* 建设中华民族共有精神家园): Chinese culture has been an “inexorable driving force behind the unstoppable growth and brave advancement in unity of the Chinese nation” (*Zhonghua minzu shengshengbuxi, tuanjie fenjin de bu jie dongli* 中华民族生生不息、团结奋进的不竭动力) and, as such, its role must be enhanced; traditional culture (*chuantong wenhua* 传统文化) must be known and adapted to modern civilization, its essence kept and its dross discarded; the excellent Chinese cultural traditions and the intangible cultural heritage will be protected; in order to learn from the achievements of foreign cultures and enhance the influence of Chinese culture in the world, international cultural exchanges must also be strengthened.

4. “Stimulating cultural innovation” (*tuijin wenhua chuangxin* 推进文化创新) and “strengthening the vitality of cultural development” (*zengqiang wenhua fazhan huoli* 增强文化发展活力): by letting “a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend” (*baihua qifang, baijia zhengming* 百花齐放、百家争鸣)<sup>23</sup>, the work of the cultural industry will be developed in order to “ensure the basic cultural rights and interests of the people” (*baozhang renmin jiben wenhua quanyi* 保障人民基本文化权益) and “enhance the international competitiveness” (*zengqiang guoji jingzhengli* 增强国际竞争力) of the industry. A “thriving cultural market” (*fanrong wenhua shichang* 繁荣文化市场) will bring both good “economic returns and social benefits” (*jingji xiaoyi yu shehui xiaoyi* 经济效益与社会效益).

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<sup>23</sup> As reported by Goldman (1987, pp. 242-243), this was part of the slogan launched by Mao Zedong in 1956: “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend”. What has come to be known as the Hundred Flowers Campaign (or Movement, *Baihua Yundong* 百花运动) was an attempt by the CPC leadership to encourage intellectuals to express their ideas in the academic arena and allow them a certain degree of freedom to express their opinions in areas that were not related to politics, such as arts, literature, and science, in order to gain their cooperation in economic development. By allowing them to criticize officials, the aim was also to improve the bureaucratic system and its efficiency (Ibid.). In 1957, a crackdown on this relaxation toward intellectuals put an end to the campaign, which, turning into criticism towards the system in place and the Party itself, had gone beyond the CPC’s intent; in turn, an Anti-Rightist Campaign (or Movement, *Fanyou Yundong* 反右运动) was initiated in order to tighten the grip on intellectuals, who were expected to be indoctrinated, and restore in them revolutionary consciousness. (Ibid., pp. 253-254).

Hu Jintao concludes this part of his keynote speech by stressing the essential role that the “thriving and prosperity of Chinese culture” (*Zhonghua wenhua fanrong xingsheng* 中华文化繁荣兴盛) plays, as a means to achieve the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (*Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing* 中华民族伟大复兴)<sup>24</sup> (Xinhua She 2007).

Through a brief analysis of the points presented above it is possible to bring to light the most salient aspects suggested by the former President’s speech and draw inspiration for the formulation of the research problem. As introduced in Chapter 1, the research problem develops around three main assumptions posed by the present author regarding the nature of Chinese soft power: in China, enhancing soft power takes on the shape of a government project; the mainstream vision of Chinese soft power places emphasis on culture, in particular traditional culture, as the core; and, surpassing the boundaries of international relations, soft power is also very much part of China’s domestic policy. These hypotheses can be established based on a comparison between Joseph S. Nye’s original conceptualization of the soft power theory and the observation of how this concept is interpreted in the Chinese context, as symbolized by Hu Jintao’s speech. Overall, it can be noted that the cultural policies that will be discussed throughout the present study, for which this speech provides the guidelines, must be understood in light of the importance placed on the enhancement of culture as part of the country’s soft power, a resource that can be wielded to respond to the new emerging needs generated by the country’s continuous domestic growth and international ascendance. In Chapter 3, in fact, Hu Jintao’s directives at the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress will be interpreted as giving culture the important function of achieving strategic goals both at home and on the global stage.

Indeed, briefly paraphrasing Hu Jintao’s statement, culture is interpreted here in a broader sense, with reference to the cultural output produced by cultural industries but also to the spiritual, or intellectual, life of the Chinese people. Culture has given the Chinese nation an unflinching driving force to keep its unity and make progress from one generation to the next. Virtues and ethics can be infused into the people’s hearts and minds by means of excellent cultural products, able to popularize the superior symbols belonging to traditional Chinese culture, while a healthy cultural market, in touch with the times but rich in national character, can generate both social benefits and economic returns for everyone. Advanced socialist culture finds its foundation in the system of socialist core values, the essence of socialist ideology, a fecund source of Marxist principles adapted to the modern concept of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The joint work of ideological and moral values, the new spiritual home created for the Chinese people, and the thriving cultural system will bring about the renaissance of the Chinese nation. This process of self-improvement will, in turn, lead to an increase in the appeal of the country’s culture internationally, thus enhancing its competitiveness.

Based on these premises, the following pages will set the parameters for the analysis of China’s soft power, drawing guidance from Hu Jintao’s keynote speech. As will be further described, there is, in fact, widespread agreement (among others, Glaser and Murphy 2009; Nye and Wang 2009a, 2009b; Zheng Biao 郑彪 2010; Cao Qing 2011; Edney 2012; Hong Xiaonan 红晓南 et al. 2013; Liu Deding 刘德定 2013; Aukia 2014) that, with the delivery of this

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<sup>24</sup> As reported by Schell and Delury (2013, Chapter 15), the word “*fuxing* 复兴”, which means “rejuvenate”, has had an extremely profound meaning for each and every generation of Chinese people since the assault suffered by the PRC at the hands of foreign powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As well, CPC leaders have taken the concept of “*fuxing*” as a symbol of China’s rise and the restoration of its greatness, which represent, in turn, the realization of the so-called “Chinese dream” (*Zhongguo meng* 中国梦) (Ibid.).

important political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the concept of soft power made its official debut on the stage of Chinese politics. In the course of this work, attention will be paid to unveiling the rationale behind Hu Jintao's words in an attempt to find an explanation for the assumptions that can be drawn from them.

## 2.2 Assumptions of the research problem

In order to explain the assumptions reported above, a starting point is that of taking note of the location of the part of the speech that deals with soft power in the body of text that constitutes Hu Jintao's political report. As indicated above, the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" appears in the section dedicated to the project of developing a prosperous socialist culture. Its placement in the section which takes into consideration peaceful development, entitled "*Shizhong buyu zou heping fazhan daolu* 始终不渝走和平发展道路" – "Unswervingly Following the Path of Peaceful Development"), would perhaps have seemed more appropriate for a topic such as that of soft power, which is generally treated in relation to a country's international relations. Conversely, the Chinese leadership's intention to increase the role of culture as part of the country's soft power appears to surpass the realm of foreign affairs, being propelled by the pursuance of domestic goals. As stated by Edney (2012, p. 907), the Chinese soft power discourse becomes part of the CPC's official ideology in a way that is very much in relation to the realm of nation-building and domestic cultural construction. Elaborating on the official incorporation of the concept of soft power into the CPC's lexicon in 2007, he further observes that Hu Jintao deals with the topic of soft power with reference to the project of developing socialism with Chinese characteristics rather than referring to China's foreign affairs and the country's position in the world (Ibid.). As will be further described, it is therefore no surprise that in China the discourse on soft power and the discourse on cultural strength often overlap. Although culture was only one of the three resources that Joseph S. Nye listed in the original soft power theory, the emphasis placed on it in the soft power discourse in China makes it possible to imply that, in this context, soft power "has become almost a synonym for cultural attractiveness" (Edney 2012, p. 908).

In this sense, to be more accurate, in the process of unpacking the meaning of the formulation used by Hu Jintao, "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*", it must be pointed out that the complete expression he uses with reference to China's soft power is actually "*guojia wenhua ruan shili* 国家文化软实力" (national cultural soft power), a collocation created by juxtaposing the words "*guojia* 国家" (country), and "*wenhua*" (culture) to the term "*ruan shili*" (soft power). As has been reported above, the official English version of the speech offers the translation "culture as part of the soft power of our country" (Xinhua News Agency 2007). By extension, "culture as part of the country's soft power" would be considered an accurate transposition of Hu Jintao's words, with the collocation "cultural soft power" being nonetheless very common in English texts as well. The present analysis will mainly utilize the term "cultural soft power" and demonstrate the intention of the Chinese leadership to place culture at the core of soft power, as is made clear with the use of this rather innovative formulation.

Analyzing Hu Jintao's statement, three trends emerge in relation to culture in the context of cultural soft power, as stated by Edney (2012, p. 908): "culture's increasing role in national cohesion and creativity, its increasing role in international power competition, and the growing

demand by the Chinese public for greater access to a variety of cultural pursuits”. The interplay of aspects related to the increasingly important role attributed to culture as a source of national cohesion and creativity, its increasingly important role in the international competition for CNP, and the Chinese public’s growing demand for a greater and more varied cultural life shows the interaction between domestic and international dynamics in the Chinese discourse on soft power. This characteristic, together with the focus on culture in the approach to soft power in the Chinese context, will constitute the pillars upon which the present work is built, corroborating the assumptions established.

Among the aspects that are extensively discussed in the course of the present work and permeating the different chapters, culture will be in the spotlight in order to show the process through which this resource has progressively come to be considered the most important feature of Chinese soft power. Besides the emphasis placed by Hu Jintao on cultural soft power and the popular opinion among scholars that culture is the core of China’s soft power, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, this assumption is also confirmed by other official statements circulating over the years in the policy community and the state media. For instance, in a speech reported on the webpage of the Forum for Cross-cultural Communication (*Kua Wenhua Chuanbo Luntan* 跨文化传播论坛) in 2006, former Minister of Culture Cai Wu 蔡武, who at the time held the position of Director of the State Council Information Office (*Guowuyuan Xinwen Bangongshi* 国务院新闻办公室), clearly stated that “[c]ulture is the core element of a country’s soft power (*wenhua shi yi guo ruan shili de hexin yaosu* 文化是一国软实力的核心要素)” (Cai Wu 2006). Similarly, an article published on the English webpage of the official newspaper *Renmin Ribao* states that even though Joseph S. Nye included factors belonging to the fields of culture, political systems, and media into the concept of soft power, “[a]mong them, culture is the core, for it fully reflects a country’s influence, cohesion, and popularity” (People’s Daily Online 2010). The article reports the opinion shared among intellectuals that China is developing its soft power in a way that fits both domestic and international conditions, striving to build the Chinese cultural system and increase its influence worldwide, and making use of the great potential for development of the Chinese cultural industry and its role in building and popularizing modern core values (Ibid.).

The betterment of China’s ideological, cultural, and spiritual environments, under the umbrella of a prosperous socialist culture, the strengthening of China’s cultural system, the revival of traditional Chinese values, and the upholding of socialist core values, keeping to the orientation of socialism with Chinese characteristics, will also be considered more closely throughout the chapters. In fact, these are all aspects touched upon by the former President’s 2007 political report as part of the task of building unity and cohesion domestically, which constitutes, in turn, a resource of soft power in itself as well as the broader context in which the program of enhancing cultural soft power is incorporated. In this regard, Edney (2012, p. 911) notes that soft power has been included within the program of building “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, which all in all constitutes a “nation-building endeavor”. These considerations are also reflected in Party members’ official statements. For instance, the words expressed by Wang Chen 王晨, an official with the State Council Information Office, in 2010 are relevant and deserve quoting at length:

我国文化软实力植根于中华民族优秀传统文化传统，以社会主义核心价值观体系为引领，反映时代发展要求，对内表现为民族的向心力和凝聚力，对外表现为国家的亲和力和影响力。

(Renmin Wang 2010)

China's cultural soft power is rooted in the outstanding cultural traditions of the Chinese people, it is guided by the system of socialist core values, it reflects the needs for development of the times, internally it manifests itself in the nation's centripetal force [cohering force] and cohesion [cohesiveness], and externally it manifests itself in the country's affinity and influence.

(Translated by the present author.)

This does not necessarily mean that socialist core values should be promoted internationally, but that their domestic strengthening can bolster China's soft power resources (Edney 2012, p. 911). This aspect will be expounded upon in Chapter 7.

On balance, enhancing cultural soft power in the Chinese context appears to be related to both domestic improvement and international relations. In this sense, another interesting insight is that provided by Zhou Qing'an 周庆安: using the idiom "the cleverest wife cannot cook without rice" (*qiaofu nan wei wu mi zhi chui* 巧妇难为无米之炊), the scholar explains that even if image molding and communication methods are certainly an important component of soft power, a country's domestic political, economic, and social development levels, constituting the bases of its soft power, are even more important and are the "kernel of soft power" (*ruan shili de neihe* 软实力的内核) (Zhou Qing'an 2007).

To conclude, the role that a strong culture can play at home, when it becomes a force that inspires the people to identify with their homeland, promote the national character, and rally around common values, is taken into consideration as a dynamic taking place internally in China, but the external dimension of which becomes an effective resource of soft power, taking its place among the forces that interact in the challenge for international competitiveness. In this sense, the present analysis finds its foundations in a specific and complex nexus: culture is at the base of Chinese soft power and, for precisely that reason, it is possible to detect the presence of both domestic and international dimensions in the related discourse. The interaction between these dimensions takes place in a manner that can be defined, by means of an analogy, as a "feedback circuit", as each of the two affects the other. In this sense, this consideration takes its lead from the view expressed by Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 20), who state that, in China, there is agreement on the fact that the development of soft power must be pushed forward not only at an international level, by means of cultural promotion, public development, and peaceful development, but also at a domestic level, working on the attraction that Chinese culture and economic and political values can exercise on both the Chinese people and the foreign public. The authors suggest that the Chinese approach to soft power should be defined as "holistic", as "the domestic and foreign policy aspects of soft-power development are conceived as an organic whole", in sharp contrast with Nye's point of view which mainly focused on soft power as a means to improve a country's international status (Ibid.). An example of this is also provided by Edney (2012, p. 913) and applied to the field of propaganda when he states that, for the Chinese leadership, there is a relation between the domestic and international political contexts, which influence one another. He finds similarities between foreign propaganda and soft power in the Party-State's view, insofar as they facilitate the achievement of domestic objectives, and includes the efforts to increase the country's cultural soft power within the broader spectrum of successful internal propaganda, identifying the shared aim of enhancing domestic cohesion,

which in turn will increase China's position internationally (Ibid.). Then, adding another step to this circuit, and looking at this relationship from an opposite perspective, one can say that increasing the country's cultural soft power for external purposes affects China's internal conditions, especially in the context of cultural construction.

In other words, flourishing at home and attractive abroad, culture becomes the core of China's soft power, leading this first introductory section to one last aspect that will emerge in the course of the present work. It is indeed also relevant to take into consideration the institutional basis of the process of culture-building described, and the presence of an economic aspect related to the competitiveness of Chinese culture as well. The process of cultural construction unfolds through the application of cultural policies that affect the Chinese cultural industry, leveraging the potential of China's cultural market. In 2010, for example, Hu Jintao stressed the need for greater efforts to reform the country's cultural system in order to increase the country's soft power, encouraging cultural innovation, the provision of cultural services, the fostering of new cultural industry forms, and the production of cultural products suitable to meet the people's needs (Xinhua News Agency 2010). In this regard, it will be demonstrated that, in the Chinese context, soft power resources need to be built and cultivated to produce soft power outcomes. Consequently, it can be assumed that in China there are specific channels through which soft power is developed; its promotion is not seen as a natural process that can easily stem from the country's cultural qualities, political values, and foreign policies. In these terms, the definition of Chinese soft power that Shaun Breslin proposes, with reference to international dynamics, is worth mentioning at length:

[Soft power] is seen largely as a state project to internationalize the voice of China so that it penetrates into popular consciousness and influences policy communities debating the consequences of China's rise. It is an attempt to promote a preferred Chinese idea of what China is and it stands for, including an emphasis on the historical roots of current thinking, identity-formation and policy designed to correct misconceptions among overseas audience about China's motivations and intentions.

(Breslin 2011, pp. 6-7)

In this way, soft power can be described as a project fundamentally pushed forward by the government. Concluding the explanation of the assumptions established, it is important to note that Hu Jintao's 2007 political report calls for China to "raise", "heighten", "enhance", "increase", or "improve" (*tigao* 提高)<sup>25</sup> the role of culture as part of its soft power, implying the presence of an action plan aimed at achieving this goal. The analysis of how China's soft power theory has been turned into practice, carried out throughout the present work, will confirm this point of view and elaborate on the purposes that lie behind this government project, with social stability and economic development emerging among other goals.

### 2.3 Areas of enquiry and research questions

Broadly speaking, following a macro-to-micro approach, the analysis of the aspects described thus far takes its lead from looking at "the big picture" of China's soft power, taking into consideration the main dynamics linked to it, before going deeper into the nature of the

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<sup>25</sup> *Hanying Cidian (di san ban)* 汉英词典 (第三版) - *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Third Edition). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2010, s.v. *tigāo* 提高.



Chinese discourse on soft power, so much so as to even touch upon the level of Chinese terminology in order to unpack the meaning of the formulation “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*”. With the purpose of guiding the reader through the development of this process, the following pages will attempt to draw the areas of enquiry and delineate the research questions that will receive in-depth analysis in the course of the study. This will be done on the basis of the tasks and goals briefly described in the introduction to the present work, the research frame drawn in Section 1.4, and the definition of the research problem provided above. In particular, thus far, after having introduced a preliminary hypothesis which helps to investigate the soft power theory and its location within the background of China’s rise, some of the key concepts described by Hu Jintao in his 2007 political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC have been examined in order to draw inspiration for the formulation of the research problem, which develops around the assumptions posed at the phase of inception of the present study. These assumptions and the related explanations provided thus far, together with the tools chosen to search for evidence that can confirm them, constitute the foundations upon which this thesis has been structured. For the definition of areas of enquiry and the selection of research questions, in fact, the two-pronged approach chosen to examine the co-existence of domestic and international aspects as one of the main pillars of the soft power theory and practice in the Chinese context, with the others being the emphasis placed on culture and the government’s involvement, has proven instrumental. The same can also be said for the binary stance taken in selecting the materials utilized for the shaping of an international and a local perspective on the overall subject of China’s soft power.

These considerations are reflected in the structure of the present thesis: as explained in the introduction to this work, in fact, the study can be considered to be divided into two parts, the first of which includes, besides the introductory Chapters 1 and 2, the definition of a conceptual framework of reference, and a comprehensive literary review. This part can be envisioned as the first area of research enquiry, which explains the reasons as to why it is relevant to study the dynamics of contemporary China through the lenses of soft power and specifically discuss the Chinese discourse on soft power. In particular, Chapters 1 and 2 have attempted to answer the following questions: what is soft power and how does it fit into the discussion related to China’s rise and today’s changing world? How is the official view of the concept of soft power defined in the Chinese context and how does it compare to Joseph S. Nye’s theory?

As the debate on the relevance of soft power in relation to China develops in a complex nexus of analyses, the elaboration of a conceptual framework is tackled in light of China’s strategic discourse as a whole and the domestic and global dynamics surrounding it. Although these aspects have been introduced in Chapter 1, this type of analysis acquires an even deeper meaning having now looked at Hu Jintao’s call for the enhancement of culture as part of China’s soft power in relation to both national cohesion and creativity and the competition in CNP. Former President Hu Jintao uses the word “*tigao*”, which means “enhance” or “increase”, implying that actions must be taken to upgrade the objectives culture can achieve. Then, what is the relation between culture as a domestic strength and its extension as a source of soft power? What is meant by the expression “*zonghe guoli*” (CNP, or overall national strength)? How does the competition in overall national strength unfold, and what role does culture play in it? Chapter 3 provides the tools to tackle these issues, forming a canvas on which to illustrate the multilayered circumstances in which the subject of China’s soft power emerges. Thus, the conceptual framework of reference is dedicated to the description of the main features of the

background upon which the discussion will develop in the second part of the study. By doing so, the intention is also to organize the abundance of knowledge available regarding popular perceptions on China's internal and external behavior, including, among others, topics belonging to the domestic sphere, such as that of a "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会), as well as some of China's most relevant principles of foreign policy, including, for instance, the concepts of "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi* 和平崛起), "peaceful development" (*heping fazhan* 和平发展), and "harmonious world" (*hexie shijie* 和谐世界).

Going deeper into the research layers, the discussion will progressively enter the field of the Chinese discourse on soft power. As previously described, the concept of soft power originated in the West, in the field of international relations; Chapter 4 will set the frame for the discussion of the penetration, and merger, of this concept into the Chinese context by looking first, from an international perspective, at the earliest and most valuable attempts to examine the topic of China's soft power in Western and Chinese literature in English, to then introduce, from a more local perspective, some of the most relevant Chinese analyses. An introduction to some peculiar elements of soft power in the Chinese context will be provided, including the vastness and variety of the related discourse and how soft power is discussed by intellectual and political elites. Then, what are the most prominent features of Western literature on China's soft power? What are the visions of Chinese scholars on Joseph S. Nye's theory and the Chinese interpretation of it? How different is the language used? How do Chinese publications in English fit into this discourse? And, ultimately, how complex is the resulting scenario? Chapter 4 attempts to introduce tentative answers to these and other related questions. By doing so, it provides another aspect of the background against which the emergence of a number of issues will be tackled in the following chapters.

Opening the discussion on the interpretation and re-elaboration of the concept of soft power within the Chinese intellectual and strategic domains, Chapter 5, the first of the second area of research enquiry, will tackle the following problems: are there any elements in the Chinese system of thought that can be considered to have facilitated the acceptance of the role of soft power and culture in today's China? How did scholars participate in the reception of these concepts? How deep-rooted are traditional values in Chinese culture, and how do they fit into the Chinese discourse on soft power? Does the theory of soft power remain the same after entering the Chinese context?

It must be noted that the level of analysis which is introduced in Chapter 4 and then further developed makes this study increasingly specific and complex: it is a step that takes the discussion deeper into the realm of the Chinese discourse on soft power, which appears to have moved away from Joseph S. Nye's conceptualization, becoming vast and variegated, as is shown by the emergence in China of different "schools of thought" in regard to the nature of soft power. Even though the "culture school" seems to prevail, an explanation of what exactly cultural soft power means has yet to meet widespread consensus. Based on the assumption that the lexical choices made by Hu Jintao in his keynote speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress are not casual, it can be assumed that, by employing the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" as the embodiment of a soft power national strategy, the Chinese leadership has also embraced the thesis according to which culture is the core of China's soft power. The terminology officially used indeed proves to be representative of the manner in which the discourse on soft power is interpreted in the Chinese context, highlighting the guiding role of the CPC's official discourse in determining the orientation towards which the theory and

practice of soft power have been evolving. In this sense, the question is raised as to whether or not, or to what extent, the choice of a specific formalized vocabulary bears witness to the type of strategies officially adopted to build and enhance China's soft power. Ultimately, this terminological problem rests upon the addition of the word "*wenhua*" (culture) to the Chinese term predominantly used to translate "soft power", "*ruan shili*", as well as on the very interpretation of the concept of power. These observations are not accidental and hide a composite matrix of connotations that can only be understood in light of China's internal and external dynamics that go along with its soft power. As well, the question here is also whether or not the Western interpretation of the Chinese discourse on soft power is somehow limited, or misguided, due to a lack of attention to the terminology used in Chinese.

Having considered all these aspects, the part of this study which focuses on the evolution of the Chinese official discourse on soft power and current approaches to cultural soft power, including Chapters 6 and 7, reveals the main features constituting the nature of the Chinese cultural soft power theory and practice today. Chapter 6 will provide an answer to the following questions: Why did the expression "*wenhua ruan shili*" emerge in the Chinese context? What does the Chinese leadership say about China's soft power? What role does the official jargon play in this discussion? How is the Chinese soft power theory turned into practice? Is China's cultural soft power totally new and entirely different in comparison to the West's soft power? How profound are their discrepancies, and are there any similarities? Chapter 7 will continue this examination, providing an answer to the following questions: how innovative is the Chinese discourse on cultural soft power today, and what phenomena does it reflect? And, what is "*ruan shili*", really? Ultimately, an evaluation will be made as to whether or not it is possible to talk about "soft power with Chinese characteristics", from a terminological, conceptual, and ideological point of view.

This rather brief description has set some important parameters for the definition of the two main areas of enquiry within which this study develops, bringing to the surface research questions that will guide this exposition. What follows is a list of the topics discussed in Chapters 1-8:

- Chapter 1: overview of aspects related to China's rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; hard vs. soft power in the changing nature of power in world politics; establishment of the soft power theory as a theoretical frame for the investigation of the Chinese discourse on soft power; China's cultural and ideological influence; culture as a frame for the investigation of China's soft power; introduction of the main assumptions the study intends to prove; and description of operative methods and materials utilized.
- Chapter 2: establishment of Hu Jintao's political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in October 2007 as the official debut of the concept of soft power in the Chinese political discourse; proposal and explanation of the research problem and its related assumptions; definition of the dynamics that revolve around culture as the core of China's soft power as a "feedback circuit" and description of the comprehensive system surrounding it; and explanation of the thesis structure.
- Chapter 3: based on the important keywords "*wenhua*" (culture) and "*zonghe guoli*" (CNP), drawn from Hu Jintao's 2007 political report, establishment of a conceptual framework of reference in light of China's strategic discourse; description of a variety of multilayered approaches that have emerged in the discourse around China's soft power against the background of the country's grand strategy; and description of a selection of domestic and foreign policy programs related to soft power.

- Chapter 4: introduction to some of the most relevant scholarly works that have discussed the topic of China's soft power in the West and in China, including a selection of materials written in English by Chinese authors, in order to merge the two macro areas of analysis (Western discourse on Chinese soft power and Chinese discourse on soft power) and give shape to an international (*discourse on Chinese soft power*) and a local (*Chinese discourse on soft power*) perspective on the nature of China's soft power; expansion of the study's theoretical frame through further insights into Joseph S. Nye's theory of soft power; presentation of the schools of thought characterizing the Chinese discourse on soft power, focusing in particular on the analyses provided by scholars that support the vision according to which the core of China's soft power is culture, embraced also by the Chinese leadership; analysis of the lack of consensus on the meaning and connotations of cultural soft power and the disagreement that has arisen regarding the terminology to be employed in this field; detection of the need for a closer examination of the nature of the Chinese discourse on soft power and its jargon, in a way that detaches it from its Western counterpart and reveals important nuances of meaning; and data supporting the growing popularity, in China and abroad, of the topic of China's soft power.
- Chapter 5: detection of primordial seeds of soft power in China's own past; influence of traditional values on China's vision of itself and its relations with the outside world; and first stages of the penetration of the soft power discourse into Chinese academic and strategic circles in the period between 1990 and 2007.
- Chapter 6: development of an official discourse on soft power in the context of contemporary China, in particular in the years between 1990 and 2007; evolution of the formulations "*wenhua ruan shili*" (cultural soft power) and "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" (enhance the country's cultural soft power), officially enunciated in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007, analyzed from different angles and highlighting the guiding role of the CPC's official discourse; formalization of a national strategy for the enhancement of the country's cultural soft power identified as the Chinese leadership's response to the need of defining a soft power theory, and practice, more suitable to the Chinese context; and more recent developments of the theory and practice of cultural soft power in China in the years between 2007 and 2012. Other topics explored include: the relationship between the Chinese academic discourse on soft power and its official counterpart; the function of political formulations in the context of Chinese soft power discourse; historical vicissitudes in the CPC's approach to the concept of soft power; the popularization of the concepts of "*wenhua ruan shili*" and "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" nationwide and the formation of a collective project for the enhancement of China's cultural soft power; and the practice of soft power through the implementation of cultural policies.
- Chapter 7: approaches to cultural soft power between 2012 and 2015, including developments in the theory behind and practice of cultural policies, views on cultural soft power in the Xi Jinping era, and terminological analyses. Supported by recent Chinese scholarly writings, media commentaries, and terminological examinations of the term "*ruan shili*" and other related expressions, the question as to whether or not it is possible to talk about "soft power with Chinese characteristics" is tackled.
- Chapter 8: display of the most peculiar characteristics of the practice of China's cultural soft power through the analysis of the case study of language standardization and promotion. This chapter includes a critical analysis of the "Outline of the National

Medium-to-long-term Plan for the Reform and Development of the Cause of Chinese Language and Characters” (*Guojia Zhong Changqi Yuyan Wenzhi Shiye Gaige he Fazhan Guihua Gangyao* 国家中长期语言文字事业改革和发展规划纲要) for the period 2012-2020 and a selection of contents drawn from the report entitled *Zhongguo Yuyan Shenghuo Zhuangkuang Baogao 2013* 中国语言生活状况报告 2013 (*Language Situation in China: 2013*), which was obtained in the course of a research trip to the PRC undertaken by the present author in April 2014, in which the aforementioned document can be found.



### 3. A conceptual framework: soft power in China's strategic discourse

In the first chapter, a few pages were dedicated to providing a brief summary of the most important constituents of the soft power theory as originated by Joseph S. Nye over two decades ago. This chapter will delineate the scope of analysis within which the debate on China's soft power develops, providing a conceptual framework of reference for the examination of a number of closely-related aspects that illustrate the relevance of Nye's conceptualization as part of China's grand strategy. The question as to why it is relevant to discuss soft power in relation to the Chinese context will thus find an answer through the analysis of soft power in light of China's strategic discourse. Performing this task, the relevance of the concept of soft power within China's grand strategy, which, as will be demonstrated, unfolds through domestic and foreign policies, will emerge, explaining the ways in which China's soft power is debated by international and domestic audiences and allowing for an investigation of the interconnection between domestic and international dynamics in the way it is wielded. Drawing upon an examination of the domestic and international role of culture in China's strategic discourse as the "two sides of the same coin" and an explanation of the important concept of "*zonghe guoli*" (CNP), the versatility of soft power as a means to achieve the multiple goals of China's grand strategy will be discussed in terms of a variety of approaches that emerge in the analysis of China's use of soft power resources.

#### 3.1 Culture and CNP

As a matter of fact, even though at the time when the concept was popularized in the West, China's soft power remained "the farthest thing on the minds of the Chinese policy elites or foreign observers", now things have changed, and soft power is considered "an arena they [the Chinese elites] too must and can win" (Deng Yong 2009, pp. 63-64). In October 2007, Hu Jintao brought the public's attention to the enhancement of culture as part of China's soft power in relation to its importance in consolidating national cohesion and cultural creativity, as it enriches the country's intellectual and ideological foundations, and in terms of the role it plays in the international competition in overall national strength. More specifically, drawing upon Hu Jintao's words (Xinhua She 2007), the "competition in overall national strength" (*zonghe guoli jingzheng* 综合国力竞争) calls for making culture more effective as part of China's soft power toolkit. As previously described, culture is included among soft power resources and in this sense it can be considered as "the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society" (Nye 2004, p. 11)<sup>26</sup>. Hu Jintao's reference to "national cohesion" is another element mentioned by Nye (1990b, p. 164) among the intangible forms of power, together with universalistic culture and international institutions, that are gaining significance following the changes that have occurred in international politics. Thus, it can be implied that a cultural upgrade can lead

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<sup>26</sup> As will be discussed in greater detail in the following pages, culture can be defined in a variety of ways according to the point of view of the observer. In the context of culture as a power resource, Joseph S. Nye elaborates on its definition in a successive volume: "'Culture' is the pattern of social behaviors by which groups transmit knowledge and values, and it exists at multiple levels" (Nye 2011a, p. 84). With this definition Nye refers to "human culture", the aspects of which can be universal, national, or particular to social classes or small groups (Ibid.).

to an increase in national cohesion and this, in turn, strengthens soft power. It is therefore no surprise that in Hu Jintao's speech domestic and foreign objectives become entangled with one another, and soft power is discussed in relation to concepts such as those of "*wenhua*" (culture) and "*zonghe guoli*" (CNP). Following the method of selecting relevant "keywords" or "watchwords" introduced in the previous chapter, the strategic discourse on China's soft power will thus be introduced through the lenses of the aforementioned terms, facilitating the establishment of a framework of reference for the present analysis.

Starting from culture, authors committed to the study of soft power usually take their lead from some of its most prominent definitions provided in the field of sociology or anthropology. Li Mingjiang (2009a, p. 7), for instance, refers to Neil J. Smelser defining culture as "the beliefs, values, and expressive symbols (including art and literature) that any group (including a whole society) holds in common, and which serve as ways of organizing experience and guiding the behavior of the members of that group". In this view, culture is certainly a potential source of soft power (Ibid.). Ding Sheng (2008, p. 59) refers to Edward B. Tylor writing that "culture or civilization, defined in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Noteworthy, and more recent, is also the definition contained in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted in 2001, which reaffirms that "culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO 2002, p. 62). Zhu Majie (2002a, p. 23) reports the definition provided by American anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn writing that culture is "a history-created system of survival types, dominant or recessive, having tendencies shared by the whole group or by some particular part in a certain period of time". The author also states that according to other scholars the fundamental attribute of culture is human creativity: "creation by men and all that men have created" (Ibid.). A complete definition of culture is provided as follows:

All in all, in its broad sense, culture refers to the sum of the material and spiritual wealth that has been created in the historical practice of human society. In its narrow sense, culture is the social ideology and its corresponding systems and organizations, including viewpoints and ideas of politics, law, ethics, arts, religion, science and compatible systems. In no dimension should culture be perceived as static; culture is a dynamic process.

(Ibid., pp. 23-24)

Zhu Majie also differentiates culture from civilization by stating that the latter comprises the former, being "the product of culture developed to a higher level" (Ibid., p. 24).

Attention must also be paid to the influence of culture on the structure of international relations. Zhu Majie (2002a, pp. 26-28) identifies five models by which culture influences international relations: 1) "the broad determinant impact" culture has on the achievements of the state, which means that no results can be obtained if the cultural factor is disregarded, as it is culture that provides human life with spiritual, ethical, and economic bases; 2) culture as "the navigator in making decisions", which means that leaders are guided by cultural concepts in their evaluation of policy issues; 3) culture as "the designer of social and economic structures", which means that culture provides the blueprint for social and economic institutions; 4) culture as "an important variable in international relations", which refers to the perception of culture as



the “dominant framework of international relations, the primary base of the national behavior, and the main source of international conflicts”<sup>27</sup>; and 5) the notion that a pivotal foundation for harmony in international relations is provided by the “commonality and complementarity of cultures”, which means that culture can be regarded as the “booster of international relations”.

In this sense, it can be argued that culture also has a role as a means to achieve strategic goals. A more in-depth analysis of the relation between culture as a domestic strength and its extension as a source of soft power can help shed light on the complexity of this issue. In Hu Jintao’s speech, the desired strategic goals are considered in relation to both China’s domestic needs and the country’s position in the international arena. As a source of national cohesion and creativity, culture responds to the spiritual and intellectual needs of the Chinese people, while simultaneously increasing China’s competitiveness in the world. Here, the values attached to culture in terms of the results it can achieve appear to be, to use an analogy, “two sides of the same coin”. On the one hand, it can be argued that, according to the leadership’s view, the ways in which culture can be upgraded as a source of the country’s soft power, which include promoting advanced socialist culture, building a system of socialist core values, cultivating civilized practices, spreading the knowledge of traditional culture, developing the country’s cultural industry, and improving the people’s cultural and spiritual life, to name just a few, will lay the basis upon which to bring about the prosperity of Chinese culture, which will accompany the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Chinese people will be able to enjoy a renewed spiritual home, an effect in line with Hu Jintao’s emphasis on culture as an increasingly important source of national cohesion. Political leader Liu Yunshan also makes this clear in a statement in which he urges people to regard culture from a new perspective and theoretical point of view based on the emergence of new circumstances and tasks: culture is not only an “important method to push social development” (*tuidong shehui fazhan de zhongyao shouduan* 推动社会发展的重要手段), but also an “important objective of the progress of civilization” (*wenmin jinbu de zhongyao mubiao* 文明进步的重要目标); it is not only a “spiritual bond that aggregates the will of the people” (*ningju renxin de jingshen niudai* 凝聚人心的精神纽带), but it also “concerns the people’s welfare and happiness” (*guanxi minsheng xinfu* 关系民生幸福); it not only “offers an increasingly bigger direct contribution to economic growth” (*dui jingji zengzhang de zhijie gongxian yuelaiyue da* 对经济增长的直接贡献越来越大), but its “role in upgrading the quality of economic development is becoming more prominent on a daily basis” (*dui tisheng jingji fazhan zhiliang de zuoyong riye tuchu* 对提升经济发展质量的作用日益突出) (Xinhua Wang 2010b). Culture provides the people with a “spiritual bond” which makes what is described here an identity and culture-building endeavor at the national level, primarily responding to domestic needs. As stated by Edney (2012, p. 912), maintaining political stability and national unity is a matter of utmost importance in the Chinese political system, and the Chinese leadership pursues cohesion within society, as well as between society and the CPC. As argued by Cao Qing (2011, p. 12), even though China’s soft power can be considered to be directed both internally and externally, its focus is mainly on domestic priorities and practices, utilized in order to develop soft power resources. Building China’s soft

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<sup>27</sup> As stated by Zhu Majie (2002a, p. 27), this is the point of view expressed in Samuel Huntington’s article “The Clash of Civilizations?” (1993).

power falls within the boundaries of national culture-building, while its external dimension can be considered to be the natural extension of China's cultural rejuvenation (Ibid.).

Before analyzing the outward-looking side of culture, it is interesting to note that the process of culture-building described above happens on the backdrop of China's rapid modernization. Aukia (2014, p. 72), for instance, argues that in the Chinese discourse cultural soft power addresses the challenges that come with modernization by placing emphasis on cultural safety<sup>28</sup>. According to another point of view, the Chinese leadership is searching for "a Chinese road to modernity" and, in doing so, it is merging two different value systems: the first is represented by Marxist socialism and envisioned as a means to maintain continuity with China's political past and the Party's legitimacy; the second hinges on traditional culture, "where China's true strengths and enduring values lie" (Cao Qing 2011, p. 12). In either of the two interpretations, internal socio-political stability seems to be the *fil rouge* underlying the discourse on cultural soft power.

On the other hand, improving China's cultural environment also has an external reflection. As increasing the country's soft power means acting on the inside in the first place, as reported by an article published on the webpage Renmin Wang with the title "*Huanqiu Shibao Guoji Luntan: tigao ruan shili, zhongdian zai guonei* 环球时报国际论坛：提高软实力，重点在国内" (Global Times International Forum: the key to enhance soft power lies within the country) (Zhou Qing'an 2007), a cultural upgrade of the kind described above will in turn increase the appeal of Chinese culture worldwide and China's overall soft power, helping the country achieve a better position in the international arena. This view is similar to the idea expressed by Zheng Biao in a passage in which the author describes the relationship between the internal and external dimensions of Chinese soft power:

中国软实力是以中华民族的文化和价值观为基础的，首先是对自身用力的，对内的，表现为实现现代化，实现中华复兴伟业所作努力；对外的方面，那不是刻意包装的，是表里如一、与人为善的，是追求和谐世界的；具有中国文化的国际影响力，也是中国文化和价值观的国际表现。

(Zheng Biao 2010, p. 114)

China's soft power is based on the culture and system of values of the Chinese people, it means exerting oneself in the first place, internally it is reflected in the achievement of modernization and the efforts made to actualize the great undertaking of China's rejuvenation; the external aspect is not deliberately packaged, [it is similar to when] the external appearance and inner thoughts coincide and

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<sup>28</sup> This is the concept of "national cultural security" (*minzu wenhua anquan* 民族文化安全 or *guojia wenhua anquan* 国家文化安全), or simply "cultural security" (*wenhua anquan* 文化安全), on which Aukia (2014) elaborates. The author suggests that, in China, soft power has become a key practice to deal with international image problems and domestic "cultural anaemia" and conceptualizes the notion of cultural soft power within the framework of the Chinese discourse on security and, in particular, against the perceived cultural threat from the West (Ibid., p. 87). In this sense the "theory of national cultural security" (*guojia wenhua anquan lun* 国家文化安全论) can be envisioned as China's strategy to respond to the challenges posed by globalization and, as such, it belongs to the national security system and its analysis is based on the concepts of "national cultural interests" (*guojia wenhua liyi* 国家文化利益) and "national cultural sovereignty" (*guojia wenhua zhuquan* 国家文化主权), as expounded upon by Han Yuan 韩愿 et al. (2013, pp. 22-37).

one is at the service of others, it is a search for a harmonious world; having the influence of Chinese culture internationally, is also an international manifestation of Chinese culture and system of values.

(Translated by the present author.)

The external dimension of China's soft power, namely China's international influence, is represented here almost as a direct reflection of a domestic process. Edney (2012, p. 913) analyzes this notion in the field of propaganda, but comes to a similar conclusion when he states that making the Chinese nation more cohesive goes hand-in-hand with making China more attractive worldwide. Thus, it can be implied that looking at the same dynamic from an opposite perspective conversely highlights how a conscious effort to increase China's soft power will necessarily affect China's domestic reality, requiring efforts to work on the country's cultural strength. This, in turn, will generate a betterment of the cultural and spiritual life of the citizens and the development of the cultural industry. These are the synergies that were described in the previous chapter as a "feedback circuit" and examples of which can also be found in the media. For instance, as stated by an editorial published on the website Renmin Wang, the only way to "stand straight within the world's forest of nations" (*yili yu shijie minzu zhi lin* 屹立于世界民族之林) is to have a strong "culture that can actively guide the way" (*wenhua de jiji yinling* 文化的积极引领), make use of "the enormous richness of the people's spiritual world" (*renmin jingshen shijie de jida fengfu* 人民精神世界的极大丰富), and "fully bring the spiritual strength of the whole nation into play" (*quan minzu jingshen liliang de chongfen fahui* 全民族精神力量的充分发挥) (Renmin Wang 2011). Similarly, Zhou Qing'an (2007) points out that "image packaging and communication tactics are the outer shell of soft power" (*xingxiang baozhuang yu chuanbo celüe shi ruan shili de waiké* 形象包装与传播策略是软实力的外壳) and therefore their importance cannot be denied. Yet, the outer shell and the inner kernel must correspond and improve each other because "if the kernel is tired and feeble the packaging will have to be thick and the world may lose confidence in the country's soft power" (*ruguo neihe piruan, baozhuang zuoda, name hui rang shijie dui yi ge guojia de ruan shili shiqu xinren* 如果内核疲软, 包装做大, 那么会让世界对一个国家的软实力失去信任) (Ibid.).

On balance, Hu Jintao's directive at the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress can be interpreted as giving culture the important function of achieving strategic goals. Suggesting that the country "enhance" or "increase" (*tigao*) the role of culture as part of its soft power (Xinhua She 2007), Hu Jintao's words can be interpreted as a call to do more in terms of actions that must be taken to upgrade the strategic objectives culture can achieve. Building a better cultural and moral system can help the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation at home but also be conducive to an increase in the country's international competitiveness. In this regard, it is advisable to further examine the meaning of the concept of "*zonghe guoli*", as it acquires specific relevance in the discourse on China's national strategy.

Together with the concept of soft power, although in different realities, the concept of "*zonghe guoli*" also gained the spotlight in the course of the 1990s. According to Cho and Jeong (2008, p. 457), CNP emerged in the Chinese context in a period when intellectuals were trying to define a new national strategy that could lead to China becoming a global power. More specifically, as demonstrated by Pillsbury (2000, p. 207), although the concept of CNP finds its antecedents in the philosophy of China's ancient strategists and has ancient cultural roots, the phrase "comprehensive national power" did not exist until the 1980s. CNP was developed in China as a unique scientific method by which to make strategic assessments of the future

security environment: Chinese analysts postulated that, by measuring and comparing CNP, it would be possible to predict power relations among nations (Ibid., p. 203). With military strength no longer being the main determinant of a nation's power, in a period in which the world was moving towards multipolarity after the end of the Cold War, the competition for power and influence in the world was seen as increasingly involving elements such as economics, science, and technology, making an evaluation of a country's current and future strength dependent on the inclusion of a larger number of factors (Ibid.). Territory, natural resources, military force, economic power, social conditions, domestic government, foreign policy, and international influence are all part of CNP, defined as "the combined overall conditions and strengths of a country in numerous areas" (Ibid.).

Another definition of CNP is provided by Hu Angang and Men Honghua (2004, p. 2), who argue that CNP is the sum total of the power or strengths of a country's economy, military, science and technology, education, natural resources, and overall influence. The authors further explain that "CNP may be simply defined as the comprehensive capabilities of a country to pursue its strategic objectives by taking actions internationally and the core factors to the concept are strategic resources, strategic capabilities and strategic outcomes, with the strategic resources as the material base" (Ibid., p. 3). Defining national strategic resources as "real and potential key resources available in realizing the strategic outcomes of a country", Hu Angang and Men Honghua use eight categories of national strategic resources (economic resources, human capital, natural resources, capital resources, knowledge and technology resources, government resources, military resources, and international resources), with 23 indicators, in order to produce a calculation of CNP as a weighted index (Ibid., pp. 3-16). The authors also refer to the definition of CNP provided in 1999 by Huang Shuofeng 黄硕风, one of the main proponents of the concept, and state as follows: "More abstractly, it [CNP] refers to the combination of all the powers possessed by a country for the survival and development of a sovereign state, including material and ideational ethos, and international influence as well" (cited in Hu Angang and Men Honghua 2004, p. 2).

To explain the meaning of CNP, many authors (among others, Pillsbury 2000; Zhu Majie 2002b; Hu Angang and Men Honghua 2004; Cho and Jeong 2008; Liu Deding 2013) refer to the pioneering works by Huang Shuofeng. In his book written in 1992, *Zonghe Guoli Lun 综合国力论 (On Comprehensive National Power)*, Huang Shuofeng describes the constituents of CNP by dividing them into two main types and seven key elements: the two types are "material power" (*wuzhi li 物质力*) and "spiritual power" (*jingshen li 精神力*), while the seven elements are: "natural resources power" (*ziyuan li 资源力*), "economic power" (*jingji li 经济力*), "science and technology power" (*keji li 科技力*), "national defense power" (*guofang li 国防力*), "political power" (*zhengzhi li 政治力*), "cultural and educational power" (*wenjiao li 文教力*), and "diplomatic power" (*waijiao li 外交力*) (cited in Liu Deding 2013, p. 38). The first four elements take the form of hard power (*ying guoli 硬国力*), while the other three take the form of soft power (*ruan guoli 软国力*) (Ibid.). Zhu Majie (2002b, p. 42) also refers to the view expressed by Huang Shuofeng in his *On Comprehensive National Power* and defines CNP as "a nation's whole power and international influence including both the material and mental [spiritual] power a nation has for survival and development". Moreover, according to Cho and Jeong (2008, p. 457), Huang Shuofeng's explanation proposed in 1999 also included the category of "coordinating power" (political structures, government leadership, organizational decision-making power, management capabilities, and reform coordination capabilities).

In particular, regarding the relation between CNP and soft power, according to Zhu Majie (2002b, p. 41), CNP “includes hard power, soft power, and their influence on international relations” and, within this interaction, soft power is an important part. Made up of political, cultural and educational, diplomatic, and synergic powers, soft power can be equaled to mental power and it comprises soft elements, such as psychology and intelligence, which give tangible shape to the role of hard power (Ibid., p. 42). The combination of quantitative indexes by which to measure a nation’s power proposed in CNP assessments already contained elements related to soft power. Analysts, however, began to systematically consider soft power as an abstract CNP rubric in the early 2000s (Wuthnow 2008, pp. 5-6). In fact, according to Li Jie 李杰 (2007, p. 19), in today’s world, competition among countries on the international stage takes place in a comprehensive manner, not only through hard power resources, such as economic growth and military strength, but also through soft power resources, such as culture and ideology. For this reason, in recent years, countries have been attaching more and more importance to the role played by soft power in the construction of CNP (Ibid.). As a consequence of the fact that globalization has facilitated the rapid exchange of information among countries, which today are capable of rapidly comparing and understanding each other’s values (*jiazhi guannian*), national spirit (*minzu jingshen* 民族精神), national qualities (*minzu sushu* 民族素质), and overall situation (*zonghe qingkuang* 综合情况), the conditions for soft power to exercise a positive effect have reached an unprecedented advantageous stage (Ibid.). This is why the status and influence of soft power as part of CNP is rising, soft power is increasingly becoming an important form of international competition, and reinforcing soft power construction is becoming a strategic choice for many countries (Ibid.).

Charts such as the one published on the website Xinwen Zhongxin 新闻中心 (Sina) in 2009 confirm that the competition in CNP to which Hu Jintao refers in his 2007 speech has been taking place for quite some time. The article reports that, according to the predictions for 2010 issued by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China ranked seventh in the competition for CNP, with its military capacity being second only to that of the United States (Xinwen Zhongxin 2009). According to Guo Linxia 国林霞 (2007, p. 39), in order to increase China’s CNP, the development of soft power cannot depart from the support of hard power: it is indeed necessary to develop soft power and hard power simultaneously, striking “a balance between soft and hard” (*ruan ying pingheng* 软硬平衡). As is argued by Liu Deding (2013, p. 1), the analysis of China’s soft power acquires significance specifically in relation to the enhancement of the country’s CNP, together with many other factors, such as: “advancing the construction of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics” (*tuijin Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi wenhua jianshe* 推进中国特色社会主义文化建设), “responding to the assault from Western culture” (*yingdui Xifang wenhua chongji* 应对西方文化冲击), and “protecting national security” (*weihu guojia anquan* 维护国家安全). The description of the interaction between hard and soft power in relation to CNP provided by the author can further shed light on the relationship between soft power and CNP: following the process of reform and opening-up, the development of China’s hard power has been fast, whereas that of soft power has lagged behind; but hard and soft power are “the two wheels sustaining a country’s overall strength” (*chengzai guojia zonghe guoli de liang ge chelun* 承载国家综合国力的两个车轮) and therefore, the author affirms, “it is only through a more evenly coordinated development of hard and soft power that CNP can develop in a sustained, healthy, and rapid way” (*zhiyou ying shili he ruan*

*shili xietiao fazhan, zonghe guoli cai you keneng huode chixu、jiankang、kuaisu de fazhang* 只有硬实力和软实力协调发展，综合国力才有可能获得持续、健康、快速的发展) (Ibid., p. 1).

### 3.2 Soft power as a versatile means to achieve multiple goals

Based on the observations made in the previous section, it can be assumed that hard power resources alone are no longer sufficient to ensure a win in the international competition among countries. Examining soft power development as a key component of China's grand strategy, Wuthnow (2008, pp. 5-7) argues that soft power has emerged as an interesting topic in Chinese strategic discourse precisely because hard power resources have not been found sufficient for China to achieve long-term strategic objectives and gain the status of a global power. For a country, this condition can in fact be reached only on the basis of the coexistence of hard and soft power capabilities, with soft power acquiring the utmost importance (Ibid.). Evidence of this is provided also by Li Mingjiang (2009b, pp. 30-31), who presents soft power as "an indicator of world status". By stating that, in order to detain the status of a great power, a country needs to have both hard power and soft power, as becoming a cultural center is an important prerequisite to be acknowledged as a major power by the international society, the author argues that its construction in China is envisioned by many as an urgent "development strategy" (Ibid.).

Yet, in China soft power is still considered "a weak link" in the country's comprehensive power (Li Mingjiang 2009b, pp. 28-30). With economic, technological, and military capabilities having experienced a dramatic increase, the relation between China's hard and soft power appears to be imbalanced due to the slow development of the softer of its components (Ibid., p. 31.). A survey carried out by the Pew Research Center in 2013 revealed some interesting data concerning the global perception of China and its soft power. According to the survey, in 2013 the United States' global image remained more positive than China's, regardless of the widespread belief that China was becoming the world's leading power (Pew Research Center 2013, p. 1). Despite China's increasing power, the ratings for the country could not be considered more positive, as a median of 63% across the nations surveyed expressed a favorable opinion for the United States, compared with 50% for China (Ibid.). The military power of both countries was perceived by many as a source of worry, while China's economic might was thought to be causing a power shift which would soon make China the leading superpower (Ibid.). Moreover, China's favorability among the countries surveyed between 2007 and 2013 seemed to have remained largely unchanged, though recording a sharp decline after 2011 in the United States, Britain, and France (Ibid., pp. 24-25). What China is still lacking, according to the survey, is precisely soft power, which was evaluated as "limited": in Africa and Latin America, the areas on which the survey focused, science and technology were the most popular form of Chinese soft power, while the spread of China's ideas, customs, and cultural products was mostly disliked (Ibid., p. 27)<sup>29</sup>. The Chinese ways of doing business were mostly

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<sup>29</sup> The 2013 survey focused on China's perception in countries in Africa and Latin America. However, Pew's 2014 survey found that China's human rights record is still a relatively weak point for China's global image (Pew Research Center 2014, p. 26). Territorial disputes in Asia are another critical point that raises concerns, especially among China's closest neighbors (Pew Research Center 2013, 2014).

appreciated among Africans (Ibid.). Despite a slight improvement of China's global image in the last few months<sup>30</sup>, the ranking issued recently by The Soft Power 30, a classification of global soft power, surprisingly places China in the last position in the list, which is led by the United Kingdom (The Soft Power 30 2015, p. 25 and pp. 27-28). In particular, the report highlights a number of critical issues, such as the imprisonment of Nobel Peace Laureate Liu Xiaobo 刘晓波<sup>31</sup>, the arrests of artist Ai Weiwei 艾未未<sup>32</sup>, the issues around minority and individual rights, censorship and lack of free press, aversion to political criticism, and weak use of social media, especially by the government, that may have harmed China's soft power despite the investments made by the country to boost the efficiency of soft power resources (Ibid., p. 28). In addition to this, the survey reveals weakness in confidence that China will show correct behavior in international affairs (Ibid.).

In line with the preceding discussion, Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 29) highlights some of the aspects that are felt as weaknesses in Chinese soft power, starting from "drawbacks in domestic institutions, weakness in research, its [China's] low level of education, the not-so-good national image, and the decline of national identity and social cohesion". Based on the author's analysis, Chinese scholars still argue about the potential of China's development model and Beijing Consensus to become a fruitful source of soft power, but others are more optimistic and focus on China's cultural power, language power, and intellectual power as means that can boost the country's potential (Ibid.). As a matter of fact, Western and Chinese scholars alike are still debating over the inclusion of the Beijing Consensus among the sources of China's soft power. The global financial crisis seems to have boosted the success of this alternative path of development (Kennedy 2010, p. 462) and China has begun to show an increasingly higher level of self-confidence in promoting the appeal of its own political and economic model, that is the Beijing Consensus (Zhang Baohui 2010, p. 59). In this sense, the Chinese view of soft power appears to be divided into two ways: soft power as the attractiveness of one country's ideology, political system, and culture (also including the appeal of the model of development); and soft power also comprising economic and diplomatic influence (Zhang Baohui 2010, p. 58). As will be further described, this is also the case for the Western perspective on Chinese soft power. Depending on its potency, the international resonance achieved by the Beijing Consensus could very possibly become a challenge to the Washington Consensus and an indication of the expansion of China's soft power (Kennedy 2010, p. 467). As well, there is still a lack of agreement about what the Beijing Consensus actually means (Peerenboom 2007, p. 6). Scholars insert it into the larger view that sees China as a "paradigm for developing states", which is

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<sup>30</sup> According to the latest survey by the Pew Research Center (2015, p. 29), in the past year there has been a slight increase in ratings for China across the 35 countries surveyed in both 2014 and 2015: in 2014, a median of 49% had a positive view of China, but in 2015 it is 54%. Negative views have also dropped from 38% to 34% (Ibid.). Commentators have attributed this improvement in China's global image to President Xi Jinping's intent to project China as a rejuvenated nation capable of wielding greater cultural and economic influence, for example through the activities of the Confucius Institutes and efforts such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Chen Te-Ping 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Liu Xiaobo is a Chinese human rights defender sentenced to 11 years in prison after many incidents related to his dissident writing and peaceful protest activities. Initially detained in 2008 because of his participation in authoring *Charter '08*, a manifesto advocating for democratic and human rights reform in China, he was charged in 2009 and prevented from participating in the ceremony awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, a decision that sparked as much fury in China as did his absence at the ceremony in the international community (Cain 2015).

<sup>32</sup> Ai Weiwei is a Chinese artist who has been challenging the PRC government with his practice of dissent, believing that it is his duty and responsibility as an artist (Ai Weiwei and En Liang Khong 2014).

based on six pillars: 1) the approach to reform adopted by the PRC government is pragmatic and faces reform with a gradual pace; 2) the State's intervention in economy is strong; 3) economic reforms have had priority over democratization; 4) China has challenged the alleged universal consensus on human rights; 5) China may be able to provide a normative alternative that is able to succeed where democracy and liberalism have failed; and 6) developing countries are attracted to China's foreign policy insofar as it attaches importance to sovereignty, self-determination, and mutual respect (Ibid., pp. 4-8). The first two pillars constitute the economic core of the Beijing Consensus, which, apart from approaching reforms pragmatically, largely involving the State's intervention in economy and maintenance of equitable growth, also refers to market reforms without democracy, self-determination, and the rejection of the Washington Consensus (Ibid., pp. 5-7)<sup>33</sup>.

As has been mentioned above, observers have linked the concept of soft power to China's strategic discourse, placing it within the boundaries of China's grand strategy. A very interesting description of China's grand strategy (*Zhongguo da zhanlüe* 中国大战略) is provided in a volume by well-known Chinese scholar Men Honghua, *Goujian Zhongguo Da Zhanlüe de Kuangjia: Guojia Shili, Zhanlüe Guannian yu Guoji Zhidu* 构建中国大战略的框架：国家实力、战略观念于国际制度 (China's Grand Strategy: A Framework Analysis), and more specifically in the preface written by Hu Angang 胡鞍钢, who states that it is a strategy that aims to "enrich the people and reinforce the country" (*fumin qiangguo* 富民强国) with the basic target, to be reached within the following 20 years, of making China the biggest economic entity in the world, reducing the gap in GDP it has with the United States, improving the living

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<sup>33</sup> Ramo's concept, introduced in Section 1.2, has received rather strong criticism in the academic community. In particular, Kennedy (2010) describes the problems contained in Ramo's analysis in great detail. In his words: "Ramo's Beijing Consensus is a misguided and inaccurate summary of China's actual reform experience. It not only gets the empirical facts wrong about China, it also disregards the similarities and differences China's experience shares with other countries, and it distorts China's place in international politics" (Kennedy 2010, p. 462). The author also discusses the "China Model" (*Zhongguo moshi* 中国模式) as a potentially more suitable framework for the description of China's development experience (Ibid., pp. 473-475). According to Cho and Jeong (2008, pp. 461-466), Ramo's concept does not offer anything new to the analysis of China's development as it appears to be a summary of the strategy officially put forward by PRC policy elites. Moreover, in terms of soft power, the concept of Beijing Consensus can be seen as generating two different responses: on the one hand, advocating for the propagation of China's development model to other countries, it may fuel the "China threat theory", while, on the other hand, it is a sign of China's rising soft power inasmuch as it appeals to those developing countries which welcome the idea of maintaining an authoritarian political system while boosting economic growth (Ibid.). The spread of the "Beijing Consensus" label grants China's development model international recognition, also in terms of political system and social structure, and highlights the uniqueness of China's experience; for this reason, the concept is embraced by Chinese analysts, even if it is the foreign academia and media to have initially disseminated it, which is in itself a sign of soft power (Ibid.). Zhang Weiwei (2006), according to whom the Chinese model includes several key features, such as the relevance of meeting the needs of the people, constant experimentation, gradual reform, a developmental state, selective learning, and correct sequencing and distinguishing priorities, talks about its merits as follows: "Over the past 25 years, I've traveled to more than 100 countries, most of them developing countries, including 18 in Africa. I have concluded that in terms of eradicating poverty and helping the poor and the marginalized, the Chinese model, however imperfect, has worked far more effectively than what can be called the American model [...]. At the end of the day, what matters most is finding the best ways to tackle the many challenges facing mankind. The Chinese model, however imperfect, has enriched the world's political discourse and wisdom and hence expanded the policy options".



standards of the people, and completing the establishment of a “moderately prosperous society” (*xiaokang shehui*) (Hu Angang 2005, p. 2). This system of objectives can be reduced to four main targets: “*zengzhang, qianguo, fumin, tigao guoji jingzhengli* 增长、强国、富民、提高国际竞争力”, which can be translated as “growing, reinforcing the country, enriching the people, and enhancing international competitiveness” (Ibid.). The first target is related to China’s economic prowess and foresees a future in which China will be “the biggest economic entity in the world” (*shijie zuida de jingji shiti* 世界最大的经济实体); the second target is based on China’s CNP and foresees a global order in which China “possesses leading capabilities as one of the world’s great powers” (*juyou zhudao nengli de shijie qianguo* 具有主导能力的世界强国); the third goal is domestic in nature as it foresees the development of a “moderately prosperous society characterized by common prosperity for everyone” (*gongtong fuyu de xiaokang shehui* 共同富裕的小康社会); the fourth goal is for China to reach the front row in the global race for competitiveness of its products, enterprises, and industries, as well as in regard to finance, basic infrastructure, science and technology, education, and other aspects (Ibid., pp. 2-3).

Linking soft power to China’s strategic objectives, Deng Yong (2009, p. 64) defines it as an integral part of China’s strategy by stating that, in China, soft power means “the ability to influence others in world politics with the goal of achieving great power status without sparking fully fledged traditional power politics of hostile balancing or war”. Wuthnow (2008, pp. 7-12) states that, in relation to China’s strategic objectives, soft power is envisioned as a useful tool to promote a positive external environment instrumental to the country’s rise. Three non-coercive strategies through which soft power resources are believed to serve China’s grand strategy have been identified: first, the transmission of traditional culture, along with the cultivation of foreign elites, through activities such as those promoted by the Confucius Institutes; second, China’s wish to expand its leadership in the developing world; third, China’s actions to reassure its neighbors and other countries that it is a non-threatening, status-quo, and responsible rising power on the path to becoming a “responsible great power” (*fuzeren de daguo* 负责任的大国)<sup>34</sup>. More specifically, within the limits of the first mechanism, the author identifies three ways in which culture, defined as “an amalgam of Confucian social and political values, folk and high customs and art, and the Chinese language”, may serve China’s grand strategy: through “cultural attractiveness” (*wenhua yinli* 文化引力), among overseas Chinese and in other states in the “Confucian” sphere; through “cultural diplomacy” (*wenhua waijiao* 文化外交)<sup>35</sup>, including efforts to raise the status and charm of Chinese civilization; and through education, which involves the creation of a cohort of foreign experts well-equipped for a better understanding of China by means of training in the PRC or through the activities of the Confucius Institutes. These aspects will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

Thus far, three observations can be made. Firstly, it is clear that discussing China’s soft power within the boundaries of its grand strategy makes it impossible to neatly separate domestic from foreign policy goals. Hu Angang (2005, p. 3) suggests that in order to implement its grand strategy effectively, China needs to put in place strategic decisions that call for the “mutual coordination of both domestic and international strategies” (*guonei zhanlue yu guoji zhanlue de xianghu xietiao* 国内战略与国际战略的相互协调). This consideration can be

<sup>34</sup> See Section 1.2.

<sup>35</sup> The concept of “cultural diplomacy” will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

extended also to the use of soft power resources as part of China's strategic discourse, as domestic and international dimensions overlap in the way soft power is envisioned, developed, and utilized within the Chinese context. This interconnection of internal and external elements embeds the Chinese interpretation of the soft power concept in both the fields of domestic and foreign policy. As has been previously pointed out, this is an aspect that permeates this entire dissertation as the analysis posits that one of the main characteristics of the conception of soft power in the Chinese context is specifically the potential for binary deployment. Thus, in order to embed the discourse on China's soft power in a complete conceptual framework including all the related dynamics, it is necessary to look at the matter from both an internal and external perspective. In this sense, Deng Yong (2009, p. 73) argues that the Chinese conception of soft power simultaneously concerns the strengthening of domestic stability, governance, and vibrancy, and the cultivation of acceptance and influence abroad. The link between domestic and foreign policies that can be found in the way the challenge of increasing soft power is addressed in China is emphasized also by Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 35) with reference to the need of generating a system of values that can unite the Chinese people domestically and enhance the country's appeal and attractiveness externally. China's cultural soft power will in fact be enhanced through the construction of a system of socialist core values, through Marxist and socialist ideology, and through the cohesive force of pursuing common aspirations under socialism with Chinese characteristics (Ibid.). Thus, the domestic aspect of the dynamics described above lies in the fact that, in the Chinese view, soft power resources need to be cultivated at home in the first place.

In some cases, this interrelation between domestic and foreign policies has been recognized as a general trait of Chinese politics. According to Edney (2012, p. 906) the evident domestic focus in the Chinese interpretation of soft power is very much in line with the way Party-State officials view the purpose of foreign affairs. Gottwald and Duggan (2011, p. 5), for example, state that "the key factor for China's foreign behavior is China itself. International forces come second". Similarly, discussing the formation of China's national identity, Barr (2011, Introduction) suggests that "China's domestic politics are inseparable from its foreign relations". It can be argued that the Chinese government's priorities are domestic in nature as it primarily pursues political and social stability for the benefit of the country's development. In a similar vein, Shambaugh (2013, p. 7) argues that China's own economic development represents "the common denominator" in a vast part of China's international behavior. Winning the acceptance of the international community is thus perceived, in the first place, as instrumental to maintaining a favorable environment that is conducive to the achievement of domestic goals. In this view, soft power becomes essential to fend off, or at least reduce, any potential obstacles to national growth.

Secondly, and in a related way, soft power development in China takes the shape of a strategic plan, the steps of which are designed to respond to specific needs. In this respect, recognizing its indispensability for China's rise, Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 30) states that "soft power does not grow automatically from the influence of hard power", but "it has to be cultivated and built up". Hence, in the Chinese view, soft power is not something that comes naturally and as such it requires the effort of both Chinese policy-makers, in their guiding role for society, and the entire population, in respecting and putting into practice the guidelines received. Evidence of this is provided by Edney (2012, p. 909) who states that, for the Chinese leadership, enhancing soft power exceeds exploiting existing soft power resources more effectively at an international level as it is mainly a matter of building and strengthening soft

power resources at home. An article published on the website *Dangyuan Ganbu zhi You* 党员干部之友 (Friends of Party Members and Cadres) in 2007 focuses on the role of culture in China's soft power discourse and in particular on the cultural industry which is still considered underperforming. Promoting soft power through its betterment becomes an urgent task that requires a collective effort:

提升“软实力”，大力发展文化产业，是一项系统工程，需要政府推动，全民参与，更需要发展教育以提高全民族素质，通过深化体制改革为“软实力”的构建创设一个良好环境。

(*Dangyuan Ganbu zhi You* 2007)

Elevating “soft power” and vigorously developing the cultural industry constitute a systemic undertaking that requires the government's promotion, the participation of the entire population, and, even more, the development of education in order to improve the inner qualities of the entire population and through a deepening of systemic reforms create a positive environment for the construction of “soft power”.

(Translated by the present author.)

In order to improve its image abroad and obtain the desired international acceptance, China needs to put in place a series of policies at home aimed at meeting not only the material but also the spiritual needs of the Chinese people. Barr (2011, Chapter 2) points out, striking a key difference with Nye's conceptualization, that China's conception of soft power exceeds the limits of the international sphere, as its deployment goes beyond image-building abroad and becomes crucial at home too. Domestically, cultural revitalization becomes essential, together with reviving socialist values and national cohesion, as Hu Jintao stressed in his keynote speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress. According to Barr, within the country, the appeal of soft power comes from different reasons: among the people, for example, a cultural revival strengthens national identity; generally speaking, whether it is through the enhancement of culture, social and moral standards, or politics and governance, soft power helps maintain domestic stability and favorable internal conditions for China's peaceful rise; for the Chinese government, however, utilizing soft power responds to the need of fostering its legitimacy and acceptance among the multiethnic Chinese population, rallying support around the idea of “national ethnic cohesion” (Ibid.). This is also to say that soft power helps China's leaders maintain “their own grip on power”: it fits well with Chinese traditional thought, it is in line with the notion of “*zonghe guoli*”, and it helps refute the Western misconceptions of what China really is (Ibid.). The author concludes by defining Chinese soft power as both “inward-looking and outward-looking”, as the growing importance attached to it is generated by both domestic and international concerns: while, on the one hand, China wishes to export its values and development potential abroad in order to facilitate the establishment of a more favorable international environment, keeping potential domestic unrest under control and strengthening intergenerational identities, through a redefinition of Chinese identities and a revival of traditional values, is equally important (Ibid.).

The establishment of a conceptual framework and the observations made thus far are useful to address the analysis of the study's problem and corroborate the related assumptions from a theoretical point of view. Finally, another central idea can be identified in the discourse around China's soft power, expanding the assumptions previously proposed: the need for China to use soft power to ease international pressure and facilitate its rise. Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 32)

believes that without soft power it will be impossible for China to avoid the obstacles that other global actors would pose to a country with an unfavorable international status. Similarly, Wuthnow (2008, p. 7) argues that, through the use of soft power, China can foster an international environment that is beneficial for China's rise as an economic and military power. According to one Chinese scholar (Fang Changping 方长平 2007, p. 24), the main goals that China hopes to achieve through the use of soft power are to alleviate the "China threat theory" (*Zhongguo weixie lun*) in its periphery and worldwide, attain the understanding of the international community, and facilitate international acceptance and support for China's peaceful development. This is confirmed in a variety of related scholarly writings, including Cho and Jeong (2008, p. 461), Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 31), and Barr (2011). Glaser and Murphy (2009, pp. 22-24) go as far as to identify a "defensive" purpose in the development of China's soft power, as it is regarded as providing an essential contribution to the preservation of a stable and peaceful international environment that will be more willing to accept a rising China. In this view, rebutting the so-called "China threat theory" seems to be the underlying purpose of China's soft power on the international front.

As will be further described, one of the main features of Chinese culture is the value it places on the concept of "peace and harmony" (*he* 和). In his 2007 speech, Hu Jintao advocates the construction of a "culture of harmony" (*hexie wenhua* 和谐文化) (Xinhua She 2007), and this goes hand-in-hand with the domestic program of building a "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui*), put forward by the government in recent years. In fact, as stated by Hong Kong scholar Chan Kin-man in his contribution to the *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*, that of a "harmonious society" is a concept introduced by former President Hu Jintao, together with the related idea of the "Scientific Outlook on Development" (*kexue fazhan guan* 科学发展观), as the "unifying concepts of his administration" (Chan Kin-man 2010, p. 821). Regarding the latter of the two concepts, the idea behind scientific development was put forward at the Third Plenum of the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CPC (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Di Shiliu Jie Zhongyang Weiyuanhui Di San Ci Quantu Huiyi* 中国共产党第十六届中央委员会第六次全体会议) in 2003 as the new central leadership's understanding about development (China.org.cn 2007). Hu Jintao provided a definition of it in a speech delivered at the Central Seminar on Population, Resource, and Environmental Work (*Zhongyang Renkou Ziyuan Huanjing Gongzuo Zuotanhui* 中央人口资源环境工作座谈会) held in Beijing in March 2004, in which he advocated for "firmly establishing and seriously implementing putting people first and a development concept that is comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable" (*laogu shuli he renzhen luoshi yi ren wei ben, quanmian、xietiao、kechixu de fazhanguan* 牢固树立和认真落实以人为本, 全面、协调、可持续的发展观) (Xinhua Wang 2004). Consequently, calling for a more balanced and comprehensive approach to China's development, the "Scientific Outlook on Development" represents the means through which a harmonious society can be built, thus solving the social disparities and conflicts that have arisen in China in recent years due to its rapid economic development (Chan Kin-man 2010, pp. 821-822). In October 2006, the Sixth Plenum of the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CPC (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Di Shiliu Jie Zhongyang Weiyuanhui Di Liu Ci Quantu Huiyi* 中国共产党第十六届中央委员会第六次全体会议) passed the "CPC Central Committee's Resolutions on Several Important Issues for Building a Harmonious Socialist Society" (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Goujian Shehuizhuyi Hexie Shehui Ruogan Zhongda Wenti de Jueding* 中共中央关于构建社会主义和

谐社会若干重大问题的决定) in which building a “harmonious socialist society” (*shehuizhuyi hexie shehui* 社会主义和谐社会) is described as a “continuously sustained process to solve social contradictions” (*yi ge buduan huajie shehui maodun de chixu guocheng* 一个不断化解社会矛盾的持续过程) aimed at “following the path of common prosperity” (*zou gongtong fuyu daolu* 走共同富裕道路) (Xinhua Wang 2006). The main themes of a “harmonious society” include: democracy and the rule of law, fairness and justice, integrity and fraternity, vitality, stability and order, and harmony between man and nature (China.org.cn 2007). According to Han Aiguo (2008, pp. 144-147), what inspired the idea behind building a “harmonious society” is the realization that rapid economic development in China has triggered a number of problems, including both material and spiritual aspects: the uneven distribution of wealth has generated, for instance, a widening economic gap, while greed and disregard for man and nature have generated safety issues regarding food, medicine, and the environment; but the most worrying aspect is the “chaos within China’s social value system” and the lack of its cultivation, which have led to the “loss of human virtues or morals”, such as “human trust, decency, dignity, compassion, and civility”. This phenomenon manifests itself in a much more evident way in Chinese society because of China’s unique history and socio-political structure (Ibid., p. 147).

In the third section of Hu Jintao’s 2007 speech, the relationship between the actualization of a “harmonious socialist society” and the “Scientific Outlook on Development” is explained as follows:

深入贯彻落实科学发展观，要求我们积极构建社会主义和谐社会。社会和谐是中国特色社会主义的本质属性。科学发展和社会和谐是内在统一的。没有科学发展就没有社会和谐，没有社会和谐也难以实现科学发展。构建社会主义和谐社会是贯穿中国特色社会主义事业全过程的长期历史任务，是在发展的基础上正确处理各种社会矛盾的历史过程和社会结果。

(Xinhua She 2007)

The English version of the speech reads:

To thoroughly apply the Scientific Outlook on Development, we must work energetically to build a harmonious socialist society. Social harmony is an essential attribute of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Scientific development and social harmony are integral to each other and neither is possible without the other. Building a harmonious socialist society is a historical mission throughout the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, as well as a historical process and the social outcome of correctly handling various social problems on the basis of development.

(Xinhua News Agency 2007)

As stated by Cao Qing (2011, p. 13), socialism with Chinese characteristics is incorporated into a “Confucian discourse of harmony”, in accordance with the revival of traditional culture and values that is part of China’s soft power construction. As reported by Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 31), there is widespread agreement that, in China, building soft power is instrumental also to this end because by paying attention to culture, national cohesion, morality, and institutions, domestic socio-political stability can be preserved, a condition which, in turn, is conducive to China’s international ascendance.

Not surprisingly, in analyzing soft power development as a key component of China’s grand strategy, Wuthnow (2008, p. 5) states that notions that belong to this field are the theory of a “peaceful rise” (*heping jueqi*), “peaceful development” (*heping fazhan*), and “harmonious

world” (*hexie shijie*). These are all foreign policy principles that place emphasis on the concepts of peace and harmony, constituting a background for wielding soft power. Chapter 3 is thus dedicated to the establishment of a conceptual framework which shows that outlining the discourse on China’s soft power in relation to its grand strategy largely expands the area in which this topic is embedded as it taps into both the domestic and international fields. The backdrop of this approach draws upon the assumption that in China “soft power is envisioned as a means to multiple ends” (Li Mingjiang 2009b, p. 30). These “multiple ends” have been described here as a nexus of resources, purposes, approaches, and challenges that can be discussed in relation to China’s soft power. In order to complement the versatility described here in terms of domestic policy, the next section will provide a brief analysis of the foreign policy concepts related to China’s soft power, mentioned above.

### 3.3 “Peaceful rise”, “peaceful development”, and “harmonious world”

Starting from the concept of peaceful rise, it is interesting to briefly address the relationship existing between soft power and China’s rise. First and foremost, as stated by Ding Sheng (2008, p. 34), with the introduction of the concept of peaceful rise, China acknowledges that, in the course of history, the rise of a new power has been perceived as problematic and, in order to overcome this obstacle, China wishes to signal to the world its intention to manage its rise in a way that avoids conflict. This is proved by policy proposals such as those introduced with the idea of building a harmonious world which can be interpreted as being part of a “soft power-based rising strategy” useful to build China’s desired international order (Ibid., p. 35). The relationship between soft power and China’s rise lies in the fact that soft power is seen as a more suitable tool than hard power to create an international environment that sees China’s rise as an opportunity, rather than a threat. In fact, if the so-called “China threat theory” is superseded by a new theory, that of the “China opportunity”, China will be able to wield its soft power more effectively and obtain its desired policy outcomes (Ding Sheng 2008, p. 29). Only under these circumstances will China be able to rise. This is why the idea of soft power has been accepted by China’s policymakers and employed to build a “peaceful, harmonious, and cooperative new international order, which can provide the most effective accommodation for China’s rise” (Ding Sheng 2008, p. 37). Similarly, Zhang Baohui (2010, pp. 57-58) argues that China seems to have solved the dilemma of what constitutes international influence, as is reflected by the increasingly prominent use of soft power in its foreign policy. As noted by Zhu Majie (2002a, p. 28), the end of the Cold War boosted the role of culture in international relations. In regard to China, the author provides a detailed description of the strategic guidelines that influenced the formulation of China’s foreign policy over the 1980s and ‘90s, but continuing also today, supported by deep cultural roots (Ibid., pp. 36-38). First and foremost, China adheres to an “independent foreign policy of peace” and supports friendly and cooperative international relations, on the basis of the “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence”<sup>36</sup> and Deng Xiaoping’s tenet “*taoguang yanghui* 韬光养晦” (to conceal one’s strengths and bide one’s time)<sup>37</sup> (Ibid., p. 36).

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<sup>36</sup> With the aim of stabilizing China’s relations with India in the Tibet Region and in the spirit of good neighborliness, the PRC’s first premier Zhou Enlai 周恩来 met with representatives of the Indian government in December 1953 to start negotiations which lasted until April 1954 and resulted in the proposal of the “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-

Nevertheless, it is also interesting to note that since the leadership transition from the fourth to the fifth generation of Chinese leaders at the end of 2012, analysts have highlighted a newer and more defined orientation for China's foreign policy. According to an article in the *South China Morning Post*, President Xi Jinping's talks with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in June 2013 made it clear that China, which had been calling for a multipolar world order free from the existing domination by major powers, was ready to take on a more prominent role in global affairs, signaling an increasing assertiveness in Chinese foreign policy and also distancing itself from the strategy promoted by the previous generations of government, which stressed that China was still a developing country hesitant to shoulder more responsibilities (Ng and Wall 2013). In 2014, the Chinese and international media profusely reported on a speech Xi Jinping delivered at a conference held in Beijing at the end of November on the topic of advancing China's diplomacy "under new conditions", following the leadership's intent to "gain a full understanding of the changing international developments and China's external environment, lay down the guidelines, basic principles, strategic goals and major mission of China's diplomacy in the new era and endeavor to make new advances in China's foreign relations" (Xinhua News Agency 2014b). The President stressed that China should "enrich and further develop" its diplomatic approach, relying on both "past practice and experience" and "its role of a major country", and "conduct diplomacy with a salient Chinese feature and a Chinese vision" (Ibid.). The advancement in foreign policy foreseen by Xi Jinping has been referred to as the establishment of a "big country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" and understood as a sign that China is moving away from its past foreign policy orientation that limited involvement in foreign affairs, primarily embodied by Deng Xiaoping's diplomatic strategy (Shi and Tweed 2014). As indicated by scholars (among others, Swaine 2010; Zhang Baohui 2010), the debate on a more assertive China undoubtedly includes an inquiry as to whether or not and to what extent Beijing foreign policy is abandoning the principle "*taoguang yanghui*" and transforming China's cautious and low-profile performance on the global stage into a more confident, assertive, anti-status quo, and even revisionist behavior. Finding an answer to this question goes beyond the purpose of the present discussion, but it is interesting to note that behind the belief that China is increasingly capable of playing a more prominent and active role in the international arena, rather widespread among Chinese commentators, there lies the peculiarity of the understanding of the concept of "*taoguang yanghui*" in the Chinese context, where, as pointed out by Swaine (2010, p. 7), is usually associated with a warning for the country to maintain a modest and positive image internationally in order not to risk worrying other global players in a way that could harm domestic development. It is a diplomatic strategy that gives rise to different interpretations

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Existence", namely, mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.). The principles were incorporated into the preamble of the "Agreement Between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India on Trade and Intercourse Between Tibet Region of China and India", which was signed in Beijing in 1954, and further developed during the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955 (Ibid.). The "Five Principles" can be considered the cornerstone of China's foreign policy and the guidelines that have always directed China's peaceful approach to international relations. Representing the opposite of power politics, they transcend social systems and ideologies and have been accepted by most of the world's nations (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.).

<sup>37</sup> Zhu Majie (2002a, p. 36) reports the complete guidelines set forth by Deng Xiaoping as "observe the situation coolly, hold our ground, act calmly, hide our capacities, bide our time and make our contribution".

depending on the toughness of the tone chosen by Chinese analysts in dealing with China's potential leading position in the world (Ibid.).

In a similar vein, it can also be argued that, if China's increased assertiveness proves to be true, the rupture between Beijing's new stance in foreign policy and that of the former leadership will become increasingly evident through the use of a discourse which will leave behind reassuring remarks, as those made during a press conference held in Beijing in March 2010 by then-Prime Minister Wen Jiabao 温家宝. On that occasion, the CPC leader confirmed China's role as a responsible state, stressed that the country was still in the "primary stage" (*chuji jieduan* 初级阶段) of development, and guaranteed that China would "never seek hegemony, even after having fully developed" (*jishi fada le, ye bu chengba, yongyuan bu chengba* 即使发达了, 也不称霸, 永远不称霸) (Xinhua Wang 2010a). In Chapter 1, the speech delivered by Xi Jinping in Paris in March 2014, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, was mentioned with the aim of elaborating on the perception of the emergence of a more assertive China that the "awakening lion" metaphor triggered in the international audience (Ng and Chen 2014; Sridharan 2014). The metaphor also stirred a heated debate among Chinese netizens (Qiangguo Luntan 强国论坛 2014). Nonetheless, it can be argued that limiting the analysis of Xi Jinping's statement to the elements of the metaphor that only emphasize the risk one can assume an awakening lion would pose ignores the other side of the coin, that is the reassurance that this lion will "bring the world an opportunity and not a threat, peace and not turmoil, progress and not regression" (*gei shijie dai lai de shi jiyu bu shi weixie, shi heping bu shi dongdang, shi jinbu bu shi daotui* 给世界带来的是机遇不是威胁, 是和平不是动荡, 是进步不是倒退) (Xinhua Wang 2014b).

In China, the foreign policy discourse has always made reference to the peaceful nature of China's ascendance onto the world stage and, in this view, it can be argued that recurrent elements of the type described above represent continuity with the past, rather than novelty, in Xi Jinping's conduction of the country's grand strategy. An evaluation of China's grand strategy under Xi Jinping's guidance would perhaps seem premature, even though China watchers have been quick to label him a "transformative leader" keen on reforming political and economic relations within China and with the outside world (Economy 2014). More cautious evaluations point out that it is still unclear whether or not Xi Jinping's foreign policy will match the novelty of his "decisive" and "blunt" style (Kaufman and Hemphill 2014, p. 1).

This brings the discussion to the topics that will be briefly described in this section. In fact, elaborating on the claims that China has an incoherent foreign policy due to the lack of a grand strategy, Buzan (2014) argues that China does not need to invent a new grand strategy because it already has one that is represented by the concepts of peaceful rise and peaceful development. Joining the two terms into the acronym PRD (peaceful rise/development), the author defines it as "an indigenous and original idea deeply embedded in China's reform and opening up, and effectively constituting the core concept for a grand strategy" which is representative of China's return to the position of a great power (Ibid., 383-384). He further argues that PRD has basically been China's grand strategy since the early 1980s when Deng Xiaoping linked peace and development as the foundation of the policy of reform and opening-up put forward in the late 1970s, which made the search for a peaceful environment an essential prerequisite for China's modernization (Ibid., p. 386).



Analyzing the concepts of peaceful rise and peaceful development separately, but in a related way, scholars (among others, Suettinger 2004; Glaser and Medeiros 2007; Mierzejewski 2012; Scott 2012) have examined the process through which the former of the two was officially put forward in 2003 as one of the new concepts in the field of foreign policy under Hu Jintao's leadership, to be replaced shortly afterwards by the latter. More specifically, the debut of the concept of peaceful rise occurred at the Bo'ao Forum for Asia (*Bo'ao Yazhou Luntan* 博鳌亚洲论坛) on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003, in a speech delivered by Zheng Bijian 郑必坚, an influential policy advisor to many CPC leaders, confidante of Hu Jintao, and chairman of the China Reform Forum (*Zhongguo Gaige Kaifang Luntan* 中国改革开放论坛), following a trip to the United States of a delegation that, under his guidance, attempted to investigate American perceptions of China's future path and its implications for the global order (Suettinger 2004; Glaser and Medeiros 2007). In the speech entitled "A New Path for China's Peaceful Rise and the Future of Asia", Zheng Bijian spoke as follows:

In the 25 years since the inception of its reform and opening up, China has blazed a new strategic path that not only suits its national conditions but also conforms to the tide of the times. This new strategic path is China's peaceful rise through independently building socialism with Chinese characteristics, while participating in rather than detaching from economic globalization. [...] The rise of a major power often results in drastic change in international configuration and world order, even triggers a world war. An important reason behind this is [that] these major powers followed a path of aggressive war and external expansion. Such a path is doomed to failure. In today's world, how can we follow such a totally erroneous path that is injurious to all, China included? China's only choice is to strive for rise, more importantly strive for a peaceful rise.

(cited in Suettinger 2004, p. 2)

China's rise is presented as the natural result of the process of reform and opening-up undertaken by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. Nevertheless, the international community does not have to feel threatened by China's future path because the country needs to rely on a peaceful international environment in order to continue to develop and become a great power, without destabilizing the international order. Differently from how other great powers rose in the past, China's aim is to rise in peace and harmony with other nations. In other words, depicting China's peaceful rise as a process that started in 1978 and continues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the aim of lifting the country's massive population out of poverty and participating in the world's economic globalization, that of Zheng Bijian represented a pledge that along its development path China would never seek global hegemony or harm neighboring countries, but instead would support the maintenance of a peaceful international environment and mutual cooperation for the common benefit and prosperity of everyone (Suettinger 2004; Glaser and Medeiros 2007). These concepts were reiterated in a speech delivered by Wen Jiabao at Harvard University in December 2003:

China today is a country in reform and opening-up and a rising power dedicated to peace. [...] China is a large developing country. It is neither proper nor possible for us to rely on foreign countries for development. We must, and we can only, rely on our own efforts. In other words, while opening still wider to the outside world, we must more fully and more consciously depend on our own structural innovation, on constantly expanding the domestic market, on converting the huge savings of the citizens into investment, and on improving the quality of the population and scientific and

technological progress to solve the problems of resources and the environment. Here lies the essence of China's road of peaceful rise and development.

[...] China tomorrow will continue to be a major country that loves peace and has a great deal to look forward to.

(PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003)

As noted by Suettinger (2004, p. 3), Wen Jiabao's speech gave the concept of a peaceful rise the status of policy formulation. His endorsement, the first by a senior CPC leader (Glaser and Medeiros 2007, p. 298), was followed by a series of occasions on which the concept was discussed and explained in official circumstances. Scholarly articles and media reports started discussing the concept of peaceful rise in light of the birth of a new national strategy (Suettinger 2004; Glaser and Medeiros 2007). Nevertheless, the wording of this theory, if not the basic rationale, would soon be replaced. Indeed, in April 2004, on the same occasion that had represented the debut of the formulation "*heping jueqi*", Hu Jintao delivered a speech in which he did not mention the wording "peaceful rise"; his key slogan was "*heping yu fazhan*" (peace and development)<sup>38</sup>, with other expressions including "peace and stability", "peace and security", "peace and tranquility", and "peaceful coexistence", but no "peaceful rise" (Suettinger 2004, p. 5; Glaser and Medeiros 2007, p. 299). The former President promised that China would pursue "peaceful development" (*heping fazhan*):

China will follow a peaceful development path holding high the banners of peace, development and cooperation, join the other Asian countries in bringing about Asian rejuvenation, and making greater contribution to the lofty cause of peace and development in the world.

(Xinhua News Agency 2004)

Glaser and Medeiros (2007, pp. 300-301) highlight two aspects in relation to the decision to abandon the wording "*heping jueqi*" in favor of "*heping fazhan*" in the CPC's official discourse: the former of the two formulations has not entirely disappeared from mainstream publications and public discourse; and the themes encapsulated in the latter appear to maintain the same orientation as Zheng Bijian's original concept. Then, it can be argued that the reasoning behind this change was primarily related to the search of a correct terminology to uniformly use in the official discourse, as required by China's Leninist political culture, although in this case in a less strict way (Ibid.). In this regard, it is interesting to consider the analysis carried out by Chinese researcher Liu Jianfei 刘建飞 (2006) who states that scholars should not spend too much energy trying to decide which one between the concept of "*heping jueqi*" and that of "*heping fazhan*" has greater "political correctness" (*zhengzhi zhengquexing* 政治正确性) because they are not substantially different. In fact, they are two different ways to express the same process: "no matter if it is 'peaceful rise' or 'peaceful development', the stress for both is on 'peaceful'" (*wulun "heping jueqi", haishi "heping fazhan", qiangdiao de dou shi "heping"* 无论 "和平崛起", 还是 "和平发展", 强调的都是 "和平") (Ibid.).

It can thus be argued that both the wordings "*heping jueqi*" and "*heping fazhan*" encapsulate the same foreign policy orientation; one that is aimed at China's domestic development and ascent on the global stage while opposing any type of hegemony and power

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<sup>38</sup> As was described in the introduction to this work, "peace and development" constituted the binomial principle at the core of Deng Xiaoping's governance.

politics. Nevertheless, there are some relevant reasons as to why the term “rise” was substituted with “development”. Glaser and Medeiros (2007, pp. 301-306) list eight criticisms against the peaceful rise theory: 1) it may weaken China’s ability to deter Taiwan independence; 2) it may not be possible; 3) the term “*jueqi* 崛起” will intensify concerns among China’s neighbors; 4) it is premature to discuss China’s rise; 5) it is contrary to Deng Xiaoping’s guidance on foreign affairs work; 6) it could undermine support for military modernization; 7) promoting “peaceful rise” could incite domestic nationalism; and 8) slogans are not policies. Two of the aforementioned critiques are particularly relevant for the present discussion: elaborating on the characters forming the term “*jueqi*”, Glaser and Medeiros (2007, p. 304) specify that the character “*jue* 崛” contains the radical for mountain (*shan* 山), hinting at something that rises up abruptly and thus making “*jueqi*” a “provocative rather than reassuring” term. Moreover, the last point raised by Glaser and Medeiros reported above seems to be in line with the reflections put forward by Suettinger (2004, p. 7) who equates the proposal of the concept of peaceful rise to a “propaganda campaign” aimed at reassuring foreigners of the positive intentions behind China’s economic and military growth: “[t]he peaceful rise campaign [...] reflected the Chinese government’s tendency to simplify complex phenomena into a *tifa*<sup>39</sup>, a slogan or mindset, rather than encourage in-depth analysis of political intentions, actions, and processes”. Similarly, Li Jingzhi and Pu Ping (2014, p. 20) emphasize that peaceful development is the mode of China’s rise and that, although “rise” has been replaced by “development” in official documents, from an academic point of view the concept of peaceful rise is still valid: “China puts forward the concept of peaceful development to demonstrate the approach it will adopt to seek the rise – through development rather than war, through peaceful means rather than force of arms”. In this sense, the expression “*heping fazhan*” appears to be “lower-key”:

First, the word *rise* seems to overshadow the diplomatic strategy of keeping a low profile and imply that China is going to abandon the guiding principle. Second, rise sounds too aggressive and arrogant, which may mislead our neighboring countries (including Russia), Western big powers, and even some developing countries into the misunderstanding that China is striving for the status of hegemon, thus adding some new evidence to the so-called China threat. Third, despite China’s fast economic development, it is still a developing country with a long way to go to gain on the developed countries, so rise is a notion China still falls short of.

(Ibid., pp. 147-148)

On balance, both the concepts of peaceful rise and peaceful development indicate in a succinct way how China intends to pursue its growth path in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the relation it wishes to establish with the rest of the world, and the effect that this process will generate. As stated by Buzan (2014, p. 387), peaceful rise and peaceful development qualify as a grand strategy because they “contain a theory about how the world works and how China should relate to that world in the light of its overriding priority to development”. Taking into consideration military, political, and economic aspects, what the author calls PRD is also a careful way to consider what kind of image should be projected by China to the outside world (Ibid.).

This last observation brings the discussion back to the field of soft power. In fact, it is important to highlight that, among the tools available to China to put into practice its soft power strategy, scholars also list the language of public diplomacy, aimed at reassuring the international community and refuting worries such as those expressed by the “China threat

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<sup>39</sup> These elements of discourse and their functions will be expounded upon in Chapter 6.

theory” (Scott 2012), and a rhetorical framework, aimed at enhancing the efficiency of soft power (Mierzejewski 2012). In particular, Scott (2012, p. 39) observes that China’s soft power is both mediated through foreign policies and public diplomacy (*gonggong waijiao* 公共外交)<sup>40</sup>, with the latter targeting the global audience and employing specific English language terms which constitute the “tool of language” in the PRC’s soft power toolkit. The author analyzes six specific terms belonging to China’s public diplomacy lexicon: “multipolarity” (*duojihua* 多极化), “multilateralism” (*duobianzhuyi* 多边主义), “democratization of international relations” (*guoji guanxi minzhuhua* 国际关系民主化), “peaceful rise” (*heping jueqi*), “peaceful development” (*heping fazhan*), and “harmonious world” (*heping shijie*) (Ibid., p. 40). Focusing on “peaceful rise” and “peaceful development”, the author states that the former is basically a “soft power linguistic tool”, depicting a win-win situation and common prosperity for China and the rest of the world, which could nevertheless inspire the image of an “earthquake/eruption” rather than that of “benefits” and “opportunity” (Ibid., pp. 47-48); the latter, however, has the advantage of drawing the people’s attention towards “China’s international socio-economic development rather than its external political-military rise” (Ibid., p. 49).

In the discussion on the proposal of the concepts of peaceful rise and peaceful development as symbols of China’s grand strategy, another aspect is relevant: the cultural component. Glaser and Medeiros (2007, pp. 294-295) argue that Zheng Bijian’s concept put forward in 2003 contained three core principles: 1) the necessity for China to “unswervingly advance economic and political reforms”; 2) the necessity for China to “ensure cultural support for its peaceful rise” by fostering Chinese civilization and drawing on human civilization; 3) and the need for China to create a suitable social environment for its peaceful rise by balancing the interests of different sectors and coordinating the development of different areas and regions, and between society and the economy and man and nature. The second core principle mentioned constitutes what is, according to the present analysis, the cultural component of China’s peaceful rise and peaceful development, constituting the link to China’s soft power. Emphasis on the value that China’s traditional culture and ancient civilization can offer to the entire globe is indeed a recurrent theme in the Chinese rhetoric on soft power. This aspect emerged also in Wen Jiabao’s speech at Harvard University mentioned above, in an excerpt that deserves quoting at length:

China yesterday was a big ancient country that created a splendid civilization. [...] The Chinese nation has rich and profound cultural reserves. “Harmony without uniformity”<sup>41</sup> is a great idea put forth by ancient Chinese thinkers. It means harmony without sameness, and difference without conflict. Harmony entails co-existence and co-prosperity, while difference conduces to mutual complementation and mutual support. To approach and address issues from such a perspective will not only help enhance relations with friendly countries, but also serve to resolve contradictions in the international community.

[...] Entering the 21st century, mankind is confronted with more complicated economic and social problems. The cultural element will have a more important role to play in the new century. Different nations may speak different languages, but their hearts and feelings are interlinked. Different cultures present manifold features, yet they often share the same rational core elements that can always be passed on by people. The civilizations of different nations are all fruits of human wisdom and

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<sup>40</sup> The practice of public diplomacy will be further discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>41</sup> This is the traditional concept of “harmony in diversity” (*he er bu tong* 和而不同), which will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

contribution to human progress; they call for mutual respect. Conflicts triggered by ignorance or prejudice are sometimes more dreadful than those caused by contradictory interests. We propose to seek common ground in the spirit of equality and tolerance, and carry on extensive inter-civilization dialogue and closer cultural exchanges.

(PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003)

As will be further described, there is general consensus (among others, Li Mingjiang 2009a, 2009b; Cao Qing 2011; Edney 2012) that traditional Chinese culture has been designated as the most valuable resource of soft power: for instance, according to Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 25 and p. 30), scholars argue that at the basis of Chinese cultural appeal are traditional Chinese cultural values with “harmony” at the core, an idea that is very well received in the cooperative world of today and that gives Chinese culture a comparative advantage. Cao Qing (2011, p. 14) states that traditional culture as soft power has been incorporated into the new political identity of the CPC and the cultural identity of the nation. In this sense, China’s soft power can even be defined as “traditional-value based” (Ibid.).

The emphasis on traditional Chinese culture in both China’s soft power discourse and public diplomacy language is not surprising given the enormity and richness of the cultural and moral heritage that has been passed down over many thousands of years of historical continuity. Conversely, contemporary Chinese culture is regarded as being “more problematic” to be used to attract foreign audiences and improve China’s standing in the world (Edney 2012, p. 909). In this sense, it comes as no surprise that emphasis is placed on concepts such as “harmony” and “peace” as sources of China’s soft power, given that a country is generally keen on displaying the “good part” of its culture that the rest of the world can agree with because it finds it enjoyable, while hiding those elements that may cause discomfort or suspicion (Li Mingjiang 2009a, p. 8). Similarly to his 2003 speech at Harvard University, in March 2007, Wen Jiabao stated:

From Confucius to Sun Yat-sen, the traditional culture of the Chinese nation has numerous precious elements, many positive aspects regarding the nature of the people and democracy. For example, it stresses love and humanity, community, harmony among different viewpoints, and sharing the world in common.

(cited in Bell 2008, p. 9)

This is in line with Hu Jintao’s call at the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress for a “comprehensive understanding of the motherland’s traditional culture, absorbing its essence and discarding its dross” (*quanmian renshi zuguo chuantong wenhua, quqijinhua, quqizaopo* 全面认识祖国传统文化, 取其精华, 去其糟粕) (Xinhua She 2007). This is also the reason why China’s policy elites have assigned scholars in a variety of disciplines the mission, crucial to an improvement of the status of Chinese civilization, to promote traditional Chinese culture with “harmony” at the core in the rest of the world (Li Mingjiang 2009b, p. 34).

The concept of harmony is also at the center of the last foreign policy concept that will be discussed here, that of a “harmonious world” (*hexie shijie*). Commenting on the release of the White Paper entitled “China’s Peaceful Development Road” (*Zhongguo de Heping Fazhan Daolu* 中国的和平发展道路) in December 2005, Li Jingzhi and Pu Ping (2014, p. 19) identify four aspects in the substance of China’s path of peaceful development, in which the proposal of building a harmonious world is present: 1) “China is to strive for a peaceful international

environment in which to develop itself and, in turn, contribute to world peace through its development”; 2) “China should achieve development with its own efforts and carry out reform and innovation”; 3) “China should seek mutually beneficial and common development with other countries in keeping with the trend of economic globalization”; and 4) “China must stick to peace, development, and cooperation, and work together with other countries to build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity”. The last aspect listed by the scholars draws what they define as “two dialectical relations” between peace and development and between China and the world, which essentially refer to the fact that China cannot develop in isolation because its development and that of the world affect each other and are both pivotal for the maintenance of peace in China and worldwide (Ibid., p. 21). As far as a definition of the concept of harmonious world is concerned, the scholars include common security, common prosperity, and mutual inclusiveness among the characteristics of a “*hexie shijie*”, which represents “China’s aspiration for an ideal international order” and a “world order concept” (Ibid., p. 23). In this regard, they provide very useful insights:

A harmonious world is a peaceful world. China insists on combining the interests of the Chinese people with that of the people in all other countries. [...] China opposes all kinds of hegemony and power politics and will never seek hegemony or engage in expansion.

(Ibid., p. 177)

As well:

A harmonious world should be a world of mutual cooperation, mutual benefit with win-win results, and common development, which is exactly the utmost objective of China’s peaceful development.

(Ibid., p. 179)

Consequently, the idea of building a harmonious world was officially put forward by former President Hu Jintao in a speech delivered at the UN World Summit in September 2005, with the title “Build Towards a Harmonious World of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity”, and then again in his political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007, when the PRC Constitution was formally amended to include the building of “a harmonious world characterized by sustained peace and prosperity” (Scott 2012, p. 50). More specifically, Hu Jintao’s words in 2007 were as follows:

共同分享发展机遇，共同应对各种挑战，推进人类和平与发展的崇高事业，事关各国人民的根本利益，也是各国人民的共同心愿。我们主张，各国人民携手努力，推动建设持久和平、共同繁荣的和谐世界。

(Xinhua She 2007)

Sharing opportunities for development and rising to challenges together so as to further the noble cause of peace and development of humanity bear on the fundamental interests of the people of all countries and meet their common aspirations. We maintain that the people of all countries should join hands and strive to build a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity.

(Xinhua News Agency 2007)

Overall, scholars agree on placing China’s discourse on a harmonious world within the larger discourse on harmony. Scott (2012, pp. 50-51), for instance, observes that building a

harmonious society represents the domestic counterpart of building a harmonious world, with the latter being strictly related to the traditional Confucian concept of “*da tong* 大同” (great harmony). Zhu Majie (2002a, p. 37) states that China’s cultural tradition places emphasis on “peace, harmony, and reconciliation”; from personal experience, having had to “get rid of the yoke of foreign powers”, the Chinese people deeply value the importance of peace and stability. But China’s foreign policy is also influenced by the country’s “social nature” insofar as “socialism stands for peace” (Ibid.). In this sense, China’s rise is different because it is that of a socialist country whose development is based on “its own strength rather than foreign aggression or colonial invasion” (Li Jingzhi and Pu Ping 2014, p. 152).

Last but not least, there is also a profound and strong connection between traditional Chinese culture and the contribution that China wishes to offer for the construction of a harmonious and peaceful world. The concept of a harmonious world symbolizes the “essence of traditional Chinese culture” because it contains notions such as “agree to disagree”, “harmony is of the greatest value”, “harmony and cooperation”, and “mutual benefit”, while at the same time comprising elements drawn from the modern system of international relations (Li Jingzhi and Pu Ping 2014, p. 25). China’s outstanding culture will continue to contribute to the progress of human civilization in even a greater way than it did in the past as China is becoming a modern socialist country characterized by “great cultural and ethical progress” (Zhu Majie 2002a, p. 38).

To conclude, all foreign policy concepts briefly described here, and in particular that of a harmonious world, are both instruments in China’s soft power toolkit, as they encapsulate China’s grand strategy in non-threatening, benevolent, and inspiring terms, and theories that conduce toward the strengthening of this softer expression of power because of the cultural component they contain. As stated by Li Jingzhi and Pu Ping (2014, p. 27), they display the “contributing power” of Chinese culture to the world and consequently enhance the attractiveness of Chinese values and the power of China’s diplomacy.





#### 4. Discourse on Chinese soft power and Chinese discourse on soft power

In order to complete the task of delineating a backdrop useful to guide the analysis that will be carried out in Chapter 5 and in the successive chapters, the first section of this chapter provides an introduction to some of the most relevant scholarly works that have discussed China's soft power in English-language literature. The second section offers some further insights into the theory of soft power as conceptualized by Joseph S. Nye, expanding the study's theoretical framework. The third section focuses on a selection of Chinese academic materials that discuss the topic of soft power, with the aim of providing an introduction to its autochthonous research, which has proven to be vast and variegated. This chapter is thus thought of as providing a link between the two macro areas of analysis concerning the Western discourse on Chinese soft power, in English, and the Chinese discourse on soft power, in Chinese. The international perspective followed in the first research area, however, must be completed by a selection of materials written in English by Chinese authors, discussed in Section 4.1. Conversely, the second research area follows a more local perspective, discussed in Section 4.3. All in all, this chapter is conceived as a brief literary review that also testifies to the growing popularity of the topic of China's soft power. After presenting the schools of thought that have emerged in relation to soft power within the Chinese context, the last section of the chapter, in fact, provides a number of data to support this evaluation. The ever-growing popularity of the concept of soft power in China, however, does not correspond to consensus on what soft power actually means in the Chinese context. Even though Chinese scholars and political thinkers seem to agree on the role that culture plays as the core of soft power in and for China, there is still no agreement on the connotations of cultural soft power, or even on what terminology should be used in such a discussion. This makes examining the nature of the Chinese discourse on soft power more closely an urgent task, in order to reveal the important nuances of meaning specifically carried by the Chinese soft power jargon and detach Chinese soft power from its Western counterpart.

##### 4.1 An international perspective: *discourse on Chinese soft power*

One of the first examples of Western consideration of Chinese soft power which will be examined here comes from the father of the concept, Joseph S. Nye, in an op-ed published in *The Wall Street Journal* (Asia) in 2005. In this piece, Nye urges the West, in particular the United States, to pay attention to China's soft power efforts, following the first East Asian Summit, which, with the exclusion of the United States from the list of participants, suggested a new balance of power in Asia (Nye 2005). By overviewing the three resources of soft power he had previously identified, namely culture, political values, and foreign policy (diplomacy), Nye provides an evaluation of China's soft power development, which still ranks below that of the United States, due to a series of issues, such as: the lack of cultural industries and universities as prestigious as those in the United States, the weakness of non-governmental organizations, insufficient respect of human rights, democracy, and rule of law, high levels of corruption and

inequality, and the risk of territorial disputes, among other problems (Ibid.)<sup>42</sup>. Nevertheless, progress has been made, as is shown by the achievements in building soft power in different areas: in terms of culture, the appreciation for Chinese traditional culture is being complemented by interest in popular culture, with notable examples such as the successful stories of Gao Xingjian 高行健, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000, Ang Lee's famous movie "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" (2000), the fame of basketball player Yao Ming 姚明 of the Huston Rockets, the hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games, the growing number of foreign tourists visiting China, and so forth; in terms of political values, the Beijing Consensus emerges as a new formula joining an authoritarian government with market economy; in terms of diplomacy, China has also made great progress, topping off its efforts for a "peaceful rise" with an upgrade of its participation in multilateral agreements, peacekeeping operations, nonproliferation talks, and other regional arrangements (Ibid.)<sup>43</sup>.

One of the earliest and most relevant English-language attempts to describe China's soft power in a comprehensive manner is the book *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*, written in 2007 by Joshua Kurlantzick, in which the author attempts to describe China's soft power in a more encompassing way when compared to the idea originally put forward by Joseph S. Nye. Kurlantzick (2007, p. 6) points out that the term "soft power" coined by Nye was meant to fit a rather limited definition that excluded elements which would fall into the category of "carrots" and "sticks", such as investment, trade, formal diplomacy, and aid, to focus more on a nation's attractiveness. Stressing that China would be able to force other countries with sticks if they do not support its actions, but that it can also reward them with substantial carrots if they do, Kurlantzick posits that China "offers the charm of a lion, not of a mouse" and that, in the Chinese context, everything that is not military power constitutes soft power, including more coercive means, such as economic inducement or diplomatic leverage (Ibid.). A point of particular interest is that Kurlantzick identifies in China's global strategy what he calls a variety of "tools of influence", which fall into two categories: "tools of culture", including Chinese culture, arts, language, and ethnicity, and "tools of business", including trade, investment, aid, and the charm of China's economic model (Kurlantzick 2007, p. 61 and p. 84). The approach chosen by Scott (2012, p. 39), which completes this classification with the category of the "PRC's public diplomacy terms of a 'tool of language'", was discussed in the previous chapter. A link is also identified between China's economic power and its cultural soft power. In fact, the country's economic might allows for the deployment of the tools of culture and diplomacy, even though they do not depend on trade and investment (Kurlantzick 2007, p. 61). This kind of cultural promotion is part of China's enhanced public diplomacy, which can be defined as "the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other nations", and helps to

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<sup>42</sup> Together with environmental degradation, the effect of these issues on the potential gains China could obtain through the use of soft power is reiterated by Joseph S. Nye and Wang Jisi in a later writing in which the authors state that China's image is suffering from its "domestic deficiencies" (Nye and Wang 2009a, p. 27).

<sup>43</sup> These examples are enriched with more recent ones in Nye's successive writings concerning China's soft power, which will be taken into consideration in the following pages. In particular, Nye and Wang (2009a, p. 27) state that, in the diplomatic field, the Chinese government is promoting the idea of international cooperation, under the slogan of a "harmonious world", and reiterating its commitment to a "peaceful path of development". As well, it is interesting to note that in the field of literature, a more recent Nobel Prize presented to a Chinese writer has perhaps raised even more attention: that awarded to internationally renowned author Mo Yan 莫言 in 2012. The media reports that while the award given to Gao Xingjian was somehow disregarded, as the author has renounced his Chinese citizenship for French citizenship, Mo Yan's achievement was cause for a national celebration for a symbol of what is perceived as China's notably growing cultural presence in the world (Jacobs and Lyall 2012).

reinforce the concept of China's peaceful development (Ibid., pp. 61-62). As will also be discussed later on, China's public diplomacy includes aspects such as the expansion of the international reach of national media, promotion of cultural exchanges and visitor programs, improvement of diplomatic corps, the spread of Chinese culture and language worldwide, and leveraging bonds with the Chinese diaspora (Ibid., pp. 61-81).

Although the present analysis does not follow Kurlantzick's interpretation that a study of Chinese soft power should include hard-power economic tools, it cannot be denied that this volume falls among the earliest and most pioneering analyses of China's soft power. As a matter of fact, as Breslin (2011, p. 6) points out, first attempts to discuss China's soft power tended to employ a broader definition of the concept, including diplomatic and economic relations among the means available to China to get its way in power politics. Evaluating China's soft power based also on the wielding of economic tools can be the consequence of the allure that China's economy, having grown exponentially for the last few decades, undoubtedly generates. As pointed out in an English-language paper written by Chinese authors Huang Yanzhong and Ding Sheng (2006, p. 24), in order to use the concept of soft power in a way that is analytically useful, it is essential to separate it from pure economic strength; however, this could be a problem for a country with an economic performance as miraculous as that of China, whereas things are easier in the case of countries with a less impressive economic situation. The authors also address the problem of the difference between "inducement" and "seduction", defining the former as an exercise of hard power, as it considers preferences as a given and acts directly on behavior, and the latter as an exercise of soft power, as it generates a change of preferences (Ibid.). In this sense, a country's economic strength is useful to project soft power if the attraction it generates is not triggered by mere utilitarian purposes, such as trade, market access, and job opportunities (Ibid.). This paper by Huang Yanzhong and Ding Sheng provides a critical review of the conceptualization of soft power by its creator and, through a casual mechanism, attempts a measurement of soft power in a way that addresses both soft power resources and the extent to which a country is able to turn these resources into desired behaviors in other countries (Ibid., pp. 24-25). It offers a preliminary evaluation of China's soft power in terms of its resources and foreign policy outcomes, putting forward three propositions: "China wields its soft power most successfully in neighboring Asian countries"; "China is increasingly having its way in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, where China's development model is admired"; and "China will find it less successful to cajole Western liberal democracies to believe its rise is peaceful and to adopt foreign policies it prefers" (Ibid., pp. 33-35). Although China is becoming the "cultural magnet of Asia", with global interest in its culture, language, and traditional values growing rapidly, and China's economic capabilities, together with moral attraction and Confucian humanitarianism, have contributed to a betterment of its reputation and an increase in its attractiveness (Ibid., pp. 26-29), the authors come to moderate conclusions in regard to China's ability to turn soft power resources into desired foreign policy outcomes. In particular, despite the extraordinary results achieved since the 1990s in this field, they believe that soft power remains China's "underbelly", as it is still a vulnerable area lacking an "ideal mix" of soft power resources, namely a balanced relationship among cultural attractiveness, domestic values and policies, and foreign policies (Ibid., pp. 40-41). For instance, its domestic political system is considered too rigid to produce examples that can match China's projected foreign policy (Ibid.). Nevertheless, it is relevant to note that this analysis was published prior to 2007, the year that, as has been previously described, officially saw the inclusion of soft power in China's top leaders' policy statements, marking the addition of soft

power to the country's national strategy. From that point onwards, soft power has been acquiring an increasingly profound meaning for both domestic and foreign policy in China.

Two other contributions worth mentioning here are the result of Ding Sheng's work, as well: a coauthored paper in collaboration with Robert A. Saunders and the study entitled *The Dragon's Hidden Wings: How China Rises With Its Soft Power*, published in 2006 and 2008 respectively. While the former contribution offers an analysis of China's growing cultural power and pays specific attention to the promotion of the Chinese language abroad as a global *lingua franca* and a tool to boost China's soft power (Ding and Saunders 2006), a point to which the discussion will come back in greater detail in Chapter 8, the latter represents a comprehensive study that looks at China's rising power from the perspective of soft power. In particular, the study elaborates on theories on rising power, evaluating the hypothesis according to which a rising China will become a revisionist power and a threat to the global status quo, while positing that the concept of soft power can represent a new approach to the analysis of China's rising power in the context of an increasingly "interdependent" world (Ding Sheng 2008, Chapter 1). Ding Sheng raises the question as to whether or not the concept of soft power as a new conceptual framework can be applied to the study of China's rise given the fact that not only had this process started at least a decade before Nye's conceptualized his theory, but also that to be at the core of Nye's discourse it was the United States (Ibid., pp. 20-21). By drawing a connection between the idea of soft power and China's ancient culture and ideology and exploring its vicissitudes in contemporary China, Ding Sheng highlights the peculiarity of the Chinese interpretation of Nye's concept in a way that is in line with the present discussion and that deserves quoting at length:

The term *soft power* has frequently appeared in Chinese media and scholarly works, but Beijing's top leaders have rarely used the exact term of *ruanlilang* (soft power) in their speeches or government's documents. They may not want to credit Joseph Nye for the idea of soft power. In fact, what Chinese political elites have said about soft power is different from Nye's definition of soft power. They believe China's soft power is embedded in China's traditional culture and ideology.

(Ibid., p. 28)

More will be said about the existing Chinese translations of the term "soft power" in Section 4.4 and Chapter 7, but it is interesting to note here that, in his English language masterpiece, this well-known Chinese Professor of Political Science goes as far as to detect a conscious intention in the Chinese leadership to elaborate a new idea of soft power suitable to China's characteristics. This would be in tune, for instance, with the connection between the concept of soft power and that of "*zonghe guoli*", which, as has been previously explained, is "an original Chinese political concept with no roots in Western political theories", insofar as in China soft power deployment is seen as indispensable to increase the country's CNP (Ding Sheng 2008, p. 28). The originality of the Chinese interpretation of soft power can also be seen in relation to the notions of China's peaceful rise, or peaceful development, and harmonious world, discussed in the previous chapter, which are also concepts peculiar to the Chinese context.

To continue this brief summary of the international debate on Chinese soft power, reference must be made to the studies carried out by Wuthnow (2008) and Hunter (2009), which, in a certain way, echo the preceding discussion. While the former discusses soft power as a non-coercive strategy that finds its place within China's strategic thinking, identifying the use of soft

power resources to serve the country's grand strategy, the latter looks at the roots of soft power in China's ancient philosophy, going back to the age of some of the most influential traditional thinkers.

Another important study of China's soft power, published in English and collecting contributions by both Chinese and Western authors, is the book edited by Li Mingjiang in 2009, to which this dissertation refers on several occasions. Including the works by contributors from various disciplines, *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics* explores the domestic and international discourse on China's soft power from different perspectives and examines China's potential soft power resources, strengths, and weaknesses, applying an interdisciplinary approach that includes investigations on domestic policies, culture, history, social relations, and international relations (Li Mingjiang 2009a, pp. 10-16). Among the topics addressed, attention is paid to Chinese philosophical approaches to soft power, the role of education in cultivating China's soft power, the assessment of the effectiveness of some of China's soft power sources, such as the operations of the Confucius Institutes, the appeal of the Chinese model of development, and China's cultural power (Ibid.). Li Mingjiang (2009a, p. 3) also highlights some drawbacks in Nye's conceptualization of soft power by posing that, first and foremost, soft power is not intrinsically embedded in the nature of certain sources of power, but it has to be nurtured and cultivated. Detecting a "resource-based approach" in the original idea of soft power leads to a second problem that is related to recognizing attractiveness, persuasiveness, and appeal as elements directly embedded in the very nature of certain resources of soft power, such as culture, ideology, and values (Ibid., pp. 3-4). It can be argued that these attributes cannot be considered intrinsic characteristics of soft power resources. For instance, why is culture thought to be more likely to produce attraction when it can also produce repulsion? Why are culture, values, and foreign policies considered as separate soft power resources when the first two can also be part of the third? These and other related questions are addressed by Li Mingjiang in a critical review of Nye's thought (Li Mingjiang 2009a, pp. 3-7).

Throughout the aforementioned volume, the picture that emerges is that of a country with immense soft power potential, in terms of resources and strengths, but also with weaknesses in turning these capacities into desired outcomes (Li Mingjiang 2009c). In particular, Li Mingjiang (2009a, p. 10) specifies that, focusing on culture and values, the resource-based approach to China's soft power portrays a picture that is more pessimistic than the scenario that focuses on China's foreign policy behaviors, which tends to highlight the growth of China's soft power. Thus, a different approach to the concept of soft power is put forward, namely the "soft use of power" approach, which considers the essence of soft power as being in the "soft use of power to increase a state's attraction, persuasiveness, and appeal" (Ibid., p. 7). This approach also explains why, in the Chinese context, the discussion on soft power pertains to both domestic and international politics, insofar as how a government uses power on its country's own people can have repercussions on the perception of the international community (Ibid., p. 9). Therefore, the examination calls for greater attention to and further analysis of the construction of soft power at home and its projection abroad. In fact, there is one point in particular brought up by Li Mingjiang that is noteworthy to better explain how the construction of soft power is viewed in the Chinese context and the relevance, in this regard, of soft power development strategies. The great deal of discussion dedicated to the development of soft power is generated by the fact that, as has been previously pointed out, soft power needs to be cultivated and built up. In the previous chapter, it was indeed highlighted that, according to Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 30), in the view of many Chinese strategists soft power "does not grow automatically from the

influence of material hard power". The tools to implement this project, in respect to China's international relations, are generally considered to be largely embedded in public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy (Lai Hongyi 2012a, 2012b). More specifically, in China, public diplomacy in general, and cultural diplomacy in particular, have become the tools of choice to develop soft power, in accordance with the official emphasis on culture as a source of national power and to the extent that public diplomacy often assumes the form of cultural diplomacy because, for the Chinese, publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio and television, and sports, some of the instruments of public diplomacy, fall into the category of culture (Lai Hongyi 2012a, p. 13). It is precisely in this perspective, which sees culture and cultural diplomacy as tools of soft power, that the funding of language promotion activities, such as the ones carried out by Hanban 汉办 (the Office of the Chinese Language Council International) and the Confucius Institutes (*Kongzi Xueyuan*), takes its place along with a variety of official programs for global cultural influence, cultural exchange programs, and the promotion of cultural exports (Lai Hongyi 2012b). Hence, in the discourse on Chinese cultural soft power.

With each of its 10 chapters providing an in-depth analysis of a different aspect of China's soft power, the book edited by Lai Hongyi and Lu Yiyi (2012), entitled *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, offers an examination of the topic from different perspectives, including the views of the Chinese elites on soft power, its official discourse, public and cultural diplomacy, foreign aid, and political strategies. As stated by Lai Hongyi (2012a, p. 1), the volume, which gathers contributions by both Chinese and Western authors writing in English, aims to address the deficiency in the literature on China's soft power, while also offering a critique of Nye's theory of soft power. In this respect, one of the main criticisms expressed in regard to Nye's conceptualization concerns his selection of culture, political values, and foreign policies as the only three resources of soft power, failing to mention other assets that operate through attraction (Ibid., pp. 4-11). For instance, it is possible to exercise attraction on another country thanks to the allure of military strength, economic power, trade opportunities, and scientific and technological progress (Ibid.). Science and technology and foreign aid, in particular, appear to be important resources of soft power and attraction which Nye fails to include among soft power resources, perhaps due to a lack of clarity in distinguishing between resources of soft and hard power (Ibid.). This is again confirmed by another contribution in the volume; Zheng Yongnian and Zhang Chi (2012, pp. 23-26) propose their own dynamic interpretation of the soft power theory, focusing on the evaluation of "the soft or hard effectiveness of power resources in international politics" and arguing that Nye's "static or rigid interpretation of soft power and hard power is limited for the study of international relations", in regard, in particular, to three main points: first, his conceptual division between soft and hard power is considered too simplistic, so much so as to give rise to contradictions with regard, for example, to the fact that Nye himself states that hard power can sometimes have a softer side, in terms of the attractive force it can generate, but then fails to elaborate on the conclusion that it is indeed the effectiveness of power resources that can be soft or hard. Second, according to the authors, some of the points raised by Nye are not in accordance with the reality of international relations in regard to the fact that, for instance, admiration for a country does not necessarily mean total compliance with the country's agenda (Ibid.). Third, with reference to some soft power resources specific to China, also mentioned above, most of the examples provided do not necessarily have implications in international politics or state behavior, making Nye's description of the scope of soft power resources "not scientific enough" (Ibid.).

An attempt to contribute theoretically to the analysis of soft power, in order to respond to the criticism expressed in regard to Nye's original conceptualization, is again offered by Ding Sheng (2008, Chapter 3) in relation, in particular, to the identification of two specific weaknesses: the lack of discussion on the "multidimensionality of soft power resources" and the lack of clarity about how countries can convert soft power resources into realized power. The author examines the multidimensionality of soft power to determine whether it can be assessed based on all three traditional dimensions of power, namely "attribute power approach", "relational power approach", and "structural power approach" (Ibid.). The author believes that the concept of soft power is "one of the greatest ideas developed during the last two decades in the field of international relations", and in stating as such he suggests combining the aforementioned approaches and recognizing the multidimensionality of soft power resources to make the concept of soft power analytically stronger (Ibid., pp. 54-55). In regard to the process of conversion from soft power resources to desired policy outcomes, the author believes that this is indeed an issue that seriously complicates the measurement of soft power, to the detriment of an analytical use of the concept (Ibid., p. 48). Thus, the author puts forward a model to explain how soft power resources can be turned into desired policy outcomes in other countries, based on two forms of behavior in soft power wielding, namely "agenda-setting" and "attraction":

[F]irst, if country *A* can establish favorable international regimes — the formal and informal norms, rules, and procedures relevant to the international system, country *B* that participates in these international regimes will automatically obey those norms, rules, and procedures, implement the country *A*'s favorable foreign policies, and lead to *A*'s desired policy outcomes; second, if country *A*'s soft power resources are attractive to *B*'s policymakers in a "neutral" international environment, a rational policymaking process in country *B* may produce the favorable foreign policies toward country *A* and lead to *A*'s desired policy outcomes.

(Ibid., p. 55)

The establishment of favorable international regimes contributes to the "agenda-setting" process that enables the country willing to exercise power to produce desired behaviors in the target country. Ding Sheng (2008, p. 51) identifies three groups of policy actors in the target country on which the second form of behavior in soft power wielding, namely "attraction", has an effect, at different degrees: top governmental leaders, interest groups and media elites, and general public. A condition for attraction to work is that the international environment be "neutral", a circumstance which happens, for example, when the bilateral relations between the countries involved in the soft power resources conversion process are historically free of antagonism (Ibid., p. 54). Thus, a country's soft power resources exercise attraction on policy actors in other countries and, provided the neutrality of the international environment, this will create the necessary conditions for attraction to act successfully and for the country to obtain the desired policy outcomes.

The various approaches to soft power and the critiques expressed in regard to Joseph S. Nye's conceptualization, suggested by the authors mentioned above, lead the present discussion to provide a more in-depth analysis of the theory developed by the American scholar in order to complete the scenario described thus far.

#### 4.2 More on Joseph S. Nye's soft power theory

Joseph S. Nye's discourse on power in global affairs in general, and soft power in particular, has developed over the years, perhaps taking into account some of the criticism expressed in regard to his theory. In his book *The Future of Power*, Nye describes power in global affairs as being related to both a definition of power as the resources a country has and the behaviors it is able to generate in other countries (Nye 2011a, pp. 5-9). In this sense, talking about "military power" and "economic power" without making clear what definition of power is being referred to, behavioral or resource-based, makes these two terms "hybrids" that combine resources and behaviors (Ibid., pp. 9-10). Nye takes the example of the debate around China's rising power arguing that it mainly refers to the country's resources without keeping in mind that the relationship between resources and outcomes can be imperfect and that one must take into account the ability to put in place strategies useful to convert resources into desired outcomes, as well as the context in which this conversion takes place (Ibid., p. 10). Although not directly addressing the criticism expressed, for example, by the authors mentioned in the previous section, these further explanations can shed light on the relationship between power measured as resources and power measured as behaviors. Nye states that, in a more careful relational definition, power is "the ability to alter others' behaviors to produce preferred outcomes", making "outcomes", and not resources, the key of the problem (Nye 2011a, p. 10). Contexts and power-conversion strategies between resources and desired outcomes should receive more attention as it is indeed these strategies that "relate means to ends", with those that successfully combine hard and soft power resources in different contexts becoming the key to what he calls "smart power" (Ibid.). In regard to the context of these interactions, Nye clearly indicates that resources that produce power in one context may not do the same if the interaction takes place in a different one (Ibid., pp. 3-4).

In addition to distinguishing between resource and relational definitions of power, Nye also suggests the existence of three aspects, or "faces", of relational power: "commanding change, controlling agendas, and establishing preferences" (Nye 2011a, pp. 10-11). Command power is the first face of power and, being the basis for hard power, which obtains the desired outcomes through coercion and payment, is very visible and easy to identify (Ibid., p. 16). It is in contrast to the co-optive power of the second and third faces of relational power, which, contributing to soft power in obtaining the desired outcomes through agenda-setting, persuasion, and attraction, is more subtle and less visible (Ibid.). The key in responding to the criticism expressed in regard to Nye's theory lies in considering the distinction between resources and behaviors produced based on them, and the role played by the target in perceiving the actor's actions. According to Nye (2011a, p. 20), confusion about soft power comes from the mistake of overlapping the actions taken by a country to achieve desired outcomes with the resources used to produce them: "[m]any types of *resources* can contribute to soft power, but that does not mean that soft power is any type of *behavior*". Once again, Nye brings up the case of China to describe some of the dynamics involved in the projection of soft power. Taking China's economic performance as a resource of power, he states that its success "can produce both the hard power of sanctions and restricted market access and the soft power of attraction and emulation", proving the point that resources that usually fall into the category of hard power can actually produce soft power behavior, depending on the context and the way in which they are used (Nye 2011a, pp. 21-22). As stated above, the target of the strategies put in place to generate behaviors also holds an important position, as determining which aspect of power is



being used is based on the target's previously existing preferences and its perception of the actions taken by the actor exercising power. In this regard, Nye suggests that "[h]ard power is push; soft power is pull" (Nye 2011a, p. 20) and that "[s]oft power is a dance that requires partners" (Ibid., p. 84). Another example Nye provides is that of the Beijing Consensus, inasmuch as it constitutes a development model which, joining an authoritarian government with successful market economy, is appealing in many countries in the developing world; but to what exactly the admirers of the Beijing Consensus are attracted or by what exactly they are induced, as well as the fact that the same resource does not seem to produce much attraction in democratic countries, are issues that deserve consideration in the evaluation of how much soft power is truly generated by this growth model (Ibid., p. 86). Once again, a behavior that may have been produced by attraction may also have been produced by other motives, such as economic inducement, while the context in which the relation takes place is also of the utmost importance. As Nye puts it: "Sometimes in real-world situations, it is difficult to distinguish what part of an economic relationship is composed of hard power and what is made up of soft power" (Nye 2011a, p. 85).

Confusing resources that may produce soft power with the effect of soft power itself is the reason why soft power is sometimes regarded as lacking effectiveness in the assessment of power in global affairs. According to Nye (2011a, p. 22), eating American food or wearing American clothing are actions that do not necessarily mean soft power, but whether or not soft power resources are successfully converted into favorable behaviors depends both on the skills of the agent in using resources to produce desired behavioral outcomes and on the context of the relationship. Soft power alone cannot produce effective foreign policy, but what is needed is "smart power", envisioned as "the ability to combine hard and soft power resources into effective strategies" (Ibid., pp. 22-23). In this regard, Nye considers China's intent to invest in soft power resources as a deliberate decision to develop a smart strategy which is useful to portray the country's hard power, namely its rising power in economic and military resources, as less threatening in the eyes of its neighbors (Ibid.).

Thus far, the concept of soft power has been further analyzed with the aim of enriching the theoretical framework based on which it will be possible to highlight some of the most relevant characteristics of Chinese soft power. First and foremost, it has been found that there is widespread consensus on the fact that resources that are considered useful soft power tools do not necessarily generate the desired changed behaviors in other countries, as effective actions must be taken to turn resources into outcomes. As well, the discussion presented so far bears witness to the fact that there exist a variety of approaches to the soft power concept because it is indeed an aspect of power that is difficult to define. It is noteworthy that an example of the behavior it refers to can be found in China, more specifically as far back as in China's ancient thinking. This is an aspect that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, but it is interesting to note here that even Nye argues that although "the concept of soft power is recent, the behavior it denotes is as old as human history" (Nye 2011a, p. 81). Nye states that even Lao-tzu (Laozi 老子, Zhou 周 dynasty, c. XI-221 BC) believed that "a leader is best not when people obey his commands, but when they barely know he exists" (Ibid.). As an academic concept, soft power has been widely used, also outside of the United States; like hard power, it can be used for good or bad purposes and, at times, its meaning has been used incorrectly, to refer to anything other than military power (Ibid.).

Soft power is not only difficult to define but also hard to master. Making soft power a successful part of a government strategy faces difficulties that depend on three characteristics of

this form of power: first, the outcome of soft power rests more in the hands of the target than is the case with hard power; second, the effect of soft power can take a long time to become manifest; third, soft power tools are not fully controlled by governments but rest as much in the hands of civil society, as is the case for culture and values (Nye 2011a, p. 83). These three characteristics constitute a useful summary of all of the aspects of soft power that have been considered thus far.

The last point mentioned above is particularly noteworthy because, as has been posed, it denotes one of the key differences between the Chinese interpretation of soft power and its original conceptualization, namely the different involvement of governments and civil society in the projection of soft power. As stated by Shambaugh (2013, p. 209), soft power should be considered as a “magnet that pulls and draws others to a nation simply because of its powerful appeal by example”; thus, it should be a country’s society to attract others rather than the work of the government to try to persuade them. According to the author, this is precisely the difference between soft power and public diplomacy, with the latter being “an instrument in the hand of *governments*” which will not be as effective if there is a lack of intrinsic soft power generated by society (Ibid.).

As well, it is interesting to note that similarities and differences between the American and Chinese views on soft power have been discussed on various occasions by the very creator of the soft power concept. In fact, as has been seen, Joseph S. Nye made reference to the case of China’s rising power and soft power efforts in various points throughout his 2011 book. First and foremost, this denotes a change in the American scholar’s approach to China’s soft power in comparison to the past, from which it can be assumed that the improvement of China’s soft power development strategies has had an impact on the international debate on soft power as well. As noticed by Deng Yong (2009, p. 63), when Nye wrote his 2004 book, China’s soft power was not taken very seriously, with just a few pages dedicated to it in the chapter on the soft power of Asian countries. As a matter of fact, in the evaluation that Nye proposed, China’s soft power was compared to that of India, as both countries were equally envisioned as having increasing hard and soft power, following rapid economic growth, but with indexes related to the potentiality of soft power resources being far from comparable to those of the United States, Europe, and Japan (Nye 2004, Chapter 3). The policies and values promoted by the CPC, together with mounting corruption, lack of intellectual freedom, and worrying foreign policies, such as the one adopted in the Taiwan case, are all elements that were considered to be harming China’s soft power capabilities (Ibid.). These aspects are also addressed in Nye’s 2011 book and in other writings by the American scholar. The efforts made by China to increase its soft power are discussed both in relation to its attractive traditional culture and the recent advancements achieved in the field of global popular culture; the examples provided include, among others, the ever-increasing number of Chinese students abroad and foreign students in China, the establishment of hundreds of Confucius Institutes worldwide, and the investments in external publicity work, with reference to media operations such as those aimed at the expansion of the English-language broadcasting of CRI, the increase in internationalization and competitiveness of Xinhua News Agency and CCTV, in order to compete with BBC and CNN, and the establishment of a 24-hour Xinhua cable news channel created based on the example of Al Jazeera (Nye 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b). Emphasis is placed on China’s numerous and expensive efforts to win friends abroad by means of soft power, stressing the huge costs of an endeavor that is still producing little returns, harmed by the country’s use of culture and narrative to create soft power in a way that is nonetheless inconsistent with domestic realities

(Ibid.). To name just one example chosen from those proposed by Nye, not long after the elaborate organization of the 2008 Olympic Games, China's domestic crackdown in Tibet and Xinjiang, together with the repression of human rights activists, undermined what had been gained in terms of soft power (Ibid.). In 2011, in his March 25<sup>th</sup> article for *The Washington Post*, the publication of which followed a lecture delivered by the American scholar at Beijing University, Nye reports the answer given to a student who enquired about the methods China could use to increase its soft power: since much of a country's soft power is generated by its civil society, the rigidity of China's censorship and controls would need to be loosened for China to achieve better results in its use of soft power (Nye 2011b). In 2012, Nye reiterated these points in an article for the *International Herald Tribune* in which he once again stressed the role of civil society in the effective development of soft power by saying that:

The development of soft power need not be a zero sum game. All countries can gain from finding attraction in one another's cultures. But for China to succeed, it will need to unleash the talents of its civil society. Unfortunately, that does not seem about to happen soon.

(Nye 2012a)

In the same year, in an article for *The Wall Street Journal*, Nye continued to comment on his experience lecturing at various Chinese universities on the topic of soft power, reporting that at the end of one of his speeches, in which he had highlighted the harm of government censorship in fields such as the Internet and art, mentioning the case of Ai Weiwei and films by Zhang Yimou 张艺谋<sup>44</sup>, a Party official clarified to the students that Chinese soft power should focus on culture and not politics (Nye 2012b).

On balance, it can be argued that, based on the very words of the creator of the concept of soft power and on the preceding discussion, China's soft power is depicted as a controversial topic on which the international and domestic audiences do not find consensus. Through the re-elaboration of the concept of soft power in greater detail presented above, which clarifies the distinction between soft power resources and behaviors, it can be implied that there is a gap that separates China's soft power resources from the achievement of their full potential in generating desired outcomes. The deployment of more effective soft power development strategies could prove beneficial in filling this gap.

As well, the process of soft power development in China appears to be heavily dependent on the government's guidance, and much less on the performance of a civil society able to freely express its many talents. This is made clear by Joseph S. Nye and Wang Jisi when they state that China's soft power has a long way to go to match that of the United States, as the former is very much dependent on the work by the government, while the latter is mainly generated by the country's civil society (Nye and Wang 2009a, p. 27).

Nevertheless, soft power is recognized as a subject that attracts a considerable amount of interest. If one considers that, since the 1990s, thousands of essays and articles have been published in China on the topic of soft power, with related lectures attracting large audiences (Nye 2012b), the doubts and criticism expressed in regard to the theory put forward by the

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<sup>44</sup> Zhang Yimou is a Chinese film director who, among many successes, directed the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Here, Nye refers to the fact that Zhang Yimou's films are always set in the past because, as stated by the director himself, the PRC's censorship would be more likely to target films about contemporary China (Nye 2012b).

American scholar are of little moment. According to Ding Sheng (2008, p. 28), for the Chinese political elites, fulfilling the dream of making China a global power rests, in an increasingly profound way, on the development of soft power.

To conclude, this discussion mainly constitutes a preamble to the contents of the next section, which will provide insights related to the integration and evolution of the concept of soft power within the boundaries of the Chinese context. Before moving on to this task, another interesting approach to the examination of the Western discourse on Chinese soft power is worth mentioning. It is that provided by a recent paper written by Aukia (2014) in which the author divides the body of available international literature on China's rhetoric of soft power into two groups, coining the terms "Dualist" and "Monotist" to define them. Authors that agree with a binary approach in analyzing Chinese soft power, by identifying both domestic and international applications in it, fall in the first category, while those who only see the Chinese thinking on soft power in relation to international relations fall into the second category. The author argues that the rhetoric of soft power in China should not be thought of as a mere way to generate attraction, but also as a policy tool for a nation still "in search of itself" (Aukia 2014, p. 72). In the previous chapter, much was said to support the choice of following a binary interpretation of the discourse on soft power in China, based on the "holistic" or "inward-looking and outward-looking" approaches proposed by Glaser and Murphy (2009) and Barr (2011) respectively. Having now added to these definitions Aukia's "dualistic" approach to the purpose of the Chinese discourse on soft power – domestic and international (Aukia 2014, p. 77), a conclusion will also be drawn in Chapter 7 regarding the possibility to define China's soft power as "soft power with Chinese characteristics", as suggested by Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 20).

Based on the description provided thus far, the present analysis posits that further research is needed to establish a clear definition of the concept of soft power suitable for the context of contemporary China. Carrying out this task is made more difficult by the variety of approaches that coexist in the analysis of the Western conceptualization of soft power based on which it would be possible to develop a Chinese interpretation of the theory. As a matter of fact, Chinese scholars engaged in developing an autochthonous Chinese discourse on soft power, which at the phase of inception usually draws upon the original theory, have developed a discussion that is as much, if not more, vast and variegated.

#### 4.3 *Chinese discourse on soft power*: overview of a local perspective

As a matter of fact, in China, the discussion on soft power started in the early 1990s, when the soft power theory made its first appearance in intellectual circles. As will be described in Chapter 5, it was presented at first through translations of Nye's works and discussed from a theoretical perspective in scholarly articles. In this early period, the approach towards the concept of soft power was quite cautious. According to Deng Yong (2009, p. 65), in the 1990s, soft power was considered a "Western privilege" and when it was mentioned in relation to China it was usually with regard to the country's domestic policies. In fact, reference to non-material power in terms of national cohesion and domestic governance was made on the background of the discussion about CNP (Ibid., p. 66). According to Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 11), in the beginning, scholars within Chinese academic circles directed their attention towards the question of what soft power meant and what its application would be in the Chinese

context. Cho and Jeong (2008, p. 457) note that it was not until the late 1990s that Chinese intellectuals started to discuss soft power in relation to the country's national strategy, at a time when the media started to report extensively on global issues, a fact that stimulated the interest of the policy elites and general public in these issues and foreign policy. This is also confirmed by Breslin (2011, pp. 5-6) who states that with the beginning of the new millennium the topic of soft power became a popular subject in Chinese academia, a debated concept on the Internet, and an issue discussed in the field of official policy. According to Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 12), the attention of the Chinese leadership and the general public for the concept of soft power escalated in the mid-2000s, when the discussion moved beyond academic analyses, and theorists formulated an extended version of the original soft power theory, which the authors define as "soft power with Chinese characteristics".

Over the years, interest in soft power increasingly penetrated the policy-making and leadership levels and gained the spotlight in the political and public debate. This is confirmed by Liu Debin 刘德斌 (2004) who, writing a decade ago, detected an increase in the interest in soft power among Chinese scholars since its first appearance in the American context, testified by an upsurge of papers touching upon this topic, so much so that "for some scholars the construction of soft power had reached the same level of importance as the success or failure of China's rise" (*you xuezhe shenzhi ba 'ruan shili' de goujian tisheng dao Zhongguo nengfou chengong jueqi de gaodu* 有学者甚至把中国'软实力'的构建提升到中国能否成功崛起的高度). The degree of attention and value attached to the concept of soft power by Chinese scholars could therefore be considered even higher than that of any other country, including the United States (Ibid.).

Similarly, Chinese scholar Wang Yiwei (2008, p. 258) highlights the importance of soft power in the Chinese context by stating that "few Western international relations phrases have penetrated as deeply or broadly into the Chinese vocabulary in recent years". In Chapter 2, Hu Jintao's reference to China's cultural soft power in his political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in October 2007 was expounded upon, and the importance of this document was explained in relation to the official inclusion of the soft power theory within China's national strategy. The widespread opinion that this relevant political event represented the debut of soft power in the CPC's official discourse will be discussed in greater detail in the second part of this thesis, through the studies carried out by Chinese scholars such as Zhao Gang 赵刚 and Xiao Huan 肖欢 (2010), Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013), and Liu Deding (2013), among others. In Western literature, Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 16), for instance, see Hu Jintao's political report as the "leadership's official sanction of soft power" and the acceptance of the mainstream view that "the core of soft power is culture". From a terminological point of view, the wording "*ruan shili*" (soft power) was thereafter incorporated into China's political jargon. Nye and Wang (2009a, p. 28) emphasize that, with the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress, soft power entered China's official language<sup>45</sup>. Aukia (2014, p. 76) highlights the impact that the CPC had on the expansion of the research on soft power in China. Defining Hu Jintao's speech as a "famous report" that "outlined national soft power goals and strategy", the author argues that the dramatic increase in soft power-related publications following the 17<sup>th</sup> National

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<sup>45</sup> There exists a Chinese version of this paper written by Joseph S. Nye (Yuesefu · Nai 约瑟夫 · 奈) and Wang Jisi 王缉思 which, in relation to this point, reads: "*Ruan shili*' *ye jinru le guanfang yuhui* '软实力'也进入了官方语汇" (Nye and Wang 2009b, p. 9).

Congress bears witness to the fact that China's study of soft power was greatly affected by the launch of the national soft power strategy in 2007 (Ibid.).

Prior to the leadership's official sanction of the soft power concept, early examples of its increasing popularity include a variety of writings by Chinese scholars, such as: Wang Huning 王沪宁 (1993), Pang Zhongying 庞中英 (1997), Liu Debin (2001, 2004), Zhang Zhan 张战 and Li Haijun 李海君 (2003), Li Haijuan 李海娟 (2004), and Liu Qing 刘庆 and Wang Litao 王利涛 (2007). These and other scholarly approaches will be discussed in Chapter 5.

This leads the present discussion to briefly introducing some of the most relevant Chinese literature analyzed in the course of this research. One of the first and most comprehensive assessments of China's soft power is that provided by well-known Chinese scholar Men Honghua in his 2007 edited book *Zhongguo: Ruan Shili Fanglüe* 中国：软实力方略 (*China's Soft Power Strategy*). In the introduction, the significance of soft power for China's strategy, the purpose behind providing an assessment of China's soft power, and the scope of investigating a way to enhance it are clarified: first, along with soft power increasingly becoming a core component of the international standing of a country, placing soft power development at a strategic level has become a fundamental demand for the realization of national overall objectives; second, carrying out an evaluation of China's soft power "is not for the purpose of competing with other countries" (*bushi weilie yu qita guojia yi jing duan chang* 不是为了与其他国家一竞短长), but that of "reflecting on oneself" (*neisheng* 内省), so that China can "review its own strategic path" (*dui ziji de zhanlüe lujing jinxing fansi* 对自己的战略路径进行反思); third, China's amicable intentions are highlighted, as it is pointed out that investigating a way to enhance China's soft power "does not pursue regional or even global expansion" (*bushi weilie diquxing naizhi quanquixing kuozhang* 不是为了地区性乃至全球性扩张), "but a hope for self-improvement" (*ershi xiwang ziwo chongshi* 而是希望自我充实), so as to "find a sustainable growth path and establish solid bases for the achievement of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people" (*zhao dao ke chixu de zengzhang lujing, wei shixian Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing de zhanlüe mubiao dianding jianshi de jichu* 找到可持续的增长路径, 为实现中华民族伟大复兴的战略目标奠定坚实的基础) (Men Honghua 2007a, p. 1). On balance, China is seen as a country that is maturing into a "multi-center of soft power" (*ruan shili de duoyuan zhongxin* 软实力的多元中心), with enormous potential for its development (Ibid.). Following the policy of reform and opening-up, the country's soft power has gained an all-around and rapid upgrade, achieving vigorous development that has evolved "from passive to active" (*cong beidong dao zhudong* 从被动到主动) and "from involuntary to voluntary" (*cong wuyishi dao youyishi* 从无意识到有意识); similarly, with the transformation of the Chinese society from a "closed society" (*fengbi shehui* 封闭社会) to an "open society" (*kaifang shehui* 开放社会) engaging with the outside world, China's soft power has also taken "a step out of the country's door" (*maichu guomen* 迈出国门), exercising "ever-increasing attractiveness and influence at home and abroad" (*dui guoneiwai de xiyinli, yingxiangli yuelaiyue da* 对国内外的吸引力、影响力越来越大) (Ibid.).

The contributions contained in this edited volume, published almost a decade ago, are numerous and include insights regarding the basic assessment of China's soft power, comparisons of China's soft power with that of the United States and Japan, and strategies aimed at enhancing the country's soft power (Men Honghua 2007b). In one of his contributions

to this book, the introduction, Men Honghua recognized that China's soft power had already become an important topic fervently discussed in strategic circles, stressing that, regardless of the disagreement among scholars trying to determine the meaning and the extensions of the concept of soft power, basic assessments had already been produced (Men Honghua 2007a, p. 3). On the one hand, the general point of view among strategists was that the "current situation and future of China's soft power are worrisome" (*Zhongguo ruan shili de xianzhuang he weilai jun lin ren youlü* 中国软实力的现状和未来均令人忧虑), as soft power was perceived as being "extremely delicate" (*ruo bu jing feng* 弱不禁风) or similar to "a sword with no point" (*you jian wu feng* 有剑无锋); on the other hand, how to transform China's rising power into effective and constructive international influence was still seen as a weak point of China's strategic plan (Ibid.). Based on a critical analysis of Nye's conceptualization, Men Honghua suggests that, when analyzing China's soft power, this theory should be enriched with "Chinese practice" (*Zhongguo de shijian* 中国的实践), realizing a "local adaptation" or "localization" (*bentuhua* 本土化) of the concept (Ibid., pp. 10-11). In this regard, the author believes that China's soft power should include five key elements: culture (*wenhua*), ideas or concepts (*guannian* 观念), development model (*fazhan moshi* 发展模式), international institutions or regimes (*guoji zhidu* 国际制度), and international image (*guoji xingxiang* 国际形象) (Ibid., p. 11). The descriptions of these core components of soft power given by Men Honghua are noteworthy and deserve a more in-depth analysis. Defining culture as the sum of material and spiritual wealth created by humanity in the course of society's historical process of development, including in particular education, literature, art, religion, science, and other spiritual wealth, the author believes that culture is perhaps incapable of directly changing the objective world, but it can indeed change the people, and it is the people that, according to their own conscience, ultimately transform the objective world (Men Honghua 2007a, p. 11). Therefore, culture is the base of a country's soft power because the "persuasive role of soft power" (*ruan shili de shuofu zuoyong* 软实力的说服作用), its "ability to penetrate" (*shentou nengli* 渗透能力), and its "attractive force" (*xinyinli* 吸引力) primarily emerge through culture, making the identification with and influence of cultural and political values the core of a country's soft power (Ibid.). Any culture having a leading role is not a closed culture, but one that exercises its international influence and, in tune with the trend of international culture, "goes towards the world" (*zou xiang shijie* 走向世界), in an interaction that requires the modernization of traditional culture (Ibid.). Being the focus of the discourse on Chinese soft power presented in this dissertation, more will be considered in Chapter 5 regarding an assessment of the role of culture, in particular traditional culture, as a core element of China's soft power.

As far as ideas and concepts (*guannian*) are concerned, Men Honghua argues that their reform is directly linked with the progress of humanity and that, especially in the case of China, a country that has entered a "large scale strategic transformation" (*daguimo zhanlüe zhuanxing* 大规模战略转型), this "provides the beacons and roadmap for the exploration of a path of modernization" (*wei Zhongguo xiandaihua daolu de tansuo tigong zhixiangbiao he luxiantu* 为中国现代化道路的探索提供指向标和路线图), becoming the "main vessel for the promotion of China's soft power" (*Zhongguo ruan shili tisheng de zhu mailuo* 中国软实力提升的主脉络) (Men Honghua 2007a, p. 11).

The development model (*fazhan moshi*) is another aspect that belongs to the toolkit of China's soft power, as previously discussed. Citing the definition provided by Yu Keping 俞可

平 (2006), Men Honghua defines the development model as a series of development strategies, systems, and ideas with clear-cut characteristics, and states that the development model is an important part of a country's soft power (Men Honghua 2007a, p. 11). He mentions the examples of ancient China's cultural model in East Asia, the industrialization model in Eastern Europe after the end of World War II, the so-called "Moscow Consensus" (*Mosike gongshi* 莫斯科共识), and the democratic model of the United States, the so-called "Washington Consensus" (*Huashengdun gongshi* 华盛顿共识), which, in spite of its influence in the entire world, has recently received questioning by developing countries (Ibid.). After the beginning of the policy of reform and opening-up in 1978, China saw the development of a socialist path with Chinese characteristics and this led Western scholars to start talking about the so-called "Beijing Consensus" (*Beijing gongshi* 北京共识), which, thanks to the rapid and steady economic development that has made China the new economic engine of Asia and the entire world, is having a "spillover effect" (*yichu xiaoying* 溢出效应) in developing countries, in contrast to the Washington Consensus (Ibid., pp. 11-12). With symbols such as the theories of scientific development and harmonious society, China's development model consists of both an increase in hard and soft power and purses an organic combination of these two sides of power, making it one of the most important sources of Chinese soft power (Ibid., p 12).

Men Honghua also treats the subject of international institutions (*guoji zhidu*) in a similar way to the discussion put forward by Ding Sheng (2008) described in Section 4.1. International institutions, which Ding Sheng (2008, p. 55) calls "international regimes", contribute to facilitating the process of agenda-setting. According to Men Honghua (2007a, p. 12), national institutions can also be considered a pillar of soft power because they can help a country achieve a leading position in international relations, setting the example for other countries and, while doing so, allow for a considerable gain in terms of economic and political advantages (Ibid.). At the same time, the level of participation in international institutions is also an indication of a country's soft power (Ibid.). As a late-comer in participating in international institutions, China has moved from a position of marginal, passive, and inactive participation to one of active involvement and creative proactivity, and its interaction with international systems has given shape to a "criss-crossed interwoven picture that has gone from weak to strong" (*yi fu zongheng jiaozhi, you dan zhi nong de huajuan* 一幅纵横交织、由淡至浓的画卷), making the breath and depth of China's participation in international institutions a universally recognized sign of the increase of China's soft power (Ibid., pp. 12-13).

Last but not least, Men Honghua treats the subject of a country's international image (*guoji xingxiang*), which he believes refers to the external and public comprehensive knowledge and evaluation of a country's politics, economy, society, culture, and natural elements, as well as the impression that its past conduct and deeds have left on the international community in terms of willpower, determination, and abilities, based on which the other members of the international community can respond to its actions and predict its future behaviors, especially in the context of strategic games (Men Honghua 2007a, p. 13). But a country's international image can also be considered as the extension of domestic politics and general affairs because, when it is positive, it can help promote the development of the country's politics, economy and culture domestically, while promoting friendly relationships with other countries internationally (Ibid.). Nowadays, international image is considered "one of the most important intangible assets of a sovereign country" (*zhuquan guojia zui zhongyao de wuxing zichan zhi yi* 主权国家最重要的无形资产之一) and all major countries equally see it, together with its molding, as a core



element of soft power (Ibid.). The author further suggests that culture, ideas, and development model constitute “inner potentialities” (*neigong* 内功) of soft power, while international image represents its “outer potentiality” (*waigong* 外公), and the two are connected by and interrelated with international systems (Ibid., p. 13).

Moving on, the year 2010 was very prolific in the debate on soft power in China with the publication of at least three volumes discussing this topic. *Guojia Ruan Shili* 国家软实力 (*National Soft Power*), written by Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan, offers a comprehensive overview of the soft power concept, including topics such as: the formation of the theory, its historical origins, the components of soft power, the relationship between hard and soft power, the methods to assess a country’s soft power, an evaluation of the soft power of global actors, including the United States, Russia, and Japan, and an analysis of China’s soft power (Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010, foreword, pp. 8-9). The authors define soft power as follows:

一国的文化、价值观念、社会制度和发展模式的国际影响力和感召力，其最高目标是实现本国文化、价值观念、社会制度和发展模式在国际社会中的主体化，最大限度地发挥国家的国际影响力。

(Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010, p. 2)

The international influence and appeal of a country’s culture, values, social systems, and development model; its [soft power’s] highest target is realizing the topicalization, within the international community, of that country’s culture, values, social systems, and development model, developing the country’s international influence to the maximum limit.

(Translated by the present author.)

The authors further argue that soft power is a key component of a country’s comprehensive power that is progressively becoming an important indicator according to which one can weigh power changes among countries and evaluate the direction of a country’s foreign policy; in line with Nye’s definition, soft power includes culture (*wenhua*), ideology (*yishi xingtai* 意识形态), foreign policy (*waijiao zhengce* 外交政策), and control over international institutions (*guoji zhidu de zhangkong* 国际制度的掌控) (Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010, p. 30). Nevertheless, the authors believe that a country’s domestic policies (*guonei zhengce* 国内政策), system innovation capacity (*zhidu chuangxin nengli* 制度创新能力), and the personal charm of leaders (*lingdaoren de ge ren meili* 领导人的个人魅力), under certain circumstances, can also be transformed into soft power (Ibid.). All of these components are placed in a relationship to soft power at different levels: a country’s culture is the “core of soft power” (*ruan shili de hexin* 软实力的核心), a country’s ideology represents the “politicization of soft power” (*ruan shili de zhengzhihua* 软实力的政治化), a country’s foreign policy constitutes the “expansion of soft power” (*ruan shili de kuozhan* 软实力的扩展), and a country’s control over international institutions corresponds to the “internationalization of soft power” (*ruan shili de guojihua* 软实力的国际化) (Ibid., pp. 30-43). In regard to culture, the authors limit their attention to the “spiritual level” (*jingshen cengmian* 精神层面), comprising spiritual beliefs (*jingshen xinyang* 精神信仰), philosophical systems (*zhexue tixi* 哲学体系), ideology (*sixiang yishi* 思想意识), values (*jiazhiguan*), aesthetic inclinations and interests (*shenmei qingqu* 审美情趣), national character (*minzu xingge* 民族性格), and ethics (*lunli guannian* 伦理观念),

among other elements (Ibid.). The other levels that compose a country's culture include: the "behavioral level" (*xingwei cengmian* 行为层面), which include elements such as lifestyles (*shenghuo fangshi* 生活方式), modes of production (*shengchan fangshi* 生产方式), family patterns (*jiating moshi* 家庭模式), conduct etiquette (*xingwei liyi* 行为礼仪), and interpersonal relationships (*renji guanxi* 人际关系); the "institutional level" (*zhidu cengmian* 制度层面), which include elements such as the form of government (*zhengzhi tizhi* 政治体制), economic model (*jingji moshi* 经济模式), social organizations (*shehui zuzhi* 社会组织), and legal institutions (*falü dianzhang* 法律典章); and the "material level" (*wuzhi cengmian* 物质层面), which refers to the products of the mutual combination of human labor and natural materials (*renlei laodong yu ziran wuzhi xiang jiehe de chanwu* 人类劳动与自然物质相结合的产物), comprising clothing and food and beverage, residential conditions, means of transportation, work equipment, arts and crafts and technology, and other "objectified manifestations of culture" (*wuhua de wenhua xianxiang* 物化的文化现象) (Ibid.).

More will be said about the conditions in which culture becomes a resource of soft power in Chapter 5, however, it is interesting to note that, with regard to China's soft power, the analysis is carried out in the framework of China's peaceful rise and takes its lead from two assumptions: first, China is both "a country with an ancient civilization and a long history" (*yongyou youjiu lishi de wenming guguo* 拥有悠久历史的文明古国) and "a great socialist country in the course of a process of modernization" (*chuyu xiandaihua jincheng zhi zhong de shehuizhuyi daguo* 处于现代化进程之中的社会主义大国); second, China is rich in soft power resources (*ruan shili ziyuan* 软实力资源), but there are still many aspects in its soft power construction that require improvement and upgrade (Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010, p. 180). Moreover, soft power is seen as instrumental for China's peaceful rise because it helps create a positive internal and external environment in regard to two aspects: first, soft power can give a radical push to the construction of a harmonious society and help realize a "long period of national peace and order" (*guojia changzhi jiuan* 国家长治久安), satisfying the internal needs for China's peaceful rise; second, from an external point of view, soft power development is conducive to pursuing a "good neighborly foreign policy" (*mulin waijiao zhengce* 睦邻外交政策) and eliminating the negative influence of the "China threat theory" (Ibid., pp. 228-229). The relationship between soft power and China's peaceful rise/development was described in Chapter 3, while some of the aspects that are taken into consideration in this volume, and that will be discussed in greater detail in the course of the present work, are the historical vicissitudes of Chinese soft power, the constituents of China's soft power and its deficiencies, and a few individual cases related to soft power, such as the 2008 earthquake in Wenchuan 汶川<sup>46</sup>, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and the issue of food safety (Ibid., pp. 180-221).

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<sup>46</sup> In order to understand the approach of the two authors, it is useful to briefly consider the case of the Great Sichuan earthquake, the 2008 earthquake in Wenchuan, so as to highlight the relation of such a tragic event with soft power. In fact, Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, pp. 193-203) discuss the domestic construction and molding of soft power based on six aspects related to how China reacted to the earthquake that hit the county of Wenchuan (Wenchuan xian 汶川县), in the province of Sichuan (Sichuan sheng 四川省) on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008: the "leadership's core" (*lingdao hexin* 领导核心), "disaster diplomacy" (*zainan waijiao* 灾难外交), media (*meiti* 媒体), the construction of legal systems (*fazhi jianshe* 法制建设), military-civilian relationships (*junmin guanxi* 军民关系), and the awakening of the citizens' awareness (*gongmin yishi de juexing* 公民意识的觉醒) as well as the construction of a civil society (*gongmin shehui de jianshe* 公民社会的建设).

An interesting point of view is also that presented by Shu Mingwu 舒明武 in his book, written in 2010, *Zhongguo Ruan Shili* 中国软实力 (*China's Soft Power*). In the preface, the author foresees a future in which China will be the “purest” (*zui dunjie* 最纯洁), “most honest” (*zui shanliang* 最善良), “fairest” (*zui gongzheng* 最公正), “most perfect” (*zui wanmei* 最完美), “most lovable” (*zui ke'ai* 最可爱), and “most charming” (*zui miren* 最迷人) country in the world, and to reach this status, the author further argues, every “soft strength” (*ruanxing lilian* 软性力量) making up China’s soft power must be given appropriate consideration (Shu Mingwu 2010, preface, pp. 1-2). The author elaborates on the status of the research on soft power in China, stating that even though good results have been obtained there are still many problems (Ibid., foreword, p. 2). Firstly, as a scientific system, soft power is still insufficiently analyzed, giving rise to the phenomenon of “only being able to see isolated details, and not the bigger picture” (*zhi jian shumu bu jian senlin* 只见树木不见森林) (Ibid.). This happens, for example, in the case of culture, which is excessively valued as a form of soft power, while the system of thought (*siwei* 思维) is overlooked (Ibid.). Secondly, there is still disorder in the arguments about the main components of soft power (Ibid.). Thirdly, the research draws too much upon Western theories, appearing profound and even abstruse, with the result of being difficult to popularize (Ibid.).

It is interesting to note that, thus far, this seems to be the only approach analyzed that, to some degree, tones down the role of culture in the discourse on China’s soft power. Conversely, according to the author, the make-up of soft power in contemporary China should be defined as a “complete national setup” (*wanzheng de guojia tixi* 完整的国家体系) composed of “five systems which are mutually independent but also organically connected” (*xianghu duli er you youji lianxi de wu da xitong* 相互独立而又有机联系的五大系统) (Shu Mingwu 2010, foreword, pp. 2-3). The five systems are: 1) China’s new spiritual system (*Zhongguo xin jingshen xitong* 中国新精神系统), which is the soul and the girder of China’s soft power, including, among other elements, the ideals (*lixiang* 理想), beliefs (*xinnian* 信念), morals (*daode* 道德), enthusiasm (*jiqing* 激情), courage (*yongqi* 勇气), determination (*yizhi* 意志), and stamina (*yili* 毅力) of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation; 2) China’s new system of thought (*Zhongguo xin siwei xitong* 中国新思维系统), which comprises the ways of thinking (*siwei fangshi* 思维方式), habitual and new, of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation and is the inevitable fruit of China’s new spiritual system, also ensuring that the development of the strength of that system receives a solid guarantee; 3) China’s new system of concepts (*Zhongguo xin guannian xitong* 中国新观念系统), which comprises the new knowledge that Chinese people have acquired regarding a series of situations and is the inevitable fruit of the first two systems; 4) China’s new cultural system (*Zhongguo xin wenhua xitong* 中国新文化系统), which, referring to culture in a narrow sense (*xiayi shang de wenhua* 狭义上的文化), comprises Chinese philosophy, science, literature, art, academia, and so on, and derives from the evolution, enhancement, and consolidation of the other three systems; 5) China’s new system of education (*Zhongguo xin jiaoyu xitong* 中国新教育系统), which is flesh and blood with the systems previously mentioned, but also has a certain independent character (Ibid.).

It is noteworthy that when discussing China’s new cultural system, the author chooses a narrow approach to the concept of culture. His focus is on innovation in the field of Chinese culture, in the sense of “bringing forth new ideas in relation to the Chinese thought, theories,

philosophies, literature, art, and so forth” (*Zhongguo sixiang, lilun, zhexue, wenxue, yishu deng fangmian de chuangxin* 中国思想、理论、哲学、文学、艺术等方面的创新), even though he admits that, in a broader sense, China’s new spiritual system, system of thought, and system of concepts are a part of China’s new culture, representing its prerequisites, inner details, and foundations (Shu Mingwu 2010, p. 168).

Last but not least, reference must be made to the book written by Zheng Biao, in the same year, entitled *Zhongguo Ruan Shili* 中国软实力 (*China’s Soft Power*). The author advocates innovation on China’s part to create its own soft power theory, as Chinese and Western cultures are different (Zheng Biao 2010, p. 108). He further argues that exploring and establishing a “Chinese soft power theory” (*Zhongguo ruan shili lilun* 中国软实力理论), and, by means of powerful ideological and theoretical tools suitable to China’s needs, correctly describing and analyzing the structural evolution of the world and the cultural challenges thereby created, are tasks that possess a considerably urgent and relevant meaning (Ibid.). Starting from the assumptions that, with regard to core values and compared to Western culture, Chinese culture has a “moral superiority that is difficult to match” (*nanyi bini de daode youshi* 难以比拟的道德优势) and that culture represents China’s “traditional advantage” (*chuantong youshi* 传统优势), Zheng Biao (2010, pp. 108-109) further argues that, in China, soft power (*ruan shili*) can also be called “cultural soft power” (*wenhua ruan shili*). In this sense, the necessity to bring forth new ideas to establish a theory of soft power more suitable for China’s needs and conditions comes from the fact that every country has a different cultural system. The author argues, in fact, that different nationalities have different territories, human affairs, histories, systems of values, and spiritual worlds; and hence different cultures (Zheng Biao 2010, p. 109). In a similar way to the explanation provided by Shu Mingwu (2010) presented above, Zheng Biao provides two definitions of culture: culture in a broad sense (*guangyi de wenhua* 广义的文化) and culture in a narrow sense (*xiayi de wenhua* 狭义的文化) (Zheng Biao 2010, p. 109). Broadly speaking, culture is the “sum of material and spiritual wealth produced in the course of humanity’s historical practice” (*renlei lishi shijian guocheng zhong suo chuangzao de wuzhi caifu he jingshen caifu de zonghe* 人类历史实践过程中所创造的物质财富和精神财富的总和); in a narrow sense, culture is defined as the “social ideology and the systems and structures that correspond to it” (*shehui yishi xingtai yiji yu zhi xiang shiyong de zhidu he jigou* 社会意识形态以及与之相适应的制度和机构), and it is used to indicate humanity’s spiritual life as well as to make general reference to common knowledge (Ibid.). This definition of culture resembles that given by Zhu Majie (2002a, pp. 23-24) provided in Section 3.1, also following a similar differentiation between culture (*wenhua*) and civilization (*wenming* 文明): in a broad sense, these two concepts can be considered to be interchangeable, but civilization indicates, to a greater extent, a certain level of development of a culture, the state a culture has reached, and even the society’s stage of development after a period of savagery (Zheng Biao 2010, p. 109).

Based on this brief introduction to the discourse on soft power presented by Chinese scholars, the following chapters will provide a more in-depth analysis of the meaning of culture in the Chinese context and in relation to soft power. Thus far, a review of the most relevant approaches to the definition of a soft power theory more suitable to China’s current situation has shown that the notion put forward by Joseph S. Nye has undergone a great deal of analysis, elaboration, and transformation after entering the Chinese context. In a similar way to the international *discourse on Chinese soft power*, both connoted as its intrinsic, theoretical

meaning and as a national resource, the *Chinese discourse on soft power* is rich and variegated, and it does not always reach uniform conclusions. In this regard, it is important to note that the authors of the contributions presented above come from different fields of research, ranging from science and technology and national security, to international security and great power strategy, from creativity and innovation to global politics and economics. According to Liu Deding (2013, p. 3), who carries out an in-depth study of the concept of “*wenhua ruan shili*”, in China, the study of soft power is currently characterized by “multi-perspective research” (*duozhong shijiao de yanjiu* 多重视角的研究), which includes, at least, four macro areas: 1) analyses of soft power from the point of view of global politics and international relations; 2) analyses carried out from the point of view of the components of cultural soft power, covering, for instance, the meaning of soft power, its significance for China, and traditional culture as a source of Chinese cultural soft power; 3) analyses of the current state of China’s soft power; 4) analyses of the path towards the enhancement of China’s soft power. The author further argues that the current research on soft power in China is interdisciplinary (*duoxueke* 多学科), with cultural soft power being conceived as an issue that concerns both the topics of cohesiveness, attractiveness, and inspirational force of Chinese culture in the context of contemporary China and how contemporary Chinese culture can coalesce the will of the people internally, while establishing an external image (Ibid.). The scope of research involves many disciplines and specializations, including philosophy, culture, politics, history, Marxist theory, management studies, communication studies, and social studies, because scholars specialized in a variety of disciplines all draw soft power into their own research areas (Ibid., p. 4). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, with almost all Chinese scholars affirming that culture is an indispensable source of a country’s soft power, the origins of the concept of “*wenhua ruan shili*” are closely related with the Western theory of soft power, but also, and even more so, with the Chinese “theory of cultural strength” (*wenhua li lilun* 文化力理论) (Ibid.).

As a matter of fact, volumes such as those published recently by Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013) and Liu Deding (2013), in addition to the abovementioned study by Zheng Biao (2010), testify to the predominance of culture among the sources of China’s soft power. This realization gives rise to the question as to why, in the Chinese discourse on soft power, this soft power resource has come to prevail over the other resources indicated by Nye, namely political values and foreign policies, overlapping, at times, with discussions related to the ideological, moral, and spiritual life of the Chinese people. Why is, as mentioned by Zheng Biao (2010, pp. 108-109), culture considered “China’s traditional advantage” and “soft power” also referred to as “cultural soft power”? With the identification of several areas that require further analysis, the following pages will expound upon these and other related issues, attempting to dig deeper into the Chinese discourse on soft power theory and practice.

#### 4.4 Soft power in the Chinese context: schools of thought and ever-growing popularity

Coined in the United States in the post-Cold War era with the aim of describing an alternative route for the most powerful Western country to maintain its international hegemony in spite of the changing degree of importance of military and economic strengths in the global balance of power, the concept of soft power has gradually made its way into the Chinese context. In the previous pages, much was taken into consideration regarding Nye’s

conceptualization and attention was paid to a number of interpretations put forward by scholars, both Western and Chinese, with the aim of enriching the soft power theory and finding an answer to a series of issues originally left unsolved. As will be further described, in the course of the theory's conceptual migration to China, the theoretical frame upon which the discourse on soft power was built has undergone a process of transformation and expansion, taking on characteristics that were originally absent from Nye's theory. The previous sections focused on the abundant international views on China's soft power, including English-language contributions written by both Western and Chinese scholars, and made reference to some of the most relevant Chinese-language volumes that testify to the richness and multiformity of the current debate on soft power in China. In doing so, a link between an international and a local perspective on the discourse on Chinese soft power was provided. Moreover, the brief examinations carried out thus far have shown that a high degree of analysis and re-elaboration has affected the theory of soft power put forward by Joseph S. Nye in the 1990s once absorbed into the Chinese context. Today, the Chinese soft power discourse appears prolific and diversified, embracing various perspectives and touching upon different fields of study. It is indeed an interdisciplinary research area that does not always present consensus among scholars.

That being said, as will be shown in the following chapters, the idea that seems to prevail is that culture occupies the most prominent position among the soft power resources available to China, as embodied by the use of the formulation "*wenhua ruan shili*" (cultural soft power). In this regard, Liu Deding (2013, p. 4) states that almost all Chinese scholars side with the idea that culture constitutes an indispensable source of a country's soft power. The author specifies that, after the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007 and Hu Jintao's proposal of the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" (enhance the country's cultural soft power), that of "*guojia wenhua ruan shili*" (national cultural soft power) became "the most popular school of thought" (*zui renme de xianxue* 最热门的显学) in China; however, even though scholars began to produce numerous analyses regarding the meaning of cultural soft power, its importance, the current state of its development in China, and methods to enhance it, based on their own fields of research, a unanimous account of what exactly the idea and the connotations of cultural soft power are has yet to be formed (Ibid., p. 39). According to the author, the points of view that appear to be relatively representative of this intricate discourse include the following aspects: 1) cultural soft power is a key component of soft power and its basic content; according to this point of view, a country's culture is generated in conformity with the country's traditions, customs, core values, religious beliefs, ethics, morals, philosophy, system of thought, lifestyle, and national character, and it reflects in the choice of the form of government, institutional organizations, political values, and ideology orientation, while at the same time penetrating into the national willpower, national behavior, and foreign policy, forming the national image as a whole; 2) cultural soft power is viewed as opposed to hard power, indicating the cohesive, mobilizing, and spiritual force exercised domestically by traditional culture, values, ideology, and other cultural factors, as well as the power to permeate, attract, and persuade exercised externally; in this sense, the extension of culture is ampler, considering the value and meaning it has inside the country; and 3) cultural soft power is the embodiment of a country's culture and knowledge, and the resources, capabilities, and creations of the intellectual system, value system, strategic policy, diplomatic methods, and education system are all part of cultural soft power; from this point of view, it is easy to see that culture is not only a country's "external

power” (*duiwai de quanli* 对外的权力), but also the “power of the nationals” (*guomin de quanli* 国民的权利) (Ibid., pp. 39-40).

Thus far, two aspects that deserve further consideration can be identified: first, the discrepancies between the Chinese discourse on soft power and the Western interpretation of the same concept are once again confirmed; and second, the difficulty in finding a unanimous opinion regarding the meaning and connotations of Chinese soft power does not seem easy to overcome, with the emergence of a variety of schools of thought. Regarding the first point raised, in discussing the abovementioned points of view, Liu Deding (2013, p. 40) places emphasis on the fact that they represent an unceasing deepening of the knowledge that Chinese scholars have of cultural soft power, progressively moving away from the study of Joseph S. Nye’s theory, to expand its extensions and enrich its connotations; in spite of the lack of a unanimous opinion on the concept, that of cultural soft power possesses an ampler depth and scope. In this regard, two points deserve further attention: first, in cultural soft power, “culture” is intended as a “wide cultural concept and system” (*da wenhua de gainian he xitong* 大文化的概念和系统), including “spiritual elements of the economic base and political superstructure” (*jingji jichu he zhengzhi shangceng jianzhu zhong de jingshen yaosu* 经济基础和政治上层建筑中的精神要素) as well as “the spiritual superstructure and its manifestations” (*jingshen shangceng jianzhu jiqi biao xian xingshi* 精神上层建筑及其表现形式); and second, the domestic understanding of cultural soft power includes knowing the relationship between hard and soft power, considering both as parts of CNP (Ibid., pp. 40-41). In addition, it must also be clarified that the existing interpretation of the concept of cultural soft power envisions it as rather “passive” (*jingtai* 静态) as it places emphasis on the fact that every cultural resource turns into a form of soft power or soft power outcome; yet, cultural soft power does not only refer to a state already achieved, but what is more important is the process and mechanism through which every resource can be turned into actual national soft power (Ibid., p. 41).

The discussion will now turn to the emergence of different schools of thought amongst the debates on soft power conducted by Chinese scholars, based on the classifications proposed by Western China-specialists such as Glaser and Murphy (2009) and Shambaugh (2013).

As previously pointed out, there seems to be widespread agreement among Chinese scholars regarding the relevance of culture in the discourse on China’s soft power. Yet, there exist deeper layers of analysis that cannot be ignored. Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 13), for instance, note that the majority of Chinese sociologists and philosophers believe that culture is the core of soft power; besides this mainstream view, however, there is a smaller cohort of intellectuals, in particular international relations experts, that, although not denying the importance of culture, believe that the core of soft power is political power. The authors identify former director of the Shanghai Institute of International Studies Yu Xintian 俞新天 as the main supporter of the “culture school”, while the second school of thought is represented by Professor Yan Xuetong 阎学通 (Ibid., p. 13 and p. 17). It is thus interesting to look at the opinions of these leading scholars more closely.

First and foremost, Yu Xintian (2008, pp. 15-16) believes that, when attempting to define soft power, among a variety of elements, it should be kept in mind that any concept or political value reflects a specific culture and system of values. Thoughts, ideas, principles, as well as institutions, strategies, and policies are all part of soft power; the core of soft power is culture, with the core of culture, that is values, having the utmost importance (Ibid., p. 16). In contrast to Yan Xuetong, Yu Xintian believes that scholars of international politics have for a long time

neglected or misunderstood the role of culture, equating it to the Classics or the pure academic study of history, literature, and philosophy, and failing to see that cultural values have decided our approach and viewpoint in relation to everything that exists in the world. Thus, the author states, thoughts, ideas, and principles, that is cultural values, possess “the power of manipulation” (*caozuoxing shili* 操作性实力) in the same way as political power does (Ibid.). In the Chinese context, the “culture” Yu Xintian refers to is “contemporary Chinese culture” (*dangdai Zhonghua wenhua* 当代中华文化), which is reflected in the way of thinking and behaving of the present-day Chinese people and is the manifestation of the flow of traditional culture until today: it includes “the result achieved through the Sinicization of Marxism – socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*Makesizhuyi de Zhongguohua de chengguo – Zhongguo tese de shehuizhuyi lilun* 马克思主义的中国化的成果—中国特色的社会主义理论), “the Western culture already accepted by Chinese people” (*yi bei Zhongguo ren jieshou de Xifang wenhua* 已经被中国人所接受的西方文化), which has, for the most part, taken on “Chinese features” (*Zhongguo tedian* 中国特点), and the “revolutionary culture created since the foundation of the CPC” (*Zhongguo Gongchandang chengli zhihou chuangzao de gemin wenhua* 中国共产党成立之后创造的革命文化) as well as the “culture [created] after the establishment of the Republic” (*Gongheguo jianli zhihou de wenhua* 共和国建立之后的文化) (Ibid.). In addition, the role of ideology in the soft power discourse, intended as the cultural values advocated by a country’s government and used to coalesce the will of the people, should not be underestimated: the more the ideology conforms to the trends of times, the more the people will approve of it and the country’s soft power will increase as a result (Ibid.).

Among the scholars belonging to the “culture school”, Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 14) include Chinese Professor Fang Changping, stressing the fact that the view that the core of soft power is culture has been supported by the observation of the United States’ behavior. In his comparison between American and Chinese soft power, in fact, Fang Changping (2007, p. 25) detects a decline in American soft power, due in particular to the government’s choices in the field of foreign policy. This decline is thus caused by “what America does” (*Meiguo zuo shenme* 美国做什么), whereas “what America is” (*Meiguo shi shenme* 美国是什么) still possesses a strong attractive force, which is one of the reasons why the soft power of the United States still occupies a position of advantage.

As previously mentioned, the second school of thought considered here is represented by the opinions expressed by Professor Yan Xuetong. Together with his colleague Xu Jin 徐进, the scholar proposes a method to quantify soft power, according to which China’s soft power, measured in terms of “international attractiveness” (*guoji xiyinli* 国际吸引力), “international mobilization capability” (*guoji dongyuan li* 国际动员力), and “domestic mobilization capability” (*guonei dongyuan li* 国内动员力) appears to be, in 2008, a third of that of the United States due to the fact that, in regard to international attractiveness, the degree of universality of China’s political system and national culture is lower than that of the United States, as is the case for the number of allies China has in the area of international mobilization capability, whereas in regard to domestic mobilization capability China appears to be stronger (Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin 2008). In greater detail, the area of international attractiveness refers to the ability of a country’s charm to attract other countries to voluntarily imitate and follow it, and it comes from two sources: the “attractiveness of the national model” (*guojia moshi de xiyinli* 国家模式的吸引力) and “cultural attractiveness” (*wenhua xiyinli* 文化吸引力) (Ibid., p.



26). The former occurs when the success of a country's model makes it possible for that country to attract other countries to imitate its system and policies; while the latter includes the affinity between countries with a similar culture, which makes it easy for them to stand together in international affairs, and the international influence a country's culture is able to exercise, which is based on its international spread and facilitates understanding and acceptance (Ibid.). The other two aspects mentioned are, respectively: the influence exercised on other countries without the use of coercive methods and the political support a country's government can obtain domestically without the use of mandatory measures (Ibid.). Thus, according to the authors, China will only be able to reduce the aforementioned gap provided that the "political investment" (*zhengzhi touru* 政治投入) in the construction of soft power is raised, including: establishing guiding principles for the balanced development of the key constituents of the country's power; taking an enhancement of the prestige of China's international strategy as the starting point; taking an increase in the number of strategic allies as the main aim of soft power construction; and taking the establishment of social equality and justice as the political basis for soft power construction (Ibid., p. 29).

Similarly to the classification proposed by Glaser and Murphy, Shambaugh (2013, p. 215) also discusses the existence of different "camps" in the discourse on soft power in China, summarized as "culture", "politics", and "economic development" and all with one element in common, that is the complaint that China lacks soft power. More specifically, among the Chinese scholars that consider culture as the key element in soft power, Shambaugh (2013, pp. 212-213) identifies two different groups, led by Chinese scholar Men Honghua, who is representative of what the author calls the "values as culture" school<sup>47</sup>, and Yu Xintian, respectively. The author agrees with the preceding discussion in identifying Yan Xuetong as the main proponent of the thesis according to which the key to China's soft power is the country's political system, but also proposes the identification of a third cohort of Chinese scholars who believe that the core of China's soft power is the economic growth that has resulted from its development, in what has been called the "China Model" (*Zhongguo moshi*), the "Chinese Experience" (*Zhongguo jingyan* 中国经验), the "Chinese Path" (*Zhongguo daolu* 中国道路), or the "Chinese Example" (*Zhongguo lizi* 中国例子) (Ibid., p. 214).

As will be expounded upon in the following chapters, the Chinese leadership appears to have embraced the thesis according to which culture is the core of China's soft power, thus siding with the culture school. This observation will be corroborated by the examination of the process through which the soft power concept has evolved from a theoretical notion studied by scholars to a national strategy aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the country's cultural soft power resources, embodied by the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" officially introduced by Hu Jintao in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2007. More specifically, Chapter 6 will show how the CPC's official discourse plays a guiding role, reflected in the terminology officially used, in determining the orientation towards which the theory and practice of soft power have been evolving in the Chinese context. Reference will thus be made to the evolution of the Chinese terms employed in the debate on soft power, focusing on salient aspects related to the process through which the expression "*wenhua ruan shili*" was created on the basis of that of "*ruan shili*" (soft power) borrowed from the West. It must be clarified that, although referring to Hu Jintao's speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress as the official event that sanctions the acceptance of soft power strategies within the political agenda of the CPC,

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<sup>47</sup> This scholar's point of view regarding China's traditional values will be expounded upon in Section 5.2.

generally speaking, the Western discourse on Chinese soft power seems to gloss over the emphasis the former President places on culture by using the relatively new expression “*wenhua ruan shili*”<sup>48</sup>. This could simply be due to the lack of a real counterpart for this conceptualization that cannot find a proper translation in English terminology (Gu Junwei 古俊伟 2011, p. 67). Some attentive scholars (among others, Glaser and Murphy 2009; Guo Jiemin 郭洁敏 2009, 2012; Aukia 2014; Zappone 2014), however, have noticed this and other discrepancies, and the present work will follow their lead in exploring the connotations of “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua ruan shili*”, as well as investigating a variety of other derivatives.

Looking at how the abovementioned expressions appear in the Chinese context, it must also be noted that intellectuals and CPC leaders alike opt, by and large, for the term “*ruan shili*” among a variety of possible translations employed to convey the meaning of the English term “soft power” in the Chinese language, which include, according to experts in the field (among others, Liu Qing and Wang Litao 2007; Cho and Jeong 2008; Glaser and Murphy 2009; Guo Jiemin 2009, 2012; Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010; Qu Xiaoying 屈潇影 2010), the expressions “*ruan lilian* 软力量”, “*ruan quanli* 软权力”, and “*ruan guoli*”, in addition to “*ruan shili*”<sup>49</sup>. Constituting part of the intrinsic characteristics of the Chinese interpretation of soft power, this issue, which primarily revolves around the translation of the word “power”, will be expounded upon in Chapter 7; however, for the present discussion, it will suffice to clarify that, besides the schools of thought discussed thus far, the Chinese soft power discourse also presents different “theories” based on the very specific interpretation of the concept of “power”. Guo Jiemin (2012, p. 17), for instance, stresses that around the concepts of “*ruan quanli*” and “*ruan shili*”, even though they derive from the same origin, different ranges of application and fields of research have developed based on “power” translated as “*shili*” or “*quanli*”, and forming two different theories which the author defines “*shili shuo* 实力说” (strength theory) and “*quanli shuo* 权力说” (power theory). Even though “strength” is the basis of “power” and the two concepts are somewhat connected, it is nonetheless important to understand that “*ruan shili*” and “*ruan quanli*” do not merely represent two variations in the translation of the expression “soft power” (Ibid.).

In a similar way, Liu Deding (2013, p. 4) elaborates on the discrepancies that emerge in the Chinese discourse on soft power, in relation to different academic disciplines and fields of research, and uses the example of the advice given by well-known Chinese scholar Pang

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<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that even the father of the soft power theory does not report the complete expression “cultural soft power” when referring to the message conveyed in 2007 by then-President Hu Jintao and by President Xi Jinping on more recent occasions (Nye 2015).

<sup>49</sup> In the translations proposed, the adjective “*ruan* 软” corresponds to the English meaning of “soft” or “flexible”. Analyzing the various combinations of this adjective with the transpositions for “power”, generally speaking, the translation of the word “*shili* 实力” in Chinese-English dictionaries is “actual strength” or “strength”, while the first meaning of the word “*lilian* 力量” is “physical strength”, “*quanli* 权力” is translated as “power” or “authority”, and “*guoli* 国力” as “national power” (or strength, might). See: *Hanying Cidian (di san ban)* 汉英词典 (第三版) - *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Third Edition). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2010, s.v. *guoli* 国力, *lilian* 力量, *quanli* 权力, *ruan* 软, and *shili* 实力. As well, scholars have detected the existence of translations that are peculiar to the Taiwanese discourse on soft power. For instance, Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung (2008, p. 426) highlight that, in Taiwan, “soft” has been translated as “*rouxing* 柔性” or “*ruanxing* 软性” and “power” as “*quanli*”, “*guoli*”, and “*lilian*”. According to Zhang Xiaoming 张小明 (2005), one Taiwanese scholar has called “soft power” “*rouxing guoli* 柔性国力”. More will be said about these and other related aspects in Chapter 7.

Zhongying, who suggests that the appropriate translations for the term “soft power” are the expressions “*ruan quanli*” and “*ruan quanshi* 软权势”<sup>50</sup>, as they are closer to the meaning originally attributed to the concept by Joseph S. Nye when analyzing the decline of American hegemony and power reconstruction. As a matter of fact, as there is still no consensus on what soft power actually represents for China, Chinese scholars also disagree as to what Chinese translation is the most suitable to convey the meaning of this English concept in the Chinese context. These considerations are confirmed by Joseph S. Nye and Wang Jisi who state the following:

There does not seem to be any official effort in China to define the term soft power, and Chinese scholars continue to debate its scope, definition, and application. Moreover, they do not agree with one another as to how that phrase in English should be better translated into Chinese, since at least three Chinese words—*shili*, *quanli*, and *liliang*—carry meanings similar to power. Different translations thus reflect nuanced interpretations of the term soft power.

(Nye and Wang 2009a, p. 28)

Similarly, Glaser and Murphy (2009, p. 11n5) point out that although former President Hu Jintao used the term “*ruan shili*” in his keynote speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2007, the appropriateness of the term is still being debated by Chinese scholars. Other Western scholars have also joined this debate, presenting, at times, dissimilar points of view. Barr (2011, Chapter 2), for instance, states that the term that is most used to refer to soft power in China and closest to the Western definition is “*ruan shili*”, which can be literally translated as “soft strength”, implying that “one also has the ability and means to act on that strength”, while the other translation equivalents for “power”, “*quanli*” and “*liliang*”, mean “having the authority or right to do something” and having “physical strength or force” respectively. Conversely, Aukia (2014, p. 79) states that the term “*ruan shili*” corresponds to “soft power”, “*ruan quanli*” to “soft authority”, “*ruan liliang*” to “soft strength”, and “*ruan guoli*” to “national soft power”. Although these different translations are used in a variety of ways in the Chinese literature, according to the author, “*ruan shili*” fits into the context of cultural construction and presents a more pronounced domestic angle, whereas “*ruan quanli*” presents a more prominent international angle, following the global power perspective in which Nye developed his original theory (Ibid.).

Both of the Western authors considered here, supported by a number of Chinese scholars, Guo Jiemin (2009, 2012) and Gu Junwei (2011) among others, agree in detecting the presence of a variety of “derivatives” (Barr 2011, Chapter 2) or “extended concepts” (Aukia 2014, p. 79), which include “*wenhua ruan shili*”, the fulcrum of the present analysis. Focusing on this expression, Chapter 6 will introduce the crux of the problem, that is the certain degree of difficulty that scholars, Western and Chinese alike, feel in discussing Chinese soft power, due to the lack of a clear-cut definition and unanimous use of a fixed terminology. Gu Junwei (2011, pp. 64-65), for instance, states that, “*ruan shili*”, “*ruan quanli*”, and “*ruan liliang*” are not synonyms but only “near-synonyms” (*jinyici* 近义词), and that, leaving out the common adjective “*ruan*”, “*shili*”, “*quanli*”, and “*liliang*”, far from being synonymous formulations,

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<sup>50</sup> As will be explained in Chapter 7, the word “*quanshi* 权势” is translated into English as “power and influence”. See: *Hanying Cidian (di san ban)* 汉英词典 (第三版) - *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Third Edition). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2010, s.v. *quanshi* 权势.

violate the standard of “monosemy” (*danyixing* 单义性). The author refers in particular to standards put in place by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which, in the ISO704:2000 (E) Terminology Work-Principles and Methods regulation, clearly stipulate that new terms must have “monosemy” (*danyixing*) and “mononymy” (*danmingxing* 单名性); the existence of three translation equivalents for the term “soft power” (“*ruan shili*”, “*ruan quanli*”, and “*ruan liliang*”) does not respect the aforementioned principles and should be unified (Ibid., p. 64). The disregard for the rules of “singleness” (*danyixing* 单一性) and “uniformity” (*tongyixing* 统一性), which according to Gu Junwei (2011, p. 64), are advocated by the *Encyclopedia of Linguistics (Yuyanxue Baike Cidian* 语言学百科辞典), is also reflected in the use of expressions employed to discuss soft power that are commonly used in Chinese literature but rather unknown in the West (Gu Junwei 2011, p. 69). These “derivative terms” (*yansheng shuyu* 衍生术语), of which “*wenhua ruan shili*” is one of many examples, do not have a unanimous understanding within the domestic intellectual circles and are unintelligible to foreign scholars (Ibid.). Thus, it goes without saying that this rather unclear situation results in the emergence of obstacles for the scientific dialogue within the country and with the foreign audience.

Nevertheless, perhaps following Hu Jintao’s official choice in his 2007 keynote speech, the most common Chinese expression used today to refer to soft power appears to be “*ruan shili*”<sup>51</sup>. Guo Jiemin (2012, p. 17) goes as far as stating that the term “*ruan shili*” has become a “high-frequency word” (*gaopin ci* 高频词) in the Chinese press and media, being widely seen in the spheres of national strategy, local politics, regional economy, company operations, cultural construction, and other domains. In this regard, it is important to note that all the derivative terms that can be identified in the Chinese discourse on soft power are indeed created on the basis of the term “*ruan shili*”. Focusing on the formulation “*wenhua ruan shili*” but also exploring the ample variety of other derivative terms that pepper the soft power debate in China, Chapter 7 will elaborate on the salient features of the terminological aspects described so far. The reasons as to why it has been possible, in China, to develop such an articulate soft power discourse will also emerge as a consequence of the intrinsic nature of the term “*shili*”.

To conclude, according to Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung (2008, p. 426), in China the concept of soft power, translated as “*ruan shili*”, “*ruan liliang*”, or “*ruan quanli*”, “peppers academic and policy discussions about world politics, Chinese foreign policy, domestic politics, and even corporate governance”. The authors report a search of the China Academic Journals database<sup>52</sup> showing that the phrase (in all three translations) made its first appearance around 1997 but then started to become popular in 2001<sup>53</sup>. The saliency of soft power in the Chinese discourse is confirmed by other detailed quantitative data. Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 24), for example, reports a search of the CNKI database through which 485 papers with the term “soft power” (in the translations “*ruan shili*”, “*ruan liliang*”, “*ruan guoli*”, or “*ruan quanli*”) in their titles, published between 1994 and 2007, were retrieved in the three sections making up the database’s journals and periodicals subdivision (liberal arts/history/philosophy, politics/military

<sup>51</sup> In this regard, Zappone (2014, p. 416) observes that the primary translation proposed by Chinese online encyclopedias and dictionaries, such as Baidu 百度 and ICIBA, is precisely “*ruan shili*”.

<sup>52</sup> The China National Academic Journals database is one of the databases of the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), continuously updated and expanded.

<sup>53</sup> The authors report that, at the time of writing, the China Academic Journals database contained over four thousand academic and policy journals published since 1994 (Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung 2008, p. 426).

affairs/law, and education/comprehensive social sciences). Breaking down the results based on the period of publication, the same search retrieved 11 articles for the years between 1994 and 2000, 58 for the years between 2001 and 2004, and 416 for the years between 2005 and 2007, with a peak in 2007 when the number of papers rose to 237 from 104 in 2006 (Ibid.). The number of entries retrieved is much larger when the search is carried out based on the full text of the articles, reaching a total of 1,211 articles in the same three subdivisions of the database between 1994 and 2007 (Ibid.). The amounts in this case are: 57 articles from 1994 to 2000, 212 from 2001 to 2004, 942 from 2005 to 2007, and including 273 in 2006 and 518 in 2007 (Ibid.). In the Chinese newspaper section, 509 articles with the Chinese term for “soft power” as part of their titles were found for the period between 2000 and 2008 (Ibid.). According to the author, these numbers show that the term “soft power” has become popular in many fields in China, indicating the growing extent of the interest in the subject in the Chinese context (Ibid.).

Nowadays, equally astonishing results are obtained when carrying out a similar search of the CNKI database. On November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the database’s three subdivisions, literature/history/philosophy, politics/military affairs/law, and education/social sciences, contained over five thousand articles with the terms “*ruan shili*” (in simplified characters) or “soft power” in their titles, based on a cross-language search limited to articles published between 2008 and 2015. Under the same conditions, over two thousand five hundred, articles that contain the expressions “*wenhua ruan shili*” or “cultural soft power” in their titles were found.

Similarly, a search of the most commonly used search engine in China, Baidu, retrieved over 14 million websites by December 2010 containing the term “*ruan shili*” (Lai Hongyi 2012a, p. 11). The same search repeated at the time of writing, using the simplified Chinese characters for “*ruan shili*” in inverted commas, found that there were over 23 million webpages and almost two hundred thousand articles in the news section, containing the Chinese term for soft power. All of these data uniformly testify to the growing popularity of the concept of soft power in the Chinese context in the period from the 1990s to today. According to Lai Hongyi (2012a, p. 11), the application of this concept has surpassed the level of the nation to be also applied to localities, local government, and enterprises, insofar as in China it has become a “trendy term for publicists, scholars, officials, and even entrepreneurs”.



## **5. Origins, historical influences, and first stages of the Chinese discourse on soft power**

For the sake of clarity, this chapter is divided into three sections: Section 5.1 will attempt to investigate the ancient Chinese philosophical thinking with the aim of searching for elements related to inter-personal and inter-state relations that, thanks to their similarity to the non-coercive approach advocated by the soft power theory, have facilitated the absorption into the Chinese context of the concept of soft power and the evolution of the related discourse; Section 5.2 will investigate how China's traditional value system has shaped China's vision of itself and state governance, and influenced the structure of the country's interactions with the outside world in the course of history, within the paradigms of culture as a form of power in international relations and with particular attention to the legacy of China's ancient civilization in today's (soft) power relations; Section 5.3 will take into consideration the process through which the concept of soft power penetrated the Chinese academic and strategic contexts in the years between 1990 and 2007, looking at the translations of Joseph S. Nye's pioneering works and a selection of early scholarly writings that contributed to the understanding and the evolution of the soft power theory in China. The discussion posits that besides having been adopted in China as a concept of foreign origins, the idea of soft power was very much present in China's ancient philosophical doctrines, in its traditional system of thought, and in values rooted in Chinese culture. Blending with the original formulation of the concept, these autochthonous Chinese characteristics have allowed for the Chinese discourse on soft power to gradually brake away from that of the West. It can be argued that, as far as Chinese scholars are concerned, the detection of these characteristics is important in order to soften the foreign nature of the concept of soft power and make it China's own. Thus, it will be shown that the emergence of the contemporary Chinese discourse on soft power does not only stem from the absorption of a Western concept into the Chinese context but also depends on and intertwines with a variety of endemic elements that have facilitated its development and expansion.

### **5.1 Primordial seeds and autochthonous origins**

In China, are there any elements in the ancient philosophical thinking, traditional system of thought, and values embedded in Chinese culture that can be considered to have constituted a Chinese autochthonous idea of soft power? Have these elements facilitated the acceptance of the role of soft power and culture within the domestic and international dynamics of today's China? In order to answer these questions, a brief examination will be dedicated to the description of the autochthonous origins of the idea of soft power in ancient Chinese philosophical thinking. Recalling that it is indeed the father of the soft power theory that detects primordial seeds of soft power in ancient China, specifically in Laozi's doctrine (Nye 2011a, p. 81), it is evident that the idea behind the concept of soft power was not new to China even long before Nye coined the term. According to Barr (2011), Chinese philosophy is rich in examples of how rulers and states could use non-coercive tools, such as virtues, morality, law, and cooperation, to obtain their desired outcomes. The possibility to detect signs of autochthonous soft power in China's antiquity is confirmed by many sources in English, written by both Chinese and Western scholars (among others, Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung 2008; Wang Yiwei 2008; Hunter 2009; Ding Sheng 2010), but it is also made clear by Chinese scholars writing in

Chinese for the local audience (among others, Men Honghua 2007a; Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010; Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013; Liu Deding 2013).

On balance, scholars unanimously provide an abundance of examples drawn from China's past, so much so that this exploration of Chinese autochthonous origins of soft power can go back several thousands of years. For instance, Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, p. 2) state that, although the concept of soft power is quite new, what it refers to has existed for a long time. In China, they take the example of the great sage Laozi and, for the West, that of the French monarch Luis XIII (1601-1643), choosing these personalities as symbols of the attention that the forebears, both Chinese and Western, had for "the soft element in a country's strength" (*guojia shili zhong de "ruan" yinsu* 国家实力中的“软”要素) (Ibid.). Chinese interest in soft power is shown by Laozi's thought dating back to two thousand five hundred years ago and stated in the classic text of Taoism, the *Daodejing* 道德经: "Tianxia zhizhi rou, chicheng tianxia zhizhi jian 天下之至柔，驰骋天下之至坚" means that, despite being the softest thing in the world, water can pass through stone and penetrate the hardest thing in the world<sup>54</sup>. In the same way, soft power can achieve many results in the present era. Citing another aphorism drawn from the *Daodejing*, "tian xia mo rouruo yu shui, er gong jianqiang zhe mo zhi neng sheng 天下莫柔弱于水，而攻坚强者莫之能胜"<sup>55</sup>, Liu Deding (2013, p. 31) confirms Laozi's interest in ideas similar to soft power, stating that his intention was to tell rulers that it was necessary to develop hard-power aspects such as politics, the economy, and the military, but even more to pay attention to the country's soft power, in terms of "wende jiaohua 文德教化" (civilization by culture and virtue), because hard power can only subdue people temporarily, whereas it is only possible to convince people to comply with the rule for a long time with soft power. The origins of what has come to be called "cultural soft power" (*wenhua ruan shili*) can thus be traced back to the Hundred Schools of Thought (*Zhuzi Baijia* 诸子百家), which, flourishing during the Spring and Autumn period (*Chunqiu shidai* 春秋时代, 770-476 BC) and the Warring States period (*Zhanguo shidai* 战国时代, 475-221 BC), started a prolonged debate around the opposing concepts of "wende jiaohua" and "wugong badao 武功霸道" (military accomplishments and rule by force) (Ibid.).

Confucianism (*Rujia* 儒家) is also permeated by concepts related to soft power, although known under different labels. Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, p. 180) look back to the Spring and Autumn period and refer to Confucius (Kongzi 孔子, 551-479 BC), citing his precept "wei zheng yi de, piru beichen, ju qisuo er zhong xing gongzhi 为政以德，譬如北辰，居其所而众星共之", which means that governing by means of virtue and enlightenment is similar to what the North Star does, attracting all the stars around itself<sup>56</sup>. Confucian thinkers strongly advocated

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<sup>54</sup> A translation of this phrase is provided by the Chinese Text Project (<http://ctext.org>), an online open-access digital library, and reads as follows: "The softest thing in the world dashes against and overcomes the hardest" (<http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>). Unless otherwise specified, excerpts and translations of pre-modern Chinese texts referenced herein are drawn from various pages (indicated in the footnotes) of the pre-Qin and Han section of the Chinese Text Project site (Chinese Text Project n.d.).

<sup>55</sup> English translation: "There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, and yet for attacking things that are firm and strong there is nothing that can take precedence of it" (<http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>).

<sup>56</sup> English translation: "He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it" (<http://ctext.org/analects/wei-zheng>).



the “kingly way”<sup>57</sup> (*wang dao* 王道) over the “rule by force” (*badao* 霸道), a fact that represents “the ancients’ understanding of soft power” (*guren dui ruan shili de renshi* 古人对软实力的认识) (Ibid.).

Largely in line with what has been said so far, Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, p. 97) affirm that the closest idea to the intrinsic quality of soft power is indeed that expressed by Confucius with the aphorism “*yuan ren bu fu, ze xiu wen de yi lai zhi* 远人不服，则修文德以来之”， which can be translated as: “If remoter people are not submissive, all the influences of civil culture and virtue are to be cultivated to attract them to be so”<sup>58</sup>. This can be considered “an exemplary summary of the so-called strategic culture of the ‘*wang dao*’ of ancient China and diplomatic thinking” (*Zhongguo gudai suowei “wangdao” de zhanlüe wenhua yu waijiao sixiang de gaodu gaikuo* 中国古代所谓“王道”的战略文化与外交思想的高度概括) (Ibid.).

Attraction can be generated in others by means of culture, an exemplary conduct, and a moral behavior. As noted by Ding Sheng (2010, p. 262), Confucianism advocated that a state’s leadership should be obtained by setting the example, putting emphasis on the limitation and regulation of power instead of its use. In this view, Hunter (2009, p. 379) brings into play another foundation of ancient Confucian thinking, the principle of the “heavenly mandate” (*tianming* 天命), according to which a ruler has the right to rule as long as he shows moral excellence. Similarly, Wang Yiwei (2008, p. 263) and Ding Sheng (2010, p. 262) observe that Confucius also preached “*yi suo bu yu, wu shi yu ren* 己所不欲，勿施于人”, a precept that encourages a person to behave towards others in the same way they would like others to behave towards them<sup>59</sup>. Liu Deding (2013, p. 31) puts emphasis on the aphorism “*dao zhi yi zheng, qi zhi yi xing, min mian er wuchi, dao zhi yi de, qi zhi yi li, you chi qie ge* 道之以政，齐之以刑，民免而无耻，道之以德，齐之以礼，有耻且格”<sup>60</sup> explaining that it means that using government decrees to govern the people and rectifying them by means of law can only save them from committing a crime and being punished, yet they will have no sense of honor; but, when morality is used to lead the people and the system of rites to assimilate them, they will not only have a sense of shame, but also pledge allegiance.

These few examples show that the idea of changing the agenda of others, attracting them to act accordingly to one’s desires rather than forcing them to do so, a core feature of soft power, was very much rooted in the most important Chinese doctrines of the past. Other examples

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<sup>57</sup> This translation is borrowed from Cunningham-Cross and Callahan (2011), an essay that provides insightful comments on Yan Xuetong’s volume *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (2011). This book places importance on the political philosophy of the pre-Qin era (*xian Qin shiqi* 先秦时期, before 221 BC) as a tool to guide contemporary politics, interpret China’s current rise, and enrich international relations theories (Cunningham-Cross and Callahan 2011). In particular, the authors specify that what is translated by Yan Xuetong as “human authority” (*wang* 王), can better be translated as “kingly way”, in contrast to the concept of hegemony (*ba* 霸) (Ibid., p. 349).

<sup>58</sup> English translation drawn from *The Analects* (Jishi): <http://ctext.org/analects/ji-shi>.

<sup>59</sup> Discussing “the golden rule of means”, Ding Sheng (2010, p. 262) translates “*yi suo bu yu, wu shi yu ren*” as “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” or “behave toward others as you would like to have them behave toward you”. The aphorism drawn from *The Analects* can also be translated as “not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself” (<http://ctext.org/analects/yan-yuan>) or “what you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others” (<http://ctext.org/analects/wei-ling-gong>).

<sup>60</sup> English translation drawn from *The Analects* (Wei Zheng): “If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good” (<http://ctext.org/analects/wei-zheng>).

include the teachings of Sunzi 孙子 (544-496 BC), Mozi 墨子 (470-391 BC), Mencius (Mengzi 孟子, 372-289 BC), and Zhuangzi 庄子 (369-286 BC). For instance, as argued by Hunter (2009, pp. 378-379), the concept of soft power has also been noticeably present in China's military thinking; Sunzi, the great military strategist who composed the famous *The Art of War* (*Sunzi Bingfa* 孙子兵法), believed that military action should constitute one part of "an integrated approach to security", but not the most important one. The philosophy of war proposed by the strategist is one in which, in order to win a fight, stratagems and astuteness are considered more important and effective than actual fighting (Ibid., p. 379). In addition, Hunter observes that, thanks also to the familiarity of generations of Chinese leaders with Sunzi's strategic thinking, many of the phrases introduced by this great military figure are still popular today, such as: "war is based on deception" (*bing yi zha li* 兵以诈立), "use gentle means to overcome the hard and strong" (*yiruo kegang* 以柔克刚), and "avoid the enemy strengths and strike at his weak point" (*bishi jixu* 避实击虚) (Ibid.).

Sunzi's teaching that even during a time of war it is better to avoid military confrontation confirms that the idea of soft power was already contemplated in the ancient Chinese philosophy that, emerging in the Spring and Autumn period and the successive Warring States period, continued to influence China's system of thought for thousands of years. According to Ding Sheng (2010, p. 262), the idea put forward by Sunzi in his masterpiece that "it is better to attack the enemy's mind than to attack his fortified cities" denotes that there are similarities between the sources utilized in military affairs to achieve the "supreme excellence" and soft power resources, such as "people's rationality, morality, values, and aspirations". In order to clarify this point, two of Sunzi's teachings deserve quoting at length:

1) "*Shigu bai zhan bai sheng, fei shan zhi shan zhe ye; bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing, shan zhi shan zhe ye* 是故百战百胜，非善之善者也；不战而屈人之兵，善之善者也”， which can be translated as follows: "Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting"<sup>61</sup>;

2) "*Gu shang bing fa mou, qici fa jiao, qici fa bing, qi xia gong cheng* 故上兵伐谋，其次伐交，其次伐兵，其下攻城”， which can be translated as follows: "Thus the highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities"<sup>62</sup>.

Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung (2008, p. 427) state that soft power can be compared to the first principle, related to "the power to subdue an enemy without a fight" (*bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* 不战而屈人之兵). Similarly, according to Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, p. 2), even when they had no choice other than to resort to war, in ancient China people held this principle high. In fact, despite being known in the world as a military strategist, Sunzi did not overestimate the importance of fighting when analyzing military affairs; he advocated that solving the contradictions between states should be addressed first without fighting (Ibid.). This is a way of thinking that has an extremely important strategic meaning, as it embodies a deep understanding of the mutual relations between war and peace, revealing a strategic guiding principle with a universal meaning: even though conflict is a contest of military strength, under certain circumstances, formulating correct stratagems and fighting effective diplomatic battles

<sup>61</sup> This English translation is available at: <http://ctext.org/art-of-war/attack-by-stratagem>.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

can reach the purpose of “subduing an enemy without a fight” (Ibid., pp. 2-3). Consequently, it is imperative to do as much as possible to try to obtain victory without resorting to military force, but rather through the deployment of strategic operations and diplomatic activities (Ibid., p. 3). These thoughts thoroughly show the “soft-power connotation” (*ruan shili neihan* 软实力内涵) of the idea of “*yirou kegang*” (using softness to conquer strength) peculiar to traditional Chinese culture (Ibid.).

Therefore, according to Liu Deding (2013, pp. 31-32), the highest achievement is giving free rein to soft power, including the comprehensive use of resources such as politics, economy, culture, and diplomacy, also when there is no choice other than to resort to hard power, as indicated by the two precepts reported above. Similarly, Ding Sheng (2010, p. 262) emphasizes that the focus on using diplomatic maneuvering, winning over an enemy with culture, and winning a battle before fighting permeated China’s ancient military strategies. In a similar way, Mozi, the founder of Mohism and the advocate of the principle of non-offense, strongly opposed the offensive use of force, which would give rise to prolonged conflicts (Ibid.).

Benevolent governance was the key to winning support among the people inside the country and in foreign lands. According to the teachings of another Confucian thinker, Mencius, a benevolent king would be able to win the support of the masses, including the oppressed in other countries, without resorting to military force because he would have no rivals in the world (Ding Sheng 2010, p. 262). As stated by Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, p. 2), in terms of relations among peoples and countries, thinkers such as Sunzi and Mencius recognized the importance of “peaceful coexistence” (*hexie gongchu* 和谐共处) and “harmonization of all nations” (*xiehe wanbang* 协和万邦). The opposition between the “kingly way” and “the rule by force” is a key principle contained in Mencius’s philosophy, encapsulated in the precepts “*ren zhe wu di* 仁者无敌”, which can be translated as “the benevolent has no enemy”, and “*yi de fu ren* 以德服人”, which means that men are to be subdued with virtue (Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010, p. 2; Liu Deding 2013, p. 31). To put it simply, soft power can be compared to the “kingly way” advocated by Mencius (Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung 2008, p. 427). Analyzing the precept “*yi li fu ren zhe, fei xin fu ye, li bu shan ye; yi de fu ren zhe, zhong xin yue er chengfu ye* 以力服人者，非心服也，力不赡也；以德服人者，中心悦而诚服也”<sup>63</sup> put forward by Mencius, Liu Deding (2013, p. 31) explains that carrying out cruel punishments domestically and military conquests externally, as proposed by the School of Law (*Fajia* 法家), would only result in temporary authority, whereas only with education by means of culture and worshipping virtues and rites it would be possible to govern the whole world (*tianxia* 天下)<sup>64</sup>, in a long-term period of peace and stability; hence the precept “*ren ren wu di yu tianxia* 仁人无敌

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<sup>63</sup> English translation: “When one by force subdues men, they do not submit to him in heart. They submit, because their strength is not adequate to resist. When one subdues men by virtue, in their hearts’ core they are pleased, and sincerely submit” (<http://ctext.org/mengzi/gong-sun-chou-i>).

<sup>64</sup> According to Zhao Tingyang (2006, p. 30), the term “*tianxia*”, translated as “all under heaven”, refers firstly to the earth or the whole world under heaven, being almost equivalent to “the universe” or “the world” in Western languages, and secondly to “the hearts of all peoples” (*minxin* 民心) or “the general will of the people”. Consequently, the idea of “all under heaven” consists of both the earth and the people because, in order to enjoy his empire, an emperor not only needs to conquer a land but also receive support from the people on that land (Ibid.). Thirdly, it has an ethical and/or political meaning, referring to a utopian world institution, or a universal system for the world, that sees the world as one family (Ibid.). In this regard, Ding Sheng (2008, p. 64) notes that the Chinese historically referred to their empire as “all under heaven”, while the concept of nation-state (*guojia*) appeared in the twentieth century.

于天下”, which means that the benevolent man has no enemies<sup>65</sup>. Resolving disputes by means of non-coercive methods meant refuting “the use of one’s strength to bully the weak” (*yi qiang ling ruo* 以强凌弱) and “engaging in wars of aggression at will” (*qiong bing du wu* 穷兵黩武) (Ibid., p. 30).

From what has been expounded upon thus far, it is possible to imply that the origins of Chinese soft power lie deep in antiquity. According to the ancient teachings discussed, behaving morally and leading by example constitute tools to exercise attraction towards others. For a ruler or a state, legitimacy comes from a just conduct, reflected in benevolent governance and diplomatic maneuvering. As well, cultural refinement is a tool to captivate others. It goes without saying that, in order to persuade others to follow suit, one cannot only resort to military force, or other material resources, but also needs to master the appeal of civil culture and the tools of attraction and enticement, assimilating others through the respect of moral principles and honorable deeds. The teachings of the ancient Chinese thinkers presented thus far represent what Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, p. 97) call “China’s valuable native resources for the research on cultural soft power” (*wenhua ruan shili yanjiu de baogui de Zhongguo bentu ziyuan* 文化软实力研究的宝贵的中国本土资源), which, “in the dialogue with Western thought, are worth considering, summarizing, and passing on” (*zhide zai yu Xifang sixiang de duihua zhong yuyi renzhen zongjie he chuancheng* 值得在与西方思想的对话中予以认真总结和传承).

As a matter of fact, as pointed out at the beginning of this section, the predominance of culture in the Chinese discourse on soft power, reflected in the use of the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*” (cultural soft power), can also be traced back to the ancient times explored here. Reconstructing the origins of the word “culture”, Liu Deding (2013, p. 30) finds that in the context of ancient China, culture represented a “strategy to rule the country” (*zhiguo fanglüe* 治国方略), namely “cultural civilization” (*wenren jiaohua* 文人教化). As early as two thousand five hundred years ago, culture was already a synonym for China’s soft power: Chinese thinkers had always seen culture as a far better way to govern the country than military force and taught the successive generations of rulers how they should adequately bring into play the soft power of culture in order to achieve a long period of stability and prosperity (Ibid.). This is why, following China’s traditional thinking, enlightened monarchs and virtuous officials attached great importance to the country’s soft power, believing that they had to realize the country’s will and win other countries’ respect by pursuing the kingly way (*wang dao*) and refuting the rule by force (*badao*) in order to obtain the understanding and approval of other peoples (Ibid.). Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, p. 97) also focus on cultural soft power stating that, despite the novelty of this theoretical thinking, in ancient China the impact of culture and morality on state governance was already clear. Reference is again made to the pre-Qin era, in particular to the principle “*nei sheng wai wang* 内圣外王”, put forward by ancient philosopher Zhuangzi, which preached that “in order to be called ‘king’ on the outside, one needs to first reach the state of ‘sage’ on the inside” (*dui wai yao neng cheng “wang”, bi xian zai neibu dadao “sheng” de jingjie* 对外要能称“王”，必先在内达到“圣”的境界) (Ibid.). This is a state that does not derive from “the deterrence of military force” (*wuli de weishe* 武力的威慑), but from a

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<sup>65</sup> English translation: “The benevolent man has no enemy under heaven” (<http://ctext.org/mengzi/jin-xin-ii>).

“strong ability to infuse a sense of belonging into the people” (*qiangda de shi min guishu de nengli* 强大的使民归属的能力)<sup>66</sup>.

To conclude, Liu Deding (2013, pp. 32-33) elaborates on elements of cultural soft power which pervaded Confucian thinking starting from the period of the Western Han (Xi Han 西汉, 206 BC-8 AD): the author analyzes “benevolence” (*ren* 仁) as the core political value, “rites” or “etiquette” (*li* 礼) as the core systemic design, and “civilization” (*jiaohua* 教化) as the core management concept, and argues that these elements, together with the traditional concepts of “harmony” (*hehe* 和合), the “golden mean” (*zhongyong* 中庸), and “integrity” (*chengxin* 诚信), represented valuable sources of cultural soft power which, still today, possess an important inspirational value in the construction of this form of strength. The exploration of traditional cultural values as important components of China’s soft power vision will continue in the following section.

This brief journey through China’s traditional philosophy has traced the origins of the Chinese view of soft power back to antiquity. The analysis of the non-coercive approach to inter-personal and inter-state relations advocated by the thinkers taken into consideration has brought into play aspects related to both the very nature of mankind and state governance. According to Ding Sheng (2010, p. 262), China’s ancient tradition did not see human nature as evil and believed that peaceful and cooperative relations among states were possible, based on morality, law, and cooperation. This allows for the establishment of a first concluding remark, shedding light on one of most prominent characteristics of the Chinese soft power discourse, that is its broader view in comparison to Joseph S. Nye’s original conceptualization. In this regard, Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung (2008, p. 427) elaborate on the fact that, in Chinese philosophical thinking, soft power can be applied not only to nations but also regions, organizations, and even individuals, making this conception more encompassing than that proposed by Nye, as it also includes “the ability to generate compliance in a society by moral example and persuasion”, besides the attractiveness a country can use to influence other countries. It can be argued that this difference is generated by the enrichment of the original soft power theory with autochthonous Chinese characteristics that have allowed for the Chinese discourse on soft power to depart from that of the West. The following pages will go on to investigate China’s traditional value system and its impact on China’s vision of itself, within the structure of the country’s interactions with the outside world in the course of history. It will be shown that, in the Chinese context, the paradigms of culture and civilization have always constituted a fertile terrain for the growth of soft power, a view reflected in the emergence of the concept of cultural soft power.

## 5.2 China’s traditional cultural values and their implications in (soft) power relations

Through the preceding discussion, the role of culture as a form of soft power in ancient China has emerged in relation to individual cultivation, state governance, and international relations. The discussion will now focus on China’s ability to leverage culture as a part of the

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<sup>66</sup> For the principle “*nei sheng wai wang*”, Wang Yiwei (2008, p. 263) provides the following translations: “become a sage from inside and an emperor from outside” and “ruling others and cultivating himself”. The phrase, drawn from *Zhuangzi* (Tianxia), and a possible translation read as follows: “是故内圣外王之道[...]” - “And thus it was that the Dao, which inwardly forms the sage and externally the king [...]” (<http://ctext.org/zhuangzi/tian-xia>).

country's soft power in international relations throughout the history of the Chinese Empire. Some observations will also be made in regard to how China's ancient philosophies and traditional value system have influenced China's vision of state governance and affected the country's own interpretation of power and soft power relations in foreign policy. The role of traditional cultural values in the construction of China's modern society will also emerge, as well as their reflection on China's current relations with the outside world in the context of soft power. Chinese culture will thus be confirmed as the most extraordinary source of Chinese soft power.

As a pivotal component of China's civilization, China's ancient philosophy set the basis for the evolution of a cultural system that is unique in the world for its continuity and homogeneity throughout the course of history. Over thousands of years, besides constituting the glue that has kept the country as one, that is, until the clash with the West in 1840<sup>67</sup>, the inspirational force of Chinese culture has also functioned as a magnet to attract foreign populations and neighboring countries. To clarify these points it is necessary to briefly recall the meaning of culture, to then bring to light the inspirational force peculiar to Chinese culture. As seen in Section 3.1, according to the definition provided by Zhu Majie (2002a, pp. 23-24), in its broad sense, "culture refers to the sum of the material and spiritual wealth that has been created in the historical practice of human society"; in its narrow sense, "culture is the social ideology and its corresponding systems and organizations, including viewpoints and ideas of politics, law, ethics, arts, religion, science and compatible systems". Moreover, culture and civilization can be considered as having a similar meaning, but the latter is the product of the former "developed to a higher level" (Ibid., p. 24). On this premise, the philosophical concepts discussed above can be considered to constitute part of China's civilization and traditional cultural system. It is mostly their appeal that has functioned as a magnet in East Asia throughout the history of the Chinese Empire. Ding Sheng (2008, p. 67) quotes John King Fairbank (1968) and his statement that "the societies of East Asia...had all stemmed from ancient China and developed within the Chinese culture area, the area most influenced by the civilization of ancient China, for example, by the Chinese ideographic writing system, the Confucian classical teachings about family and social order, the official examination system, and the imperial Chinese monarchy and bureaucracy". Through this reference to the common cultural heritage of East Asia, Ding Sheng (2008, pp. 60-68) compares Chinese culture to a "cultural loadstone" which has been characterized by an uninterrupted history and the ability to exercise assimilating power. The strength of Chinese culture has steadily kept China together for most of its history, while providing it with the possibility of relying on a process of "osmosis" when conquering neighboring areas, rather than military victory (Ibid.). In fact, as will be further described in the

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<sup>67</sup> Well-known historian John King Fairbank describes the foreign impact on China in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as follows: "[...] China's nineteenth-century experience [...] became a stark tragedy, an unforeseen and certainly enormous decline and fall almost without equal in history. This tragedy was the more bitter because it was gradual, inexorable, and complete. The old order fought a rear-guard action, giving ground slowly but always against greater odds, each disaster followed by a greater, until one by one China's asserted superiority over foreigners, the central power of the emperor at Peking, the reigning Confucian orthodoxy, and the ruling elite of scholar-officials were each in turn undermined and destroyed" (Fairbank 1978, p. 3). The acceleration of this process was represented by the Opium War of 1840-1842 and followed by a series of foreign aggressions on China, culminating in the expansion of the unequal treaty system which, among many other features, saw the number of treaty ports multiply ten-fold from five between 1842 and 1911, in a form of imperialism which was perceived as humiliation from which China yearned to escape (Ibid., pp. 3-4).

following pages, “nothing can be absorbed into the Chinese culture without going through a process of ‘localization’” (Ibid., p. 65).

The matters discussed so far can be taken even deeper. The discussion can touch upon the very nature of power, comparing the Chinese to the Western interpretation of this theoretical concept. For instance, discussing China’s public diplomacy, Wang Yiwei (2008, pp. 262-263) elaborates on the Chinese understanding of the concept of power pointing out its differences with the Western understanding and the consequences this has on the Chinese interpretation of soft power, an aspect that will be also discussed from a terminological point of view in Chapter 7. More specifically, Wang Yiwei (2008, p. 262) takes his lead from referring to the Western idea of power, which he defines as “the ability of one actor or organization to influence the attitude and behavior of another actor or organization”. The author argues that this definition focuses on those with power as the subject and those without power as the object; thus, when employing the concept of power, Western politics primarily refer to the subject exercising power without considering the “extent of acceptance” of the object of power (Ibid.). In Wang Yiwei’s opinion, this constitutes an important difference between the ancient Eastern tributary system and the modern Western international system (Ibid.). Secondly, the author explains that the word “power” is usually translated into Chinese as “*quanli*”, a term that has two basic meanings in traditional Chinese: “steelyard” (noun) or “against scripture while for principle” (verb). He further argues that, in Chinese philosophy, the understanding of power is always related with morality as shown, for example, by the aforementioned principle of “*nei sheng wai wang*”, which teaches that a good ruler must cultivate the talents and virtues of the sage in the inside and exercise benevolent governance towards the outside (Ibid., p. 263). This is another way to express the idea that “morality inside brings power outside” (Ibid.). In Chinese philosophy, the traditional idea of power is also linked to nature: the great sage Laozi taught his acolytes the principle of “*wu wei er zhi* 无为而治” (govern by doing nothing that is against nature), which indicates that, in other words, power comes from nature (Ibid.). Wang Yiwei summarizes these considerations by stating that in the conventional way of conceiving power, traditional Chinese thinking teaches that “power comes from morality and morality comes from nature”; this is why the traditional tributary system integrated power and morality and, therefore, in antiquity, there was no concept of nation, nation-state, sovereignty, or international system but rather the idea of “*tianxia*” (all under heaven) (Ibid.).

Historically, this view has reflected on China’s relations with the outside world. In this regard, Jacques (2012, pp. 294-341) discusses what he calls “the Middle Kingdom mentality” and takes a cultural approach to answer the question as to what China will be like as a great power. Recalling that China has only quite recently come to refer to itself as a nation-state, the author focuses on China as a civilization and argues that to understand China’s behavior in inter-state relations it is necessary to first understand how the Chinese people see themselves, in terms of history, culture, race, and ethnicity (Ibid.). Chinese people think of themselves as one race, the Han Chinese, and the PRC Constitution defines China as a unitary, multi-ethnic state (Ibid.). Although very diverse internally, the Han Chinese constitute the main ethnic group, encompassing 91% of the population and sharing the same common origin dating back to five thousand years ago, the age of the Yellow Emperor, while the remaining 9% is made up of other races (Ibid.). This demographic scenario embodies the perception of the “extraordinary longevity and continuity of Chinese civilization”, regardless of internal diversities peculiar to populous countries (Ibid., p. 297). More will be expounded upon these aspects, in particular from a sociolinguistic point of view, in Chapter 8. However, it is important to note, as done by

Jacques (2012, pp. 300-301), that these attitudes are reflected in the Chinese idea of “the other” and the distinction between “civilization” and “barbarians”, with the latter being seen as inferior to the Middle Kingdom and drawn to it due to its superior Confucian culture. Imperial China, which, as has been previously mentioned, referred to itself as “all under heaven”, held a Sinocentric view of the world order, with a single civilization at the center, China, and barbarians all around (Ibid., pp. 304-305). China’s expansion unfolded through “a combination of conquest and cultural example”, in the course of an extended process of Sinicization across China’s frontiers, which saw absorption and assimilation prevail: “Whatever the role of force, [...] there is no brooking the huge power, influence and prestige of Chinese thinking and practice” (Ibid., p. 304).

The power of attraction and influence was at the center of the relations imperial China established with neighboring countries in the course of history. In fact, according to Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, pp. 180-181), it was through cultural exchanges that China gradually became the center of a “Confucian sphere of cultural influence” (*Rujia wenhua quan* 儒家文化圈) and of the tributary system (*chaogong tizhi* 朝贡体制). The former, also known as “Sinosphere” (*Zhongghua wenhua quan* 中华文化圈), designates countries and societies that took Confucianism as the main ideology and system of social values, Chinese characters as the main vehicle to transmit culture, and China’s political system as the main political form (Ibid.). This sphere included, at the very least, areas comprising ancient Korea, Vietnam, Japan, and other countries and societies, while the latter, also known in Chinese as “*cefeng tizhi* 册封体制” or “*zongfan tizhi* 宗藩体制”, designates a type of international system that took China as the core and suzerain (*zongzhu* 宗主), presenting tributes to the emperor and conferring titles as the main formalities, and political and trading relations as the essence (Ibid.). The area covered by the tribute system exceeded that of the Confucian sphere of cultural influence in East Asia, to embrace, in the period of the Ming 明 (1368-1644) and Qing 清 (1644-1911) dynasties, countries and peoples in East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and other regions (Ibid.).

In his evaluation of China’s soft power, Men Honghua (2007a, p. 15) once again brings into play China’s ancient civilization, attributing an “inborn advantage” (*xiantian youshi* 先天优势) to the soft power of China’s culture, embodied not only in the advanced nature of ancient Chinese culture, with Confucian civilization (*Rujia wenming* 儒家文明) at its core, and its immense radiating force towards the periphery, but also in the role Confucian culture played in promoting successive tides in the rise of East Asia. Based on its cultural advantage, China was able to export its culture through international exchanges, constituting a splendid cultural era and constructing a tributary system in East Asia that revolved around culture (Ibid.).

In a similar vein, Liu Debin (2001, p. 63) argues that soft power is not new as its origins can be traced back to ancient times when countries or peoples exercised “attractive force” (*xiyinli*) and “charm” (*meili* 魅力): ancient China, for instance, never sent any troops to occupy the surrounding countries, towards which it exercised immense influence, so much so that a Confucian sphere of cultural influence was formed with Chinese culture at the center. One aspect of this process lied in the high degree of development of China’s material culture, but the other aspect was related to the strong attractive force (*xiyinli*) and “assimilation-type power” (*tonghua shi lilian* 同化式力量) that Chinese culture and the Chinese way of life had on the surrounding peoples and countries (Ibid.). This is also to say that “the visual angle from which the Celestial Empire governed was domestic-oriented and did not have wild ambitions of power



expansion” (*Tianchao zhili de shijiao shi neixiang de, bing wu kuozhan quanli de yexin* 天朝治理的视角是内向的，并无扩张权力的野心) (Men Honghua 2007a, p. 16). When coming into contact with the external world, China would naturally expand its inner ethical order towards the outside, relying on the attractiveness of the Chinese ceremonial and on the provision of goods in its relations with vassal states (Ibid.). This is why the tributary system, as natural extension of the “Chinese ethical order” (*Huaxia lunli zhixu* 华夏伦理秩序), can be considered a type of “world order” (*tianxia zhixu* 天下秩序) which surpassed the boundaries of nationality and race and represented the Eastern countries’ early practice of global systems and international order; China’s efforts to pursue a strategic path seeking moral objectives can also be seen as having had profound implications for the construction of the contemporary order of East Asia (Ibid.).

In other words, the tributary system, of which the Chinese Empire constituted the center, revolved around the co-optive power of Chinese culture. Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, pp. 180-181) emphasize even more the potency of Chinese culture in generating this early form of soft power: taking an original approach, they choose the cultural exchanges ancient China cultivated with the outside world as an example of soft power at work. Elaborating on historical vicissitudes of soft power in China the authors state that throughout the history of the Chinese Empire the courts always valued hard power but at the same time placed even more emphasis on the cultural element of soft power and engaged in cultural exchanges with the outside world (Ibid.). These activities were lively during the heyday of the Han 汉 (206 BC-220 AD) and Tang 唐 (618-907) dynasties, as is shown by the contacts with Central and Western Asia, the penetration of Buddhism (*Fojiao* 佛教) into China, which had a profound impact on its native culture in terms of ideas, customs, literature, and art, and the activities held along the Silk Road (*Sichou zhi lu* 丝绸之路), which gave shape to a cultural structure characterized by a bidirectional blend in which Chinese culture both spread towards and received inputs from the outside world (Ibid.). In the Ming dynasty, a symbol of these cultural exchanges is the heroic undertaking of admiral Zheng He 郑和 who, with his “voyages to the four Oceans” (*Zheng He xia si yang* 郑和下四洋), connected China with Southeast Asia, Southern Asia, Western Asia, and Eastern Africa (Ibid.). Zheng He’s expeditions did not lead to the conquest of territories, the establishment of colonies, or the pillage of other countries’ possessions, as was the case with expeditions promoted by Western countries, but were conducted to promote friendship and economic and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world (Ibid., p. 3). Zheng He’s historical legacy is still praised today by the people in East Asia and other places, and it represents a typical example of the expansion of Chinese soft power abroad in ancient times (Ibid.).

Discussing these and other historical events in a similar way, Ding Sheng (2008, p. 65) confirms that “[i]t is not difficult to find numerous evidences regarding the power and resilience of Chinese culture from China’s history”. Thus, it can be argued that throughout history China has confirmed its ability to leverage culture as a form of power in international relations. As argued by Li Mingjiang (2009b, pp. 25-26), history has indeed demonstrated the advantages of China’s cultural soft power. Cultural glory has been a prominent feature of China’s long history, with the superiority of China’s cultural grandeur emerging through the influence that China has exercised on East Asia for millennia: the merits of Chinese culture are evident, for instance, in the positive effect its influence has had on the rise of East Asian countries. Moreover, as highlighted by Men Honghua (2007a, p. 15), in the last one hundred years or so, Western

civilization has posed enormous challenges to Eastern civilization, but, as symbolized by the great accomplishments achieved by China in the process of reform and opening-up and the shift of global power towards the Asia-Pacific region, China's traditional culture is being actively promoted, whereas Western civilization is entering a phase of self-reflection and readjustment. A new leaf is being turned in the blend of Eastern and Western civilization, with China becoming the center of confluence of Eastern and Western culture (Ibid.). Most importantly, traditional Chinese culture pursues "peace and harmony" (*he*) and puts emphasis on the principle of "harmony in diversity" (*he er bu tong*); advocating "equal treatment" (*pingdeng xiangdai* 平等相待), "honest cooperation" (*chengxin hezuo* 诚信合作), and "mutual benefit" (*huli huhui* 互利互惠), conflicts between man and nature, man and man, country and country, and family and family are thus resolved and the harmonious development among dissimilar civilizations can be realized (Ibid., pp. 15-16).

Nowadays, China can make use of the legacy passed on by the historical influence of its civilization and the charm of its traditional culture to enhance its contemporary soft power. Li Jie (2007, p. 21), for example, argues that Chinese traditional culture, with concepts such as "harmony" (*he*) and "union" (*he* 合) at its core, is a natural source of soft power unique to China, which not only has had a profound impact on the progress of China's own civilization, but also on that of mankind. In times of conflict, Chinese culture emphasizes the principles of "winning people over by virtue" (*yi de fu ren*) and "subduing the enemy without fighting" (*bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing*); in dealing with power, it stresses values such as "good-neighborliness" (*mulin youhao* 睦邻友好) and "harmonious coexistence" (*hexie gongcun* 和谐共存) (Ibid., p. 22). The principles of harmony and unity are reflected in the resilience of Chinese civilization through adversities and have forged the Chinese national character: as a result, Chinese people have a proclivity for "modestly declining" (*qianran* 谦让), are "honest and kindhearted" (*renhou* 仁厚), and are "tolerant and lenient" (*kuanrong* 宽容), while the national system of values, with the principles of "*he wei gui* 和为贵", which can be translated as "harmony is worth more than anything", and "*he er bu tong*" (harmony in diversity) as its core, advocates "harmony" (*hexie* 和谐), "understanding" (*hemu* 和睦), and "cooperation" (*hezuo* 合作) (Ibid.). These ideas have produced a profound and lasting effect not only on the development of China but also on the peace and prosperity of the world, while, in particular after the beginning of the process of reform and opening-up and following the impetus of the economic development, the charm that China's traditional culture had accumulated over millennia started to arouse deep interest within the international community (Ibid.). This is confirmed by Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 25), according to whom traditional Chinese culture has been recognized as the most valuable source of Chinese soft power thanks to its long and uninterrupted history and richness in traditions, symbols, and textual records. Besides the principles discussed above, traditional Chinese culture also places emphasis on values such as "giving priority to human beings" (*yi ren wei ben* 以人为本) and "harmony between nature and humankind" (*tian ren he yi* 天人合一) and provides an alternative to Western civilization in responding to the many problems which have arisen in modern history, thus increasing the Chinese cultural appeal in the context of cultural diversification and globalization (Ibid.). As has been discussed in Chapter 3, the alternative interpretation of international relations that China offers, embodied by the program of building a "harmonious world", is indeed based on these concepts.

Within China, the CPC's leadership is currently promoting a revival of China's traditional culture, leveraging values such as those described above, which appeal to both

Chinese people and the international community. This can be inferred from the writings of a number of Chinese scholars who, in discussing the construction of China's soft power, refer to the important role a revival of Confucian culture can play inside and outside China (among others, Pang Zhongying 2006; Kang Xiaoguang 康晓光 2007; Li Jie 2007). According to Kang Xiaoguang (2007), for instance, the revival of Confucian culture is extremely important for the construction of China's soft power because of the role it plays in the reestablishment of ethics and morals (*daode*), social order (*shehui zhixu* 社会秩序), and political legitimacy (*zhengzhi zhengdangxing* 政治正当性), and in regard to the "identification of the Chinese people with their nation and ethnicity" (*Zhongguo ren de guojia rentong he minzu rentong* 中国人的国家认同和民族认同). Abroad, China has already established a foreign policy based on the Confucian doctrine; spreading Confucian culture can help proclaim China's system of values and strengthen the legitimacy of the Chinese system, while at the same time exercising a positive effect not only in the cultural field but also in the global competition in economy and politics (Ibid.). Similarly, Li Jie (2007, p. 23) argues that Chinese culture, with its core consisting of Confucian culture, is able to surpass boundaries of space and time to become a link through which to further communication and understanding between China and the world. At the same time, it is still necessary to take into consideration how to make sure that a glorious culture that has lasted for five thousand years, as is the case for China's traditional culture, can "push out the old and bring in the new" (*tuichen chuxin* 推陈出新) and "glow with vitality" (*huanfa shengji* 焕发生机), in order to show the world "a China that has a profound cultural background and a distinctive ethnic style, and that is strongly keeping pace with the spirit of the times" (*yi ge yongyou shenhou wenhua diyun, xianming minzu fengge he nongyu shidai jingshen de Zhongguo* 一个拥有深厚文化底蕴、鲜明民族风格和浓郁时代精神的中国) (Ibid.). Pang Zhongying (2006), talks about "exporting" (*chukou* 出口) Confucian thought in relation to the use of soft power and differentiates between exporting Chinese language under the name of Confucius, as is being done by the Confucius Institutes, from actually exporting Confucian thought.

On balance, traditional Chinese values are thought to be playing a role in China's cultural construction at home, but also in the impact of China's behavior on the global stage. Chinese scholars writing in English, such as Chen Jianfeng (2009) and Zhang Lihua (2013a, 2013b) also confirm this argument. For instance, according to Zhang Lihua (2013a, 2013b), within China, traditional values, which, in a nutshell, include harmony, benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, and filial piety, still play a central role in policymaking. The author states that traditional Chinese culture is primarily based on Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, with Confucianism having been established as the orthodox philosophy of the Chinese state; classes on these subjects are becoming increasingly popular in modern Chinese society, testifying to "the spiritual hunger of Chinese people in today's market economy" (Zhang Lihua 2013a). Moreover, for traditional Chinese culture to be beneficial to the construction of China's system of values today, traditional values should be complemented with contemporary ones, such as freedom, democracy, human rights, rule of law, and equality, and combined with Marxist values (Ibid.). Among the traditional cultural values that "influence the psyche of the Chinese people", harmony is the core tenet: "Modern Chinese society tries to maintain harmony between humankind and nature; between people and society; between members of different communities; and between mind and body" (Zhang Lihua 2013b).

But besides influencing the modeling of China's modern society, traditional Chinese values also affect China's foreign policy and diplomacy. To briefly summarize this aspect, it can be maintained that the core value drawn from traditional Chinese culture that relates the most to China's current foreign policy and diplomacy is once again the concept of harmony (*hexie*) (Zhang Lihua 2013a, 2013b). In brief, this concept provides four key ideas for Chinese foreign policy: 1) harmony but not uniformity; 2) mutual respect between countries, big and small; 3) "it is lonely at the top" for powerful countries (*gao chu bu sheng han* 高处不胜寒), which means that a powerful country should not aim to become a superpower; 4) engage in reasonable struggle only if it is necessary (Ibid.). Similarly, Chen Jianfeng (2009) analyzes how China can cultivate soft power from a cultural and philosophical point of view, suggesting that Chinese leaders should follow the "Doctrine of the Mean" in approaching international issues because the balanced wisdom encapsulated by this traditional concept is more acceptable to the international community and can increase China's soft power.

A system of values and ethics such as the one described here, in which traditional culture plays a key role, is thus a vehicle of both domestic and international advantages. As has been pointed out, Chinese culture has a "comparative advantage" in the new set-up of international relations, which values interdependence and cooperation (Li Mingjiang 2009b, p. 30). This is due to its focus on harmony derived from China's ancient tradition, together with a variety of positive features, discussed above, intrinsic to the Chinese system of thought. It is worth recalling here that the revival of traditional Chinese culture appeared as one of the methods to increase China's cultural soft power indicated by Hu Jintao in his speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2007; the former President stressed the importance of knowing China's traditional culture and adapting it to modern civilization, keeping its essence and discarding its dross (Xinhua She 2007). Besides stressing the need for this selective process, which, as has been described, joins tradition and innovation, Hu Jintao also put emphasis on strengthening cultural exchanges, in order to learn from the achievements of foreign cultures and enhance the influence of Chinese culture in the world (Ibid.).

From the aspects analyzed thus far, it is possible to imply that China's traditional cultural values and system of thought have had a long-lasting impact not only on the development of China's view of state governance and international relations in the past, but also on the current structure of China's modern society and (soft) power relations with the outside world. Values drawn from ancient philosophical thinking constitute the core of traditional Chinese culture, the most appealing elements of which are being revived today to become part of modern culture. Chinese culture, a blend of tradition and innovation, becomes the most extraordinary source of soft power for China. As can be implied from Hu Jintao's words, China is determined to reestablish the status of great cultural power it once enjoyed in the past, leveraging the appeal of its traditional culture but keeping pace with the times. As there is no reason why history should not repeat itself, it comes as no surprise that the topic of the re-emergence of Chinese culture is gaining ever-increasing popularity. Ding Sheng (2008, pp. 68-73), for instance, argues that, in the current globalization era, the development and prosperity of Chinese culture around the world can benefit from the trends of multipolarization and pluralization, and refers to traditional cultural products, such as acupuncture, *feng shui* 风水, martial arts, herbal medicine, local cuisines, literature, religious practices, and the masterpiece *The Art of War*, as well-known symbols of the global popularity of traditional Chinese culture, while China's modern arts, cinema, pop music, acrobatics, and dance are also attracting new audiences in the Asia-Pacific region and in the West. The author also takes into consideration sports, tourism, and

technological leadership, as part of the expanded reach of China's cultural soft power, and goes as far as bestowing the title of "exact personification of China's growing soft power" on basketball player Yao Ming (Ibid.).

Last but not least, as has been pointed out throughout this discussion, the legacy of the influence exercised by Chinese civilization in the past is still actively present in today's world. Signs that China is the world's oldest civilization are visible in the elements of its cultural heritage that it shares with other societies in East Asia and Southeast Asia, where China's potential to expand its soft power cannot be compared to that of other nations (Huang Yanzhong and Ding Sheng 2006, p. 27). Following Joseph S. Nye's claim that cultural similarities facilitate the wielding of cultural appeal as a resource of soft power (Nye 2004, pp. 15-16), China's civilization can be considered more likely to generate soft power in areas that share some elements of the ancient cultural and political systems discussed in this section. This is why China is perceived today as having the capacity to take a leading role in establishing the so-called Asian values, making its civilization "China's greatest soft power asset" (Cho and Jeong 2008, pp. 469-470).

This investigation of China's traditional cultural values and their influence on China's perception of its role within the structure of the country's interactions with the outside world, over the course of history and today, has shown that, in the Chinese context, the paradigms of culture and civilization have never ceased to constitute a fertile terrain for the growth of China's soft power. Traditional culture, with harmony at the core, has been confirmed as the most extraordinary resource of China's soft power. The following pages will take into consideration the process through which Joseph S. Nye's soft power theory generated interest in Chinese academic and strategic circles in the years between 1990 and 2007. It will be evident that the translations of Nye's works and early scholarly writings that contributed to the understanding of the soft power theory in China have found in China's own cultural tradition and thought pattern a resourceful background upon which to develop a soft power theory that, nowadays, appears enriched with Chinese practice.

### 5.3 Translations of Nye's works and early scholarly approaches

The policy of reform and opening-up initiated in the late 1970s facilitated contacts between the Chinese and Western systems of thought, after a period of closure that saw China largely isolated and cut out of international dialogues. The same can be argued regarding the study of international relations as a discipline. In fact, it was not until the late 1980s and the early 1990s that the translations of some classic Western texts on the topic of international relations theories were made available to Chinese scholars (Ding Sheng 2010, p. 263). Yet, following the Tiananmen incident in 1989<sup>68</sup>, CPC leaders and officials regarded Western culture

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<sup>68</sup> Author Andrew Nathan reports that besides a variety of important materials telling the story of the events that occurred in Beijing in 1989, from the point of view of the students and citizens, a book that gathers reports and minutes from meetings taking place at the decision-making levels of the government and the Party in the PRC, *The Tiananmen Papers* (2001), provides the first overview of how the incident was handled by the authorities (Nathan 2001). The protests that were started in Beijing by students who demanded economic reform and liberalization did not intend to challenge the regime but what made the situation unresolvable was the impossibility to find a compromise between the two sides; the turmoil swept China in the spring of 1989 and was ended by force in

and political values with a certain degree of aversion, attributing the cause of the turmoil among the Chinese people to the spread of “bourgeois political thoughts”, to which the concept of soft power also belonged (Ibid., pp. 263-264). Nevertheless, it was not long after Joseph S. Nye originated his theory that Chinese scholars, experts of international relations, and policy-makers started studying and discussing soft power. As has been previously described, scholars (among others, Cho and Jeong 2008; Ding Sheng 2010; Liu Deding 2013) share the widespread view that, in China, interest in soft power emerged together with the concept of “*zonghe guoli*” (CNP), as the strengthening of capabilities other than the economic and military ones started to be contemplated as a task of crucial importance for building the overall strength of China as a global power. In the mid-1990s, Chinese government officials and international relations experts had already started to study soft power more objectively, considering it as an indispensable component of the strategy aimed at increasing China’s CNP, building on the legacy left by China’s traditional culture to regain the status of a great power for the country (Ding Sheng 2010, p. 264). This is confirmed by the speech delivered in 2001 by then-President Jiang Zemin 江泽民 at the meeting to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the CPC, which, although not yet containing the term “*ruan shili*” (soft power), made the importance of CNP very clear: “The fundamental task of socialism is to develop the productive forces, increase the overall national strength of our socialist country and improve the people’s living standards so as to reflect the superiority of socialism over capitalism” (China.org.cn, n.d.).

It can be argued that, at the turn of the century, China started to pursue soft power in a more calculated way. This is confirmed by Deng Yong (2009) in his investigation of how soft power was treated in the rhetoric and practice of China’s international strategy in the post-Cold War era. The author argues that, when applied to China, the approach chosen by Joseph S. Nye, which regarded soft power as a prerogative of a hegemonic power, able to use it to consolidate its material supremacy, is “misplaced” (Ibid., p. 64). The inapplicability to the Chinese case of the concept as was created in the American context comes from the different status of the two countries: the United States was the hegemonic power in world politics, while China, after the Tiananmen incident, was struggling for global recognition (Ibid.). Thus, sources, means, and objectives of China’s soft power have differed from those of the United States and soft power has become for China an integral part of its strategy to achieve the status of a great power in the new century (Ibid.).

In order to explore this argument, the following pages will describe the process through which the concept of soft power came to be part of the Chinese intellectual and strategic debate in the years between 1990 and 2007, highlighting similarities, differences, and innovation in comparison to its American counterpart.

As a matter of fact, only two years after Joseph S. Nye first spoke about soft power in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, his work was translated into Chinese by He Xiaodong 何小东 et al. and published by China’s Military Translation Press<sup>69</sup>. This paved the way for the popularization in China of Nye’s idea, if not the exact expression “soft power” (Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung 2008, 426n5). As *Bound to Lead*, Nye’s

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Tiananmen Square on June 4, a tragic event that, because of its long-lasting consequences, has come to be regarded as one of the most significant in the history of the PRC (Ibid.).

<sup>69</sup> [美] 约瑟夫·奈: 《美国定能领导世界吗》, 何小东、盖玉云等译, 军事译文出版社 1992 年版。Cited, among others, in Cho and Jeong (2008), Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung (2008), Ding Sheng (2010), and Liu Deding (2013).

successive works also received the attention of Chinese intellectuals. In 2005, two major contributions were made to the debate on soft power in the Chinese context: the first was the translation of Nye's book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, by Hu Xiaohui 吴晓辉 et al.<sup>70</sup>, and the second was the compilation of a collection of Nye's works translated by Chinese international relations expert Men Honghua<sup>71</sup>.

Besides the translations of Nye's works, there is widespread consensus among scholars (for example, Li Haijuan 2004; Liu Debin 2004; Cho and Jeong 2008; Glaser and Murphy 2009; Li Mingjiang 2009b; Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010; Edney 2012; Lai Hongyi 2012a; Liu Deding 2013; Shambaugh 2013; Aukia 2014) in identifying Wang Huning as the first Chinese intellectual to have written an article about soft power in China. Currently a member of the Political Bureau of the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC Central Committee and director of the Policy Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, according to Xinhua News Agency (2012c), in the course of his career, Wang Huning has held the position of chief policy advisor to then-President Jiang Zemin and former President Hu Jintao and has been a professor at Shanghai's Fudan University (Cho and Jeong 2008, p. 456; Shambaugh 2013, p. 210). In 1993, he contributed to the Journal of Fudan University with an essay entitled "*Zuwei guojia shili de wenhua: ruan quanli 作为国家实力的文化: 软权力*" (Culture as national power: soft power). According to Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, foreword, p. 3), this article initiated the domestic research on soft power through a detailed description and discussion of Nye's theory and a concrete analysis of all the elements that constitute soft power, as well as the differences between soft and hard power. As the title of the essay indicates, Wang Huning emphasizes the role of culture as a type of power, which he equates to soft power. He argues that considering culture as soft power was, at the time, a brand new concept in the field of global politics; people had already started to consider political systems, national morale, national culture, economic systems, science and technology, and other factors as attributes that constituted a country's power, but it is indeed the "dispersing quality" (*fasanxing 发散性*) of these elements that allows soft power to have the property of power in international relations (Wang Huning 1993, p. 91). Elaborating on culture as a type of power that can influence the behavior of other countries, Wang Huning states that the standpoint according to which culture functions as a country's power has been attracting consideration for a long time, as all through the ages people have considered intangible elements as pillars of national power (Ibid., p. 93). From a broader point of view, among the elements that can be included in the scope of culture, Wang Huning enumerates the "political system" (*zhengzhi xitong 政治系统*), "national morale and national culture" (*minzu shiqi he mingzu wenhua 民族士气和民族文化*), the "economic system" (*jingji tizhi 经济体制*), the "process of historical development and its legacy" (*lishi fazhan jincheng he yiliu 历史发展进程和遗留*), "science and technology" (*kexue jishu 科学技术*), "ideology" (*yishi xingtai*), and so forth (Ibid.). Culture has attracted the highest degree of people's attention in the new trend of contemporary politics and that's why when discussing a country's power and strength one crucial item to take into consideration is the active role of culture, with soft power nowadays gaining as much importance as hard power, if not more (Ibid.). It is nevertheless worth

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<sup>70</sup> [美] 约瑟夫·奈: 《软实力: 世界政坛成功之道》, 吴晓辉等译, 北京: 东方出版社 2005 年版。Cited in Qu Xiaoying (2010).

<sup>71</sup> [美] 约瑟夫·奈: 《硬权力与软权力》, 门洪华译, 北京大学出版社 2005 年版。Cited in Qu Xiaoying (2010) and Liu Deding (2013).

clarifying that, according to Wang Huning, up to that time, the analyses considered had not paid much attention to the “force of the dispersing quality” (*fasanxing de liliang* 发散性的力量) of the abovementioned elements, which is what gives them the attribute of power in international relations (Ibid., pp. 93-94). Moreover, it is known that hard power and soft power act in a different way and achieve results through different methods. Wang Huning also elaborates on this aspect: “If a country’s culture and ideological system have an attractive force, others will voluntarily follow” (*ruguo yi ge guojia de wenhua he yishi xingtai shi xiyinli de, taren jiu hui zidong de zhuisui* 如果一个国家的文化和意识形态是有吸引力的，他人就会自动地追随) and “it [the country] will not have to use hard power, which is highly expensive” (*ta jiu mei you biyao shiyong daijia gao’ang de ying quanli* 它就没有必要使用代价高昂的硬权力) (Wang Huning 1993, p. 92). Perhaps, the key to understanding this approach can be found in a statement in Wang Huning’s writing’s introductory abstract: “The strength of soft power comes from [its] diffusing nature; only when a culture propagates extensively will soft power give rise to formidable strength” (*ruan quanli de liliang laizi kuosanxing, zhiyou dang yi zhong wenhua guangfan chuanbo shi, ruan quanli cai hui chansheng qiangda de liliang* 软权力的力量来自扩散性，只有当一种文化广泛传播时，软权力才会产生强大的力量) (Ibid., p. 91).

It is noteworthy that such an early approach to soft power in the Chinese context already recognized the superior position of culture among the resources a country can use to wield its soft power, reaffirming the vision inherited from the past that was discussed in the previous sections. It can thus be argued that the prevalence of culture in the Chinese discourse on soft power was already being determined as the mainstream view among Chinese scholars. In fact, the central thesis according to which culture is the main source of a state’s soft power would then be followed by Chinese analysts and political leaders, as is visible in a variety of scholarly articles and official speeches (Li Mingjiang 2009b, p. 25). It is also interesting to note that, in contemporary China, the interest in culture as a type of strength has arisen not only in relation to the acceptance of a foreign concept into the Chinese context, but also as an endemic phenomenon. Keeping in mind that among Chinese scholars the idea that culture is an indispensable source of a country’s soft power predominates, as has been introduced in Section 4.3, the investigation of the establishment of a concept of soft power in the Chinese context, following an interpretation in the Western context, makes it possible to localize the origins of “*wenhua ruan shili*” (cultural soft power) both in the Western theory of soft power and the Chinese “theory of cultural strength” (*wenhua li lilun*) (Liu Deding 2013, p. 4). According to Liu Deding (2013, pp. 38-39), the process of development and evolution of the soft power concept in contemporary China can be divided into two phases: the first phase, which covers the 1990s, saw “the concept of soft power and the concept of cultural strength run side by side” (*ruan shili gainian he wenhua li gainian bingxing* 软实力概念和文化力概念并行), while the second phase, starting in the 2000s, was characterized by “the proposal and popularity of the concept of cultural soft power” (*wenhua ruan shili gainian de tichu he shengxing* 文化软实力概念的提出和盛行). In the course of the first phase, Chinese scholars started paying attention to the concept of “*wenhua li* 文化力” (cultural strength), along with that of CNP, almost at the same time when Nye popularized his soft power theory (Ibid., p. 38). While the second phase will be analyzed later on, some aspects of the first phase are worth mentioning here. In particular, with reference to the concept of “*wenhua li*”, Liu Deding (2013, pp. 38-39) identifies Jia Chunfeng 贾春峰 as one of its main proponents; in his work *Jiaqiang shichang jingji fazhan*



*zhong de “wenhua li” yanjiu* 加强市场经济发展中的“文化力”研究 (Study on the enhancement of “cultural strength” in the development of market economy), published in 1993, the author argues that CNP should also include “spiritual culture/civilization” (*jingshen wenming* 精神文明), comprising cultural strength. According to Jia Chunfeng, cultural strength includes four aspects: “the intelligence factor” (*zhili yinsu* 智力因素), including education and science and technology, “mental strength/spiritual force” (*jingshen liliang* 精神力量), including morals, values, ideals, etc., the “cultural network” (*wenhua wangluo* 文化网络), including libraries, cinema halls, sports centers, and other entertainment facilities, and “traditional culture” (*chuantong wenhua*) (cited in Liu Deding 2013, p. 39). Comparing this approach to that of Wang Huning, Liu Deding (2013, p. 39) points out that Jia Chunfeng’s concept of cultural strength was largely centered around explaining the relation between culture and economic development, whereas Wang Huning was the first in China to place “culture” and “soft power” together in a systematic analysis. By stating that culture was a type of soft power and a component of national power, Wang Huning’s interpretation represented both a response to Nye’s conceptualization and also a different understanding of the concept, making culture equivalent to soft power rather than just a part of it (Ibid.). Thus, placing the word “*wenhua*” (culture) in front of “*ruan shili*” to form the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*” in the Chinese context represents “a rectification of the excessive political use and instrumental nature of the Western concept of soft power” (*shi dui Xifang de ruan shili gainian guoyu nongzhong de zhengzhi shiyong zhuyi he mingxian de gongjuxing de yi zhong jiaozheng* 是对西方的软实力概念过于浓重的政治使用主义和明显的工具性的一种矫正) (Ibid., p. 30). This aspect will be expounded upon in Chapter 6, while debates regarding the terminology used in relation to soft power will be dealt with in Chapter 7.

Prior to the leadership’s official sanction of the concept of “*wenhua ruan shili*”, which, as will be further described, occurred in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2007, early examples of the increasing popularity of the theory of soft power within Chinese intellectual circles include an academic paper written in 1997 by Nankai University Professor Pang Zhongying entitled “*Guoji guanxi zhong de ruan liliang ji qita* 国际关系中的软力量及其它” (Soft power and others in international relations). According to Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, foreword, p. 3), Pang Zhongying believes that every country should use its own resources and turn them into usable soft power in the context of international relations. Besides traditional culture, Asian countries can also find an important source of soft power in their development model (Ibid.). The definition of soft power that Pang Zhongying provides is worth quoting at length:

软力量，可比之为中国古代伟大的军事战略家孙武所谓的“不战而屈人”、“兵不顿而利可全”的力量吧，它是一个国家对自己拥有的非直接经济力量和军事力量等软资源的开发、使用和传播能力，借以在国际关系中游刃有余，达到实质力量达不到的目标。

(Pang Zhongying 1997, p. 50)

Soft power can be compared to the power that ancient China’s great military strategist Sun Wu [Sunzi] called “subduing an enemy without a fight” and “triumphing without losing a soldier”; it is a country’s ability to develop, use, and spread its own non-direct economic and military strengths and

other soft resources in order to skillfully act in international relations, reaching goals that substantial power cannot reach.

(Translated by the present author.)

Other contributions to these early stages of the debate on soft power in China are the article “*Bu neng hushi zengqiang wo guo de ruan shili* 不能忽视增强我国的软实力” (Can’t neglect strengthening our country’s soft power), written by American specialist Shen Jiru 沈骥如, in 1999, and the conference on “The Importance and Influence of Soft Power in U.S. Foreign Policy” organized in August 2002 by the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) (cited in Cho and Jeong 2008, p. 456).

As previously pointed out, the interest in soft power in China received a boost at the turn of the new millennium. For instance, a scholarly article written by Liu Debin in 2001, calls for a new approach to the study of American “sole hegemony” (*yi jia duba* 一家独霸), the prominent feature in the structure of global strategy after the end of the Cold War, posing that the Chinese research on American supremacy had stopped at the pre-Cold War phase (Liu Debin 2001, p. 61). The author argues that the analysis of soft power provided a new instrument to dissect the characteristics of the hegemony of the United States: being different than hard power, which is based on economic and military strengths, soft power is the attractiveness and appeal of a system of values, ways of life, and social systems, and the “assimilating power” (*tonghua li* 同化力) and “regulatory force” (*guizhi li* 规制力) established on these bases (Ibid.). In the age of globalization (*quanqiu hua* 全球化) and informatization (*xinxihua* 信息化), American hegemony is not only embodied in its superior position in the economic and military fields, but even more in “the influence and infiltration in the entire world” (*quan shijie de yingxiang he shentou* 全世界的影响和渗透) of its popular culture (*dazhong wenhua* 大众文化), values, and ways of life; in other words, it is embodied in the rapid expansion and intangible spread of American soft power (Ibid., p. 62). The ever-increasing importance of soft power has intensified the phenomenon of “Americanization” (*Meiguohua* 美国化) in the process of globalization, and has changed the initial form of American hegemony, while at the same time transforming the modes and themes of the competition among dominant countries, posing unprecedented challenges to other nations, including those in the West (Ibid.).

One preliminary consideration can be made based on these first examples: it can be argued that, since its first appearance in the 1990s, the concept of soft power has been recognized as an important aspect in the measurement of a country’s power, in the West and in China alike. Assessing soft power has gradually come to be seen as a new method to interpret power relations among countries in the globalization and informatization era. With the transformation of the structure of global power, soft power has increasingly gained relevance for the evaluation of a country’s standing in international relations, consequently making analyses of soft power resources of utmost importance for the development of soft power strategies. Given the difference in status between the United States and China, it comes as no surprises that the Chinese soft power discourse would soon depart from its American origins.

In this regard, a scholarly article written in 2003 by Zhang Zhan and Li Haijun is worth mentioning here as it attempted to focus on the sources of China’s soft power. The authors detect three components making up China’s soft power: “the vitality of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi zhidu de shengmingli* 中国特色社会主义制度的生命力), “the appeal and attractiveness of Chinese culture” (*Zhonghua wenhua de*

*ganzhaoli he xiyinli* 中华文化的感召力和吸引力), and “the international influence of the independent and autonomous peaceful foreign policy” (*duli zizhu heping waijiao zhengce de guoji yingxiangli* 独立自主和平外交政策的国际影响力) (Zhang Zhan and Li Haijun 2003). These three components are interconnected, shaping the formidable power of China’s foreign politics and producing a positive and profound impact on today’s international politics (Ibid.). It is interesting to note that, in their analysis of China’s foreign policy, the authors once again place Chinese culture in a prominent position. They posit that the core target of China’s foreign politics is safeguarding China’s socialist system and that, in the process to reach this goal, it is necessary to “push Chinese culture towards the world” (*tuidong Zhonghua wenhua zou xiang shijie* 推动中华文化走向世界); with Chinese culture as the girder, diplomatic methods must be adequately put to use, in order to defend world peace and promote common development (Zhang Zhan and Li Haijun 2003, p. 45).

Similarly, in 2004, Li Haijuan published a scholarly writing in the journal *Mao Zedong Deng Xiaoping Lilun Yanjiu* 毛泽东邓小平理论研究 (Studies on Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping Theories) which is worth mentioning here as culture is once again in the spotlight. The author’s main argument is that in today’s world “the core of ‘soft power’ competition is the competition in cultural strength” (“*ruan quanli*” *jingzheng de hexin shi wenhua li de jingzheng* “软权力”竞争的核心是文化力的竞争): at present, countries around the world are increasingly recognizing the significant role of soft power with culture as the core in the competition in CNP and this is why, one after the other, they launch “cultural competition strategies” (*wenhua jingzheng zhanlüe* 文化竞争战略) (Li Haijuan 2004, p. 50). In addition, the author believes that, in the international soft power competition, developed countries take advantage of their powerful position to unceasingly expand and propagate their culture and systems of values, while developing countries are obviously in a vulnerable position (Ibid., p. 49). China, as a developing country occupying a weak position in the soft power competition, must lay stress on bringing out the superiority of its traditional culture and participate in international cultural exchanges and competitions, enhancing and cultivating national spirit, and never ceasing to increase the competitiveness of Chinese culture (Ibid.). The article also suggests ways to enhance China’s soft power. In particular, Li Haijuan focuses on a development strategy for Chinese culture in the context of the soft power competition (Li Haijuan 2004, p. 52). Although having a civilization of five thousand years and having already demonstrated its cultural superiority in the course of history, nowadays it is undeniable that China is a developing country occupying a vulnerable position in terms of culture (Ibid.). To respond to “the strong cultural infiltration and erosion brought about by developed countries” (*fada guojia wenhua de qiangshi shentou he qinshi* 发达国家文化的强势渗透和侵蚀), China must make full use of the excellent traditions of its national culture and learn from the experiences of others to develop its cultural exchanges even further (Ibid.). Once again, the superiority of traditional Chinese culture is envisioned as a result of its emphasis on the concept of harmony. The author believes that despite being a competition, the soft power contest does not represent “bipolar antagonism in which ‘you die I live’ ” (*bu shi “ni si wo huo” de liangji duikang* 不是“你死我活”的两极对抗) because peaceful coexistence and common development are possible (Li Haijuan 2004, p. 52). Thus, a culture that advocates the realization of harmonious development among different civilizations, as is the case for Chinese culture, may occupy a position of comparative advantage in a soft power competition of this kind (Ibid.). Nevertheless, the article does not fail to take into consideration the risks Chinese culture faces. In fact, in the new context of soft power

competition, China finds itself in a situation of cultural vulnerability, running the risk of its culture being infiltrated and eroded (Li Haijuan 2004, p. 53). This risk comes primarily from two factors: the infiltration of Western culture into Chinese culture and the attack of Chinese traditions from the market economy (Ibid.).

The disproportion between the cultural strength displayed by developed countries and that of developing countries is an oft-debated topic of Chinese scholars. In 2004, Liu Debin also elaborates on the disadvantages experienced by China's soft power in relation to the superiority of American soft power resources, advocating greater investments in the domestic research on soft power, so that China can also reach a leading global position in the field of soft power development. Depicting a connection between China's ancient history and its recent transformations, this scholarly writing justifies the relevance placed on soft power in today's China through a brief, yet insightful, historical overview that deserves quoting at length:

尽管约瑟夫·奈的“软权力”说还没有在西方学术界获得多数认同,但对中国来说却具有重要意义。经过一个多世纪的艰苦努力,中国终于摆脱了半殖民地和半封建处境,“加入”到“国际社会”中来了。在目前市场开放、观念更新、社会转型和文化重塑这样一个特殊的历史时期,“软权力”的构建对中国具有尤为特殊的重要意义。中国是世界历史中唯一从古至今延续下来的文明古国,中国文化凝结和塑造了她的过去,也不可避免地影响她的未来。但是在过去一个多世纪救亡图存的拼搏中,面对欧美大国的压力,中国人根本没有机会从容地思考和解决这个问题。现在,在摆脱了民族存亡的危机之后,在美国“软权力”的巨大优势面前,中国的“软权力”的构建已经成为当务之急。尤其是中国要实现“和平崛起”的战略目标,不仅要有“硬权力”的储备,还必须具有文化上的影响力和感召力,必须在“软权力”的发展方面走在世界前列。这就要求我们对“软权力”说的研究投入更多的精力。

(Liu Debin 2004)

Although Joseph Nye's soft power theory has not obtained widespread approval within Western academic circles, for China it has major significance. After more than a century of hard work, China has finally broken away from an unfavorable semi-colonial and semi-feudal situation and has entered the international community. At the present time, such a particular historical period in which the markets are opening up, old notions are being replaced with new ones, and society is transforming, the construction of soft power has an especially particular and important meaning for China. In the world's history, China is the only ancient country whose civilization has continued from ancient times until today; Chinese culture solidified and molded her past and it is unavoidable that it will influence her future. But in the struggle for survival of the past century, facing the pressure from Western powers, the Chinese people did not fundamentally have a chance to calmly discuss and solve this problem. Now, having gotten rid of the crisis for which the nation could live or die but facing the immense superiority of American soft power, the construction of China's soft power has already become a matter of vital importance. In particular, if China wants to achieve the strategic objective of its "peaceful rise", it is not only necessary to have "hard power" reserves, but also the power to influence and inspire that comes from culture; in terms of development of soft power, China must be in the world's front row. This requires us to invest even more energy in the research on the soft power theory.

(Translated by the present author.)

Based on this brief overview of a selection of studies carried out by Chinese scholars in the first stages of the analysis of the soft power theory, it can be argued that the intellectual viewpoint has progressively evolved from a basic understanding of the concept in the American

context to an interpretation more suitable to China's situation. Studies have experienced a gradual, yet significant, development, detecting the need to develop strategies aimed at improving China's soft power. As previously pointed out, in the last decades, the development of soft power has come to take on a strategic significance for China, as it is pursuing the goal of reinvigorating the country's position in the world. In fact, when the soft power concept was first introduced, American culture already enjoyed worldwide popularity, while, for China, it was imperative to revive the appeal of its own culture, in order to make full use of its international competitiveness. It is therefore no surprise that, as stated by Liu Debin (2004), the debate on soft power among scholars became fervent, perhaps even more so than in the West.

Even though in the period covering the 1990s and the early 2000s Chinese scholars would place attention on the study of soft power from a theoretical perspective, trying to understand its function and how it could be applied to the Chinese context, a "made-to-measure" interpretation of the soft power theory would soon emerge from the academic and strategic circles, to better suit the peculiarities of the Chinese experience. In fact, as stated by Men Honghua (2007a, pp. 10-11), when analyzing China's soft power, the theory should be "localized" and enriched with "Chinese practice". The present discussion posits that it is precisely to this end that emphasis is placed on culture as a form of national strength in the Chinese discourse on soft power, as the rather innovative expression "*wenhua ruan shili*" shows. Moreover, as has been expounded upon in the previous sections, traditional culture becomes a specific tool for China to bring the country back on the world stage. This goes hand-in-hand with China regaining the status of most influential civilization it once enjoyed in the past. By placing emphasis on the role of culture as a resource of soft power, scholars recognize the advantage that the ancient Chinese civilization and deep-rooted system of thought represent for China's ascent, while at the same time acknowledging that China's soft power deployment is still weak in comparison to that of other great powers.

With reference to the examination of soft power as a relatively new theory penetrating the Chinese context, another contribution is worth mentioning before moving on to reviewing the history of the official discourse on soft power, which converged into the formalization of the concept of "*wenhua ruan shili*" in Hu Jintao's 2007 speech. As a very thorough appraisal of the status of the research on soft power up to 2007, the summary compiled by Chinese scholars Liu Qing and Wang Litao takes into consideration four aspects of the research: 1) the origins and development of the soft power theory; 2) the translation of the term "soft power" in Chinese; 3) the connotations of the soft power concept; and 4) the contributions and deficiencies of the soft power theory. In particular, the authors point out that for Chinese scholars committed to the research on soft power, the most problematic and controversial aspect has been the task of defining its connotations, as there is still no widespread consensus on the definition of soft power, its origin, its classification, and its characteristics (Liu Qing and Wang Litao 2007, p. 39). While the translations of the term "soft power" debated by the scholars will be taken into consideration in Chapter 7, attention must be paid here to the connotations of soft power, in regard to which the authors raise an interesting point that is in line with the approach chosen by the present dissertation, that is a binary interpretation of soft power. The authors debate potential "classifications of soft power" (*ruan lilian de fenlei* 软力量的分类) highlighting a variety of views: some Chinese scholars believe that soft power has an "internal" (*neibu* 内部) and "external" (*waibu* 外部) division, with the former including a country's system innovation, human resources, cultural influence, national cohesion, and affinity, and the latter including a

country's international image, the power to control international systems, and the capability to take on international duties (Liu Qing and Wang Litao 2007, pp. 40-41). Others believe that soft power can be divided into two types: soft power in a "narrow sense" (*xiayi* 狭义) and soft power in a "wide sense" (*guangyi* 广义), with the former indicating immaterial, cultural, and spiritual aspects, such as the attractiveness exercised towards other countries by values, culture, and technology, and the latter indicating the influence of a country's economy and diplomacy in the world (Ibid.). Last but not least, an even newer conception that has emerged is that related to the differentiation between "endogenous" (*neisheng de* 内生的) and "constructed" (*jiangou de* 建构的) soft power (Ibid.).

As has been expounded upon, in the Chinese discourse, it is indeed possible to detect a binary interpretation of the concept of soft power, which embraces both domestic and foreign factors. Nevertheless, from the writings considered so far, it is also clear that Chinese scholars still advocate the need for a more clear-cut definition of soft power and call for the development of a soft power theory more suitable for the Chinese context. Greater effort is required to define what soft power means for China, how to enhance it, and how culture can be wielded to produce soft power outcomes as part of the country's national power toolkit. These aspects are again discussed in one of the earliest and most comprehensive books analyzing China's soft power: *China's Soft Power Strategy*, edited by Men Honghua in 2007, to which this dissertation has referred on several occasions. As previously mentioned, Men Honghua (2007a, pp. 11-14) analyzes China's soft power based on five elements: culture, ideas, development model, international institutions, and international image. Assessing Chinese culture as a source of soft power, he highlights the efficient role played by China's ancient civilization in radiating China's traditional culture and values in East Asia and worldwide (Ibid., pp. 15-16). Apart from traditional Chinese culture being one of the mainstream cultures in the world, Men Honghua highlights another characteristic of China's culture, that is its "openness" (*kaifangxing* 开放性) (Ibid.). He argues that, in the course of history, China has been influenced by foreign countries, while its influence has touched not only Asia, but also Europe, especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries; even when, in the eyes of the West, China was perceived as undergoing a process of "Westernization" (*Xihua* 西化), in the course of its reforming and opening-up, for the Chinese that was actually a process of confluence and merger between the Chinese and Western civilizations, with "harmony in diversity" remaining the future appearance of the world (Ibid., pp. 16-17). With China's rise being in unison with Asia's rapid economic development, people in the world started again to look more closely at the incredible potential of traditional Chinese culture with Confucianism as its leitmotiv, reinstating Chinese culture in its strong position (Ibid., pp. 17-18). Today, examples such as the operations of the Confucius Institutes, which embody an ever-increasing "Chinese fever" (*hanyu re* 汉语热) abroad, testify to a new upsurge in interest in Chinese culture worldwide, confirming the message reiterated by the Chinese leadership that "Chinese culture belongs not only to China, but to the whole world" (*Zhongguo wenhua bu jin shuyu Zhongguo, ye shuyu quan shijie* 中国文化不仅属于中国, 也属于全世界) (Ibid., p. 18).

Nonetheless, China's soft power is still assessed as weak. Discussing methods to promote it, Men Honghua (2007a, pp. 51-54) takes his lead from listing all the goals set for China's domestic and international future, following the rapid development in recent years: domestically, by 2020, China aims to ensure sustainable economic and social development, complete the construction of a middle-class society and the first stages in the creation of a harmonious

socialist society, and increase the country's strength and competitiveness, using the achievements of development to benefit the entire people; modernization will be fundamentally realized by 2050, making China a "prosperous and powerful, democratic, and civilized socialist country" (*fuqiang*、*minzhu*、*wenming de shehuizhuyi guojia* 富强、民主、文明的社会主义国家). Internationally, China will be closer to becoming a "quasi-world power" (*zhun shijie daguo* 准世界大国) exercising a leading role in the Asia-Pacific region by 2020, and it will develop into a "world power" (*shijiexing daguo* 世界性大国) by 2050, contributing to the establishment of a harmonious world (Ibid.). The implementation of these strategies requires soft power to exercise a leading role; China must become a "real global power" (*zhenzheng de quanqiuixing daguo* 真正的全球性大国) and, for this reason, how to make China's soft power superior is a major topic of consideration among policy-makers and strategists (Ibid.). The elevation of China's soft power can thus be seen from different angles: first, since the increase in material wealth is the main reason why China's soft power, and in particular culture, ideology, and development model, receive attention, emphasis must still be put on learning how to wield hard power, increasing the investment in hard power and reinforcing its "projecting ability" (*toushe nengli* 投射能力); second, no effort must be spared to carry forward China's traditional culture and to transform it into a direct driving force behind Chinese ideas, the development model, international institutions, and international image, in order to guide the way towards the enhancement of China's soft power by means of cultural superiority; third, China's development model must be optimized and perfected; fourth, the capacity to participate in international institutions must be reinforced, striving to exercise a leading role; and fifth, the improvement of China's international image must be promoted based on the construction of China's domestic image (Ibid., pp. 51-54).

The second and last points raised by Men Honghua deserve further consideration; the following sections, in fact, will elaborate on the idea of enhancing China's soft power by means of cultural superiority, suggested by scholars such as Men Honghua (2007a, p. 52), but also elaborated in the CPC's official discourse on soft power, embodied by the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" (enhance the country's cultural soft power). It will be shown how the Chinese leadership has responded to the need of a more clear-cut definition of soft power in the Chinese context by means of the formalization of the concept of "*wenhua ruan shili*" (cultural soft power). As well, the project of enhancing culture as part of the country's cultural soft power will appear to be supported by a system of institutional actions, especially in the form of cultural policies, elaborated over the course of time and diffused nationwide, with the aim of building resources of cultural soft power and enhancing their attractiveness on the global stage. Moreover, in regard to the last point mentioned by Men Honghua (2007a, p. 53), the promotion of China's international image based on the construction of China's domestic image shows that building China's soft power involves both domestic and foreign policy strategies. This once again confirms the originality of the Chinese interpretation of Joseph S. Nye's soft power theory, which, as highlighted in Section 5.1, displays a broader view in comparison to the original conceptualization. This breadth is also related to the binary approach to soft power mentioned above, showing that, in the course of the theory's conceptual migration to China, the theoretical frame upon which the discourse on soft power was built has undergone a process of transformation and expansion, based on China's historical background and experience. The relation between China's domestic and international image that Men Honghua refers to can indeed be explained within the frame of these binary and more comprehensive paradigms.

According to Men Honghua (2007a, p. 54) international image building depends, to a certain extent, on both the domestic and international levels and, generally speaking, soft power puts more emphasis on the promoting role of domestic factors. He further argues that, on the domestic level, China must accelerate the pace in the construction of a harmonious society, synchronously carry out economic development and social progress, ensure political stability and cultural prosperity, and implement the democratic rule of law and fair justice, so as to build the foundation for China's "centripetal force" (*xiangxinli* 向心力) and "international influence" (*guoji yingxiangli* 国际影响力) (Ibid.). In order to become a responsible great power in the international community, China must first take responsibilities towards itself and its citizens, showing the image of a country that, domestically, is in touch with the people, democratic, incorruptible, and efficient, and that vigorously protects the people's civic rights and interests as well as profits abroad (Ibid.). Accordingly, at an international level, China must strive to make "harmony" a universal value (Ibid.).

The "centripetal force" Men Honghua refers to can be thought of as corresponding to the "cohesive force" (*ningjuli* 凝聚力, or "cohesion", "cohesiveness") discussed by Hu Jintao in his speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in October 2007 (Xinhua She 2007). As a matter of fact, such important tasks as those discussed above, could not go unnoticed by CPC officials and policy-makers. The next section will investigate the evolution of the Chinese leadership's approach to the soft power theory throughout the years, of which Hu Jintao's 2007 political speech, a historical landmark in the Chinese discourse on soft power, represents a synthesis. The government's guidance and involvement in the development of a Chinese discourse on soft power, as well as strategies aimed at enhancing the country's cultural soft power, will also emerge through an examination that breaks down the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" in order to analyze the connotations of its components.

### *Closing remarks*

This chapter has shown how the emergence of the Chinese discourse on soft power has been influenced by China's historical background and traditional thought pattern of which its system of values represent a powerful symbol. Historically, culture and civilization have constituted for China a wellspring through which to cultivate a unique vision of the individual, state governance, and international relations. This vision has affected China's very own interpretation of soft power over the course of history and plays an important role even today. The discourse on soft power in contemporary China has arisen from the historical relevance placed on culture, which is also reflected in China's modern theory of cultural strength, and the more contemporary concept of CNP. Yet, it cannot be denied that the influence of Joseph S. Nye's theory has been felt in China too. Absorbing and re-elaborating this foreign concept based on autochthonous ideas, academic and strategic circles have given rise to a new concept, that of "*wenhua ruan shili*" (cultural soft power). Thus, the Chinese discourse on soft power appears to be the result of the efforts made by Chinese scholars and strategists to link China's tradition with contemporary ideas, throughout the early stages of the research. Culture as the predominant resource of soft power has been identified as the element that sets Chinese soft power apart from its Western counterpart. In this way, enriched with Chinese practice so much so as to give rise to a "made-to-measure" interpretation, the soft power theory in China displays



peculiar characteristics: it is broader than its original conceptualization, it follows a binary approach embracing both domestic and foreign dynamics, and, above all, it places emphasis on culture as the most extraordinary source for China's soft power. The difference in status, resources, and strategic purposes between China and the United States, although not preventing the mastery in the use of soft power from being equally recognized, in the United States and China alike, as an important component in the assessment of a country's strength and international competitiveness in today's changing world, has, not surprisingly, given rise to the development of different interpretations of soft power. Moreover, in China, building soft power is envisioned even more as a way to build national strength and Chinese scholars have been advocating for a more clear-cut definition of what China's soft power actually is, a prerequisite which is instrumental to define strategies useful to enhance it. In fact, China's soft power is still assessed as being relatively weak, but the emphasis on culture, and especially traditional culture, is undoubtedly seen as a powerful resource to develop and project it. By placing culture at the core, the Chinese discourse on soft power, represented today by the concept of "*wenhua ruan shili*", appears to be envisioned in a more comprehensive way, allowing for the deployment of strategies that touch upon a betterment of China's domestic situation, as well as an increase in the country's international competitiveness. The formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" (enhance the country's cultural soft power), officially adopted into the Chinese political jargon in 2007, embodies the leadership's definition of what soft power represents for contemporary China and its current status, and reflects the institutional determination to build and enhance (*tigao*) China's cultural resources as part of the country's soft power.



## 6. Official discourse on soft power in contemporary China: culture as a national strategy

This chapter will focus on the development of the official discourse on soft power in the Chinese context between the early 1990s and 2007 and the related theory and practice in the years that followed until 2012. It will be divided into three parts which will explore, from different angles, the process through which the soft power concept has evolved from a theoretical notion studied by scholars, in the fields of academia and strategic studies, to a political formulation embodied in the expression “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” (enhance the country’s cultural soft power), officially introduced by Hu Jintao in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007, and a national strategy disseminated nationwide and put in practice through cultural policies. More specifically, Section 6.1 will provide an introduction, exploring the relationship between the academic discourse presented above and the point of view expressed by the CPC’s leadership on soft power. Building on the premise that the expressions “*wenhua ruan shili*” (cultural soft power), “*guojia wenhua ruan shili*” (national cultural soft power), and “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” can be considered official political formulations, attention will also be paid to the role played by these elements of discourse in the language of Chinese politics. The guiding role of the CPC’s official discourse in determining the orientation towards which the research on and practice of soft power has been developing in the Chinese context will emerge, and how the nature, resources, and purposes of soft power strategies peculiar to China are reflected in the terminology officially used will be highlighted. This will emerge with even more clarity in Section 6.2, which takes into consideration historical vicissitudes of the CPC’s interest in theoretical and ideological aspects that can be linked to the contemporary interpretation of soft power. The origins of the Chinese leadership’s discourse on soft power will thus be traced back to China’s communist tradition, in particular bringing to light a selection of relevant contributions in the years after 1990, but also taking into account the heritage left by CPC’s predecessors, and eventually culminating in the formalization of the concept of “*wenhua ruan shili*” in 2007. The salient aspects related to the evolution of this concept from that of “soft power” (*ruan shili*), adopted from the West and progressively adjusted to the Chinese context, will also be brought to light, as well as the government’s guidance in the development of a Chinese theory of soft power and the determination to turn it into a practice aimed at enhancing the country’s cultural soft power, an aspect that will emerge through the analysis of the formulation “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*”. The popularization of the Chinese view on soft power will make it necessary to also refer, at times, to scholarly articles, official documents and speeches, and news reports, often made available through state media outlets, in order to draw a picture of the Chinese discourse on soft power that is as complete as possible. This type of analysis is even more relevant for the investigation carried out in the Section 6.3, which focuses on more recent developments of the theory and practice of soft power in the Chinese context in the years between 2007 and 2012. The discussion will take into consideration a selection of official speeches, policy documents, and Party-State guidelines, disseminated and debated through the media, which will testify to the relevance of cultural policies for the enhancement of the country’s cultural soft power. The theoretical framework on which the Chinese discourse on soft power is built will thus appear as being supported by an action plan to enhance China’s cultural soft power officially promoted at the Party’s and State’s levels, in which the country’s institutions and overall society are called to participate in a collective effort.

## 6.1 Preliminary observations

In order to fulfill the task of describing, through an overview of the evolution of the Chinese leadership's approach to the concept of soft power over the years between the early 1990s and 2007, the influence exercised by the CPC's official view on the shaping of the contemporary discourse on soft power in China, as well as the definition of its resources, tools to enhance it, and purposes, some preliminary observations must be made. It will be shown that there exists a close link between the studies conducted by Chinese scholars and strategists on the concept of soft power and the official vision put forward by the Chinese leadership. It will also be demonstrated that the formulations adopted by the official discourse guide the ways in which political and public debates on soft power are conducted in China. But more importantly, it will be discussed how these political formulations are more than just a linguistic phenomenon, as they assume even more the function of articulating the guidelines for the definition of what soft power represents for China and the development of domestic and foreign strategies aimed at its construction and enhancement.

Firstly, it is necessary to shed light on the relationship between the discourse provided by academics and experts presented in the previous section and the Chinese leadership's point of view in regard to soft power. This relationship is somewhat complex due to the fact that, in the first place, the discourse on soft power in the Chinese context is rather intricate in itself. As previously pointed out, both the *discourse on Chinese soft power* at an international level and the *Chinese discourse on soft power* at a domestic level are rich and variegated; they do not always reach uniform conclusions and display, at times, contradictory points of view. Wuthnow (2008, p. 2) describes the Chinese discourse on soft power as the opposite of a "closed system" insofar as it does not develop solely within intellectual circles but receives "external inputs", such as: state ideology, Western publications on the topic of soft power and Chinese soft power, and developments in Chinese foreign policy itself. These inputs have transformed this discourse into "a hybrid of various sources" without impeding, however, the development of an increasingly high level of articulation in terms of details, number of participants, and dynamism and complexity in the analysis of the topic (Ibid., p. 3). The author also argues that there is a correlation between the research carried out and the actions performed by decision-makers (Ibid.). This relationship can be described as a "feedback loop through which leaders seek the advice of civilian experts, the research of whom is, in turn, constrained by the decisions of policy elites" (Ibid.). In the following pages this interdependence will emerge when, for the sake of clarity, it will be necessary to refer to theories and hypotheses suggested by intellectuals, researchers, and experts in order to better comprehend the CPC's official discourse.

Secondly, and in a related way, it is also important to investigate whether or not, and to what extent, the official discourse on soft power plays a guiding role in the definition of the direction towards which the analysis of this topic has been moving. In other words, the argument posed here is that the Chinese leadership's choice of words has served, and still serves, as guidance for the evolution of the ways in which experts, scholars, pundits, and the general public in China talk about soft power. In this regard, reference must be made to the role played by language in Chinese politics, a point that will also be dealt with, from a terminological point of view, in Chapter 7. For the present discussion it will suffice to posit that the fixation of a specific "*tifa* 提法", a term that can be generally defined as "the way something is put", a

“formulation”, or “wording”<sup>72</sup>, in the leadership’s official discourse generally sets the direction for the development of policies, research, and public debate. With reference to the field of Chinese politics, and more specifically that of political propaganda, the term “*tifa*” takes on a more profound meaning in comparison to the general one provided above. Brady (2008, p. 100), for example, defines these formulations “official definitions of the correct terminology to be used in public discourse” and states that in China, since 1949, the year when the PRC was founded by Mao Zedong 毛泽东, employing a “*tifa*” has been “one of the most powerful means of thought control”. The author also provides a more concise definition of “*tifa*” in the glossary to her volume: “politically correct speech” (Ibid., p. 206). A similar view is expressed by Schoenhals (1992), who examines formalized language as a form of power, maintaining that in contemporary Chinese politics things are done with words. In particular, he believes that “formalized language and formalized speech acts help constitute the structure of power in China’s political system” (Ibid., p. 1). He further argues:

In some cases the process of policy making is indistinguishable from the process of policy formulation. Policy implementation at all levels is affected by concerns with questions like How should this be put? What happens if we put it like that? Will putting it like this put people off? What do they mean by putting it differently? Can we really let them put it like that?

(Ibid., p. 3)

It is important to clarify that China is not the only country that employs specific formulations in political discourse. Schoenhals (1992, p. 1) writes that “formalization is part of politics everywhere”, while Lu Xing (1999, p. 492), focusing on the use of political slogans in Communist China from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, argues that “there is nothing new nor culture-specific about the use of slogans”. That being said, in the Chinese political system specific wordings and formalizations acquire a more profound meaning. As stated by Schoenhals (1992, p. 3), in contemporary Chinese politics, language formalization has become a “form of power managed and manipulated by the state”, which “has a bearing upon all aspects of Chinese politics”.

First and foremost, in China, the origins of language formalization can be, once again, traced back to antiquity. Analyzing how the Chinese contemporary political discourse shares some rhetorical features with classical Chinese rhetoric, Lu Xing (2002, p. 100) takes into consideration the philosophical concept of “*zhengming* 正名” (rectification of names). According to the author, this term was employed in Confucian thinking to indicate that social disorder and moral decline were caused by the misuse of words, names, and their meanings (Ibid.). *The Analects* report:

If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success. When affairs cannot be carried on to success, proprieties [rites] and music will not flourish. When proprieties and music do not flourish, punishments will not be properly awarded. When punishments are not properly awarded, the people do not know how to move hand or foot. Therefore a superior man considers it necessary

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<sup>72</sup> *Hanying Cidian (di san ban)* 汉英词典 (第三版) - *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Third Edition). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2010, s.v. *tifa* 提法.

that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect.

(Chinese Text Project n.d.)<sup>73</sup>

Language appears as a crucial tool to maintain order and avoid chaos, as only by calling things with their correct names do people know how to properly act. Lu Xing (2002, p. 100) attributes to the rectification of names the function of a “political solution to the problem of disorder and moral decline” and sees communication as having a “crucial role in contributing or inhibiting social order”. Schoenhals (1992, p. 2) also stresses the extensive study of language formalization in pre-modern China, as political philosophers believed that if what is said is not reasonable, the affairs of the state will not reach success and the people will have no guidance in choosing what is right. Moreover, according to Lu Xing (2002, p. 100), rulers must employ the concept of “*zhengming*” to fix social roles and make sure that everyone performs their role in society; sometimes this also requires the creation of new terms. This is demonstrated in *The Analects* by the effort of painstakingly creating and defining moral terms, such as “*ren*” (benevolence), “*li*” (rites/rules of propriety), “*xiao* 孝” (filial piety), and “*shu* 恕” (reciprocity), in order to reshape and redirect Chinese society towards new moral standards and a civilized order (Ibid.). In short, one can say that to guide the people to do what is right, it is necessary to define names for things and call these things appropriately. Chinese political philosophers of pre-modern China understood this very well and regarded language formalization very highly.

Contemporary Chinese leaders have also learned this lesson. As Schoenhals (1992, p. 14) puts it, “to gain access to the agora, PRC citizens must employ as their means of expression what in the eyes of the state count as ‘appropriate’ formulations”. Moreover, in her study about the use of political slogans in Communist China, Lu Xing (1999) describes these rhetorical elements of discourse as a form of persuasion that, by means of a pervasive use, has had a strong impact on Chinese culture and altered the thought pattern of Chinese people, and their conceptualization as a means to meet changing social conditions and establish control.

According to Schoenhals (1992, pp. 8-11), although the CPC has yet to develop a clear theory about formulations, some of their main characteristics are rather evident: they have to “contribute to the attainment of specific goals”; they should be “scientific”; and they should be considered “to be politically useful and clever”. Some accepted formulations are short, even amounting to just one single word; others may be considerably longer (Ibid., p. 11)<sup>74</sup>.

In brief, a considerable amount of international sources dealing with different aspects of China’s foreign policy and soft power supports the thesis according to which language is a tool used with mastery by Chinese leaders. Callahan (2007, pp. 786-787), for example, recognizes that the use of official phrases to guide political understanding and action, a phenomenon that he defines as “language politics”, is common in China’s domestic discourse, and highlights that this trend is recently being perfected also in the communication with foreign audiences,

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<sup>73</sup> Chinese version: “名不正，则言不顺；言不顺，则事不成；事不成，则礼乐不兴；礼乐不兴，则刑罚不中；刑罚不中，则民无所措手足。故君子名之必可言也，言之必可行也。君子於其言，无所苟而已矣。” Available at: <http://ctext.org/analects/zi-lu>.

<sup>74</sup> The author clarifies that according to Chinese usage of the term “*tifa*” and Western conversation analysis usage of the term “formulation”, formulations consisting of a single word and formulations consisting of a string of words can be treated in the same way, as the former can be considered a special case of the latter (Schoenhals 1992, p. 6n17).

emphasizing “the importance of language politics in Chinese foreign policy”. Language politics is thus a field in which shared goals go hand-in-hand with a “shared language”, constituting “official language games [...] reinforced through persistent and ever-present repetition” (Ibid.). An example of this is the use of the expressions “*heping jueqi*” and “*heping fazhan*”, thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. As previously mentioned, Scott (2012) analyzes China’s public diplomacy lexicon as a tool to reassure the international community and facilitate alliances in the age of China’s rise. In particular, the author points out that, in the PRC, language is used instrumentally, assuming the role of an “instrument of government and diplomacy” (Ibid., p. 40).

Based on these premises, it is important to highlight how the official discourse on soft power fits into this discussion. The adoption of the concept of soft power within the Chinese official discourse was marked by the use of the expression “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” in Hu Jintao’s political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in October 2007. As will be discussed in the following pages, the expressions “*wenhua ruan shili*”, “*guojia wenhua ruan shili*”, and “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” are recognized by many (Renmin Wang 2009; Huang Lizhi 黄力之 2014; Wang Yiwei 王义桅 2014) as officially sanctioned “*tifa*”. With the use of these formulations in such an important political event as is the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress, what Cao Qing (2011, pp. 11-12) calls the “culture-based conception of soft power” was given strategic meaning not only as an instrument to achieve the desired foreign policy goals but also, and more importantly, as a set of “communicative values” aimed at reaching consensus on the urgency “to build a strong, coherent national culture and identity as the basis for China’s soft power”. This “consensus-building exercise” can be seen as “the mobilisation of a cultural campaign”, in a vision of soft power that is both “internally and externally directed”, but primarily oriented towards the Chinese nation, advocating a change in domestic priorities and practices in order to develop soft power resources (Ibid., p. 12). As will be described in greater detail later on, the national project aimed at enhancing culture as part of the country’s soft power is clearly depicted in the leadership’s discourse, first and foremost in Hu Jintao’s speech, but also in other leaders’ speeches and policy documents. How soft power is envisioned in the Chinese government’s official discourse can thus be summarized by a definition provided by Cao Qing (2011, p. 10): “it is a set of values that a given community articulates and practices as its own foundational principles which might exert some form of appeal at times to members outside that particular community”.

As has been previously pointed out, China’s soft power discourse has both an internal and an external dimension. Yet, it can be argued that the internal dimension takes on relatively greater relevance, embodying one of the most peculiar characteristics of the Chinese discourse on soft power. As Cao Qing (2011, p. 12) points out, in the Chinese official discourse, China’s soft power is depicted as a pivotal aspect of the construction of national culture, while its external dimension is largely conceived as a reflection of the expected rejuvenation of China’s culture: “[...] reviving traditional values, enhancing communication infrastructures, but more importantly developing a strong national identity constitute central components, and therefore defining characteristics, of the official discourse of soft power”.

It can thus be implied that this vision is primarily due to the type of discourse adopted by the Chinese leadership and the importance attributed to it in setting the guidelines for the development of domestic and foreign policies. In this regard, Cao Qing (2011, p. 12) argues that, in the hierarchical structure of China’s communication system, “top leaders’ speeches carry explicit political validity for a national project, which will be promoted and carried out by government departments”. Thus, the popularity of the concept of soft power, the main

characteristics of its interpretation in China, with culture and traditional values as its core, and the resulting cultural strategies appear to be the consequence of the related official discourse. This is evident also because following Hu Jintao's political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007 discussions on soft power rapidly gained the spotlight in official discourse, in relation to both domestic and international issues (Cao Qing 2011, p. 11).

These aspects will be further demonstrated in the following pages which will take into account the development of the Chinese official discourse on soft power in the years after 1990 and leading up to 2007, offering a critical analysis of the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*". The relation between the official terminology used and the orientation of the Chinese discourse on soft power will thus emerge, together with the government's active role in defining the Chinese soft power theory, which will then be turned into a series of specific strategies aimed at enhancing the country's cultural soft power.

## 6.2 Developments prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007

Even though the present analysis elaborates on the penetration into the Chinese context of the concept of soft power as a notion generated in the West, thus taking its lead from the 1990s, Chapter 5 highlighted some of the most relevant elements that can be found in the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition and applied to the interpretation of soft power in contemporary China. In a similar vein, the following pages will trace the origins of the Chinese leadership's discourse on soft power back to China's past, focusing on the years between 1990 and 2007, but also bringing to light the influence of previous communist tradition. Based on the premise that, through the official discourse, the Chinese leadership has enunciated a national project aimed at enhancing culture as part of the country's soft power, as stipulated by the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" (enhance the country's cultural soft power), the aim of this section is to highlight how interest in national culture-building has been expressed, over the years, by successive generations of CPC leaders, eventually culminating in the formal endorsement of the concept of "*wenhua ruan shili*" (cultural soft power) in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2007. For this reason, the evolution of the concept of "soft power" (*ruan shili*), adopted from the West and progressively adjusted to the characteristics of the Chinese context, into that of "*wenhua ruan shili*" will also be brought to light, together with the rationale behind this choice. The discussion posits that an attempt to distinguish between these two concepts and a critical analysis of the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" are crucial to pinpoint not only the orientation of the Chinese discourse on soft power in terms of discussed topics, emphasized connotations, and highlighted characteristics, but also the government's involvement in the definition of a soft power theory more suitable for the Chinese context and the declared determination to take action to build and enhance (*tigao*) the country's cultural soft power.

Chinese authors engaged in the analysis of Chinese soft power often make reference to "Sinicized Marxism" (*Zhongguohua Makeshizhuyi* 中国化马克思主义) when discussing the origins and evolution of cultural soft power. For instance, Zheng Biao (2010, pp. 145-154) describes the relation between traditional culture and Marxism, stating that they have to "overcome sectarianism" (*kefu menhu zhi jian* 克服门户之见) and "join hands to forge China's soft power" (*lianshou dazao Zhongguo ruan shili* 联手打造中国软实力).



In Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, pp. 75-96), a “Sinicized Marxist cultural soft power theory” (*Zhongguohua Makeshuyi wenhua ruan shili lilun* 中国化马克思主义文化软实力理论) is proposed. Its development is taken into consideration as evidence that “the CPC has always attached importance to cultural construction” (*Zhongguo Gongchandang lilai zhongshi wenhua jianshe* 中国共产党历来重视文化建设), and that “under the leadership’s guidance and through more than 90 years of work, Chinese culture has gradually transformed its form from traditional to modern, and achieved great results” (*zai dang de lingdao xia, jingguo 90 duo nian de nuli, Zhongguo wenhua cong chuantong xingtai zhuanbian wei xiandai xingtai, qude le juda de chengjiu* 在党的领导下, 经过 90 多年的努力, 中国文化从传统形态逐步转变为现代形态, 取得了巨大的成就) (Ibid.).

In the eyes of Chinese scholars, the seeds of today’s soft power can thus be found not only in China’s ancient traditional values and system of thought, but also in the CPC’s discourse on culture-building promoted since the foundation of the Party. Today’s official discourse on China’s cultural soft power is seen as the result of the historical inheritance passed on starting from the founding principles of Marxism. In Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, pp. 75-96), many examples are provided to support this thesis. In fact, the “Sinicized Marxist cultural soft power theory” is seen as representing “the Marxist cultural thought of the new period” (*xin shiqi de Makeshuyi wenhua sixiang* 新时期的马克思主义文化思想) and as constituting “the inheritance and development of the cultural thought of Marx, Engels, and the three generations of CPC collective leadership” (*dui Makesi Engesi ji dang de sandai lingdao jiti wenhua sixiang de jicheng he fazhan* 对马克思恩格斯及党的三代领导集体文化思想的继承和发展) (Ibid., p. 75). Marx and Engels are seen as the initiators of the “proletarian advanced cultural thought” (*wuchan jieji xianjin wenhua sixiang* 无产阶级先进文化思想) as they proposed a series of guiding principles for the construction of “proletarian advanced culture” (*wuchan jieji xianjin wenhua jianshe* 无产阶级先进文化建设) which paved the way for the exploration of advanced culture carried out by successive Marxists; the successive generations of CPC collective leadership attached great importance to cultural construction and its social function, a fact that reflects the Party’s cultural awareness in regard to its mission, ensuring that, in any historical period, the Party would represent the “progressive orientation of advanced Chinese culture” (*Zhongguo xianjin wenhua de qianjin fangxiang* 中国先进文化的前进方向) (Ibid.).

Entering the age of globalization and informatization, as has been previously discussed, the role of culture in the international competition for power became more prominent and, in China, the early 1990s saw the growing popularity of the concepts of “*zonghe guoli*” (CNP) and “*wenhua li*” (cultural strength). In the same period, then-President Jiang Zemin advocated the construction of “advanced socialist culture” (*shehuizhuyi xianjin wenhua*) (Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 78). The third generation of the CPC collective leadership, with Jiang Zemin as the core, connected socialist culture with CNP, further developing the Marxist cultural soft power thought and suggesting that culture belonged to CNP, as “spiritual force” (*jingshen lilian*) also belonged to it (Ibid., p. 79). The 15<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Di Shiwu Ci Quanguo Daibiao Dahui* 中国共产党第十五次全国代表大会) in 1997 decreed the following:

建设有中国特色社会主义的文化，就是以马克思主义为指导，以培养有理想、有道德、有文化、有纪律的公民为目标，发展面向现代化、面向世界、面向未来的，民族的科学的大众的社会主义文化。

(cited in Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 79)

Building socialist culture with Chinese characteristics means developing, under the guidance of Marxism and with the target of cultivating citizens with ideals, morality, culture, and discipline, a national, scientific socialist culture for the masses, oriented towards modernization, oriented towards the world, and oriented towards the future.

(Translated by the present author.)

Moreover, Jiang Zemin also proposed that “culture is an important symbol of comprehensive national power” (*wenhua shi zonghe guoli de zhongyao biao zhi* 文化是综合国力的重要标志) and this gave rise to important new ideas for the development of the theory of cultural soft power on the basis of what had been passed on by the predecessors (Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 79).

Although not yet called “soft power” or “cultural soft power”, the need to make use of culture for the purpose of nation-building, identity-building, and the enhancement of national cohesion was already clear, as was the necessity to increase China’s competitiveness on the global stage by means of cultural undertakings. On one occasion in 1998, Jiang Zemin specified:

一个民族、一个国家，如果没有自己的精神支柱，就等于没有灵魂，就会失去凝聚力和生命力。有没有高昂的民族精神，是衡量一个国家综合国力强弱的一个重要尺度……

(cited in Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 79)

If a people, a country, does not have its own moral pillars, which is equal to having no soul, it will lose cohesiveness and vitality. Having or not a high national spirit is an important scale to measure if a country’s comprehensive national power is strong or weak...

(Translated by the present author.)

With the 16<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2002, the reform of the cultural system was for the first time included in the content of a political report of the national congress, bringing cultural construction into China’s development strategy (Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 81). This is confirmed by the following statement contained in the report:

当今世界，文化与经济和政治相互交融，在综合国力竞争中的地位和作用越来越突出。文化的力量，深深熔铸在民族的生命力、创造力和凝聚力之中。

(cited in Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 81)

In today’s world, culture blends together with economics and politics and it has an increasingly prominent position and role in the competition for comprehensive national power. The force of culture is deeply casted in the vitality, creativity, and cohesiveness of the nation.

(Translated by the present author.)

Moreover, the strategic policy of “actively developing cultural undertakings and the cultural industry” (*jiji fazhan wenhua shiye he wenhua chanye* 积极发展文化事业和文化产业) was also put forward (Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 81).

It is relevant to note that the 16<sup>th</sup> National Congress also marked the inclusion of Jiang Zemin's theory of the "Three Represents" (*san ge daibiao* 三个代表), into the ideological apparatus of the CPC. The Party's legitimacy was reiterated because of its ability to respond to the new historical situations the country was experiencing. The Party was thus called to represent the requirements for developing China's advanced productive forces, the progressive orientation of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people<sup>75</sup>. According to Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, pp. 79-80) this shows that the Party's awareness of the importance of building socialist culture had reached new proportions, indicating that "the country's social development had moved, in terms of value orientation, from politics and economics to an all-around progress in politics, economics, culture, and society" (*woguo de shehui fazhan zai jiazhi quxiang cong zhengzhi、jingji zhuanxiang le zhengzhi jingji wenhua shehui de quanmian jinbu* 我国的社会发展在价值取向从政治、经济转向了政治经济文化社会的全面进步).

All these examples testify to the fact that the concept of soft power, although not called as such, had been present in the history of the CPC for many years, with culture-building constantly at the core. As Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 22) puts it, for the CPC's top leadership soft power was "no longer an alien concept". This is even more true in regard to the era of Hu Jintao and the fourth generation of Chinese leaders, which saw the official definition and formalization of the Chinese soft power theory, culminating with the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress. It is indeed in this period, with 2007 as a cornerstone, that discussions on soft power flourished at all levels. According to Cho and Jeong (2008, p. 459) the soft power theory was able to turn into a "nationwide trend" due to a greater systematization of the concept at the leadership level, which benefited from the proposal of various theories and concepts, such as those of a "peaceful rise", Beijing Consensus, and "harmonious world", as well as the importance attributed to public diplomacy.

In this regard, the 13<sup>th</sup> Group Study Session of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Zhengzhiju Di Shisan Ci Juti Xuexi* 中共中央政治局第十三次集体学习) held at the end of May 2004, also assumes relevance. According to Lai Hongyi (2012a, p. 11) the meeting exposed the Chinese leadership to the concept of soft power. Two articles published in the Chinese government weekly, *Liaowang* 瞭望 (*Outlook*), are worth mentioning here: "Tisheng Zhongguo ruan shili: jiedu Zhongyang Zhengzhiju Di Shisan Ci Juti Xuexi 提升中国软实力：解读中央政治局第十三次集体学习" (Promoting China's soft power: interpreting the 13<sup>th</sup> Group Study Session of the Politburo of the Central Committee),

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<sup>75</sup> According to the People's Daily Online (2006), as a theoretical tool to strengthen the Party and promote socialism in China, the important thought of the Three Represents is a continuation and development of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory, reflecting the new demands posed to the work of the Party and the State by new developments and changes happening in China and in the world. The thought of the "Three Represents" was first proposed by Jiang Zemin in 2000 when he pointed out that: "An important conclusion can be reached from reviewing our Party's history over the past 70-odd years; that is, the reason our Party enjoys the people's support is that throughout the historical periods of revolution, construction and reform, it has always represented the development trend of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. With the formulation of the correct line, principles and policies, the Party has untiringly worked for the fundamental interests of the country and the people. Under the new conditions of historic significance, how our Party can better translate the Three Represents into action constitutes a major issue that all Party members, especially senior officials, must ponder deeply" (Ibid.).

written by Yang Taoyuan 杨桃源, and “*Zhongguo xuyao ruan shili* 中国需要软实力” (China needs soft power), written by Zhao Changmao 赵长茂. The first article is a commentary on the 13<sup>th</sup> Group Study Session, which, according to Yang Taoyuan (2004), revolved around the topic of “advancing and developing China’s philosophy and social sciences” (*fanrong he fazhan woguo de zhexue shehui kexue* 繁荣和发展我国的哲学社会科学) and the heated discussion within the international public opinion regarding the Chinese model and the Beijing Consensus. More importantly, the meeting showed that it was evident that the Chinese leadership intended to accelerate the construction of China’s soft power from a strategic height, considering philosophy and social sciences as part of the country’s CNP (Ibid.). According to Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 23), Professor Cheng Enfu of the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, who participated in the meeting, commented that the group study session clearly showed that the Chinese leaders attached importance to soft power. As well, the second article vigorously called for China to build soft power. According to Zhao Changmao (2004), in fact, a country’s rise lies fundamentally in an all-around upgrade of its CNP, but in the pattern of multipolarization (*duojihua*) and globalization (*quanqiu hua*) of today’s world the role of soft power in the international competition is becoming increasingly prominent. China’s peaceful rise has placed building and strengthening soft power in a crucial position because it is a process that not only involves the unceasing upgrading of economic, scientific and technological, and military strengths, but also, and even more, the unceasing strengthening of the attractiveness (*xiyinli*), or attractive force, and affinity (*qinheli* 亲和力) of culture and ideology, that is “a process of unceasing growth and accumulation of soft power” (*ruan shili buduan chengzhang he jilei de guocheng* 软实力不断成长和积累的过程) (Ibid.). Last but not least, in this process, “traditional culture would play a unique role” (*chuantong wenhua jiang fahui dute zuoyong* 传统文化将发挥独特作用) (Ibid.).

It is evident that the Chinese interpretation of soft power was taking shape in a more clear-cut way among the CPC’s elites and gaining momentum in the political discourse. 2006 was an important year for the formalization of China’s soft power strategy. According to Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 23), reference to the need to increase the country’s international status and influence through the use of soft power was made by Hu Jintao at a meeting of the Central Foreign Affairs Leadership Group in January and then again at the Eighth National Congress of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles in November. As a matter of fact, the first appearance of the Chinese term for soft power (*ruan shili*) in the Party’s and State’s documents is reported to have occurred on this last occasion (Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 82). In particular, Hu Jintao once again stressed the important position of culture in the competition for CNP and stated the following:

如何找准我国文化发展的方位，创造民族文化的新辉煌，增强我国文化的国际竞争力，提升国家软实力，是摆在我们面前的一个重大现实课题。

(cited in Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 97)

How to seek a direction that allows for the development of the culture of our country, creating a new splendor for our national culture, increasing the international competitiveness of our culture, and promoting the country’s soft power, is a major practical task set in front of us.

(Translated by the present author.)

Another preliminary step before publicly making soft power an official political strategy in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in October 2007 is represented by the 38<sup>th</sup> Group Study Session of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Zhengzhiju Di Sanshiba Ci Juti Xuexi* 中共中央政治局第 38 次集体学习) held in January 2007. On this occasion Hu Jintao stressed that building and managing internet culture would “be beneficial for an increase in the country’s soft power” (*youli yu zengqiang woguo de ruan shili* 有利于增强我国的软实力) (cited in Hong Xiaonan 2013, p. 82). This once again bore witness to the fact that the Chinese leadership had become sensitively aware of the importance for China of increasing its soft power (Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 82).

In the course of 2007 other Chinese leaders spoke about soft power: Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 23), for example, gives relevance to a speech delivered in March by Jia Qinglin 贾庆林, at the time Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (*Zhongguo Renmin Zhengzhi Xieshang Huiyi* 中国人民政治协商会议, CPPCC) and a member of the CPC Politburo Standing Committee (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Zhengzhiju Changweihui* 中共中央政治局常委会), and a special session of the CPPCC National Committee held in July. In the course of this latter event, Jia Qinglin is reported to have stressed the importance of the role played by soft power and cultural construction as its core in meeting domestic demands and enhancing China’s competitiveness in the world (Ibid.). According to Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, p. 97), in fact, the meeting gathered suggestions regarding the issue of building national soft power with cultural construction as the main content.

Just a few months later, on October 15<sup>th</sup>, the formulation “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” made its first official appearance in the Chinese political discourse when Hu Jintao pronounced his keynote speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC. As previously noted, scholars (among others, Glaser and Murphy 2009; Nye and Wang 2009a, 2009b; Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010; Zheng Biao 2010; Cao Qing 2011; Edney 2012; Liu Deding 2013; Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013; Aukia 2014) recognize the importance of this event, which represented a milestone in the formalization of the Chinese official view of soft power. For instance, Zheng Biao (2010, p. 108) comments on the introduction of the expression “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” into the political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress, stating that to realize the great undertaking of China’s rejuvenation it is necessary to have robust hard-power foundations, but even more the formidable support of soft power. Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, p. 232) argue that the use of the words “*tigao wenhua ruan shili*” by Hu Jintao signaled that the concept had been elevated to the height of national strategy, pointing out the direction for future cultural construction. In Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, pp. 96-97), “*guojia wenhua ruan shili*” is reported to have become a “hot expression” (*remen de ciyu* 热门的词语) in recent years, not only representing the center of attention in academic circles but also a “core concept” (*hexin gainian* 核心概念) within “national political tactics” (*guojia zhengzhi celüe* 国家政治策略) and “development strategies” (*fazhan zhanlüe* 发展战略), “entering into the country’s grand blueprint for future development” (*jinru dao guojia weilai fazhan de hongwei lantu zhi zhong* 进入到国家未来发展的宏伟蓝图之中). In this sense, officially including “*wenhua ruan shili*” in the congress report as a key theme made it clear that the Party and the State had already made the task of improving cultural soft power a new strategic focus in the strengthening of CNP and in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people (Ibid., p. 97).

Although terminological aspects will be expounded upon in the following chapter, a brief explanation is needed here to clarify the difference in usage of the two expressions “*ruan shili*” (soft power) and “*wenhua ruan shili*” (cultural soft power). This difference has emerged throughout the entire discussion, but it must be once again stressed that, when referring to Hu Jintao’s speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress as the official event that marks the entrance of the topic of soft power within the political agenda of the CPC, the Western discourse, or discourse in English, does not always stress the use by former President Hu Jintao of the relatively new expression “*wenhua ruan shili*”. Generally speaking, talking about “soft power” in the Chinese context seems to coincide with “cultural soft power”, with the two terms being used alternatively and with no real distinction or clarification. This could simply be due to the lack of a real counterpart for “*wenhua ruan shili*” in the English language. As mentioned before, this aspect has been expounded upon by Gu Junwei (2011). The author points out that Chinese research on soft power must also give its contribution to global research, through a dialogue with scholars from other countries aimed at testing scientific results; however, the introduction of the term “soft power” into the Chinese language has given rise to many problems related to the misuse of a variety of “derivative terms that do not have a uniform understanding within the country” (*zai guonei dou meiyou tongyi renshi de yansheng shuyu* 在国内都没有统一认识的衍生术语) (Ibid., p. 67). This impedes the international dialogue among scholars, as is testified by the case of “*wenhua ruan shili*” which does not have a corresponding term in English, or is translated as “soft power” in the same way as “*ruan shili*” (Ibid.) By taking the example of the Wikipedia page related to soft power, which cites Hu Jintao’s report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress glossing over the use of the correct expression “*wenhua ruan shili*”, Gu Junwei (2011, p. 67) raises a good point: the difficulty for international academic circles to comprehend the terminology used by Chinese scholars. This aspect will be expounded upon in Chapter 7, however, looking at how the lack of a fixed and precise English translation for the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*” somehow jeopardizes the correct transposition of the formulation employed by Hu Jintao in his speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress shows that, at times, the discrepancies between Chinese and English terminology and the difficulty in translating across these two languages without losing important nuances of meaning can affect the Western perception of Chinese concepts, as is the case for Chinese soft power.

Following the lead of Glaser and Murphy (2009), Aukia (2014), and Zappone (2014), attentive Western scholars who, among others, have noticed these terminological discrepancies, the present analysis has aimed to explore the connotations of “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua ruan shili*” more profoundly, as well as investigating a variety of other derivatives in Chapter 7. In fact, the argument has been that it must always be kept in mind that the complete expression Hu Jintao used with reference to China’s soft power in his 2007 political report is indeed the formulation “*guojia wenhua ruan shili*”, a collocation that, as has been previously pointed out, sees the juxtaposition of the words “*guojia*” (“country”, sometimes corresponding to “China” or “nation” in English translations) and “*wenhua*” (culture), to the term “*ruan shili*”. The official English version of the speech, reported in Chapter 2, offers the translation “culture as part of the soft power of our country”. As previously explained, “culture as part of the country’s soft power” would be considered an appropriate alternative for Hu Jintao’s words. The collocations “cultural soft power” and “national cultural soft power” are nonetheless also very common in English texts, and in the present analysis, a conscious effort has been made to distinguish between “soft power” and “cultural soft power” when necessary and respecting the consistency with the sources analyzed. With the argument being that, by employing a somewhat innovative

expression (*wenhua ruan shili*) in the 2007 political report, culture was placed at the core of the Chinese discourse on soft power following a specific rationale, the present analysis maintains that an attempt to distinguish between the concepts of “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua ruan shili*” is pivotal to a better understanding of the Chinese narrative of soft power. As seen in the previous sections, in China, the soft power discourse displays a series of peculiar characteristics, and this is evident in the juxtaposition of the word “culture” before “soft power” in the formulation officially adopted in the Chinese political discourse. It is a choice which is not casual, but serves a series of purposes: it embodies the characteristics of the “made-to-measure” interpretation of soft power in the Chinese context; it sets the Chinese discourse on soft power apart from its Western counterpart, toning down the political nature of the latter and highlighting the nation and culture-building purposes of the former; and, by placing culture, and especially traditional culture at the core, it opens up new spaces for a use of soft power which aims at the achievement of an all-around betterment of China’s domestic and international realities in the age of China’s rise.

Zappone (2014, p. 417n7), for instance, clearly states that the creation of the concept of cultural soft power reflects the leadership’s intention to place culture at the center of the Chinese discourse on soft power. The extract that focuses on soft power drawn from the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress has been inserted in Chapter 2, in order to provide an explanation of the main assumptions proposed in this work. For the sake of clarity, the points considered relevant to the present discussion were also summarized and explained in great detail, in order to present the parameters of this research. Consequently, it was highlighted how the placement of culture at the core of the Chinese discourse on soft power reflected the choice of this resource as the basis for Chinese soft power and attention was paid to the former President’s statement that “culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength” (*wenhua yuelaiyue chengwei minzu ningjuli he chuangzaoli de zhongyao yuanquan*、*yuelaiyue chengwei zonghe guoli jingzheng de zhongyao yinsu* 文化越来越成为民族凝聚力和创造力的重要源泉、越来越成为综合国力竞争的重要因素) (Xinhua She 2007; Xinhua News Agency 2007). Based on this description, it is easy to see that in the Chinese context soft power is envisioned as serving both domestic and international needs because culture, placed at the core of Chinese soft power at the behest of the leadership, plays an important role in both directions. Thus, as argued by Zappone (2014, p. 417n7), cultural soft power embraces both aspects related to domestic politics and aspects related to foreign politics, with an increase in cultural soft power being both crucial to the achievement of a new international identity and status, but also to the development of a more equal society characterized by renewed values that, in line with innovation but also with China’s communist tradition, can once again bestow political legitimacy onto the Party, the historical guarantor of national morality.

Chinese scholars have also elaborated extensively on the relation between “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua ruan shili*”. As previously discussed, Liu Deding (2013, pp. 38-39) proposes that the process of development and evolution of the soft power concept in contemporary China can be divided into two phases: while the first phase saw the simultaneous development of the concepts of cultural strength and soft power, the second phase was characterized by the proposal of the concept of cultural soft power and its increasing popularity. In this sense, the proposal of the formulation “*wenhua ruan shili*” can be seen as merging these two concepts into an expression that takes on innovative connotations in comparison to its Western counterpart.

According to Liu Deding (2013, pp. 2-3), in the course of the process of borrowing from the Western theory of soft power and the Chinese theory of cultural strength, Chinese scholars have also actively developed research on cultural soft power, with literary works regarding the interpretation and analysis of “*wenhua ruan shili*” and research papers unceasingly emerging in large numbers. The author identifies a dissertation compiled in 2004 by a graduate student named Gao Yan 皋艳 as the earliest document attempting to discuss China’s national soft power: from that point onward the publication of Chinese research treatises on cultural soft power took off, making the topic a focal point in the cultural domain (Ibid., p. 3).

To explain this process, Liu Deding (2013, p. 38) takes its lead from an explanation of the main difference between the Western and the Chinese interpretation of soft power. The author takes into consideration the lack of a completely unanimous theoretical understanding and explanation of the concept of soft power after its penetration into China, which, nonetheless, has not impeded the emergence of some variations: for instance, even though the origins of the expression “*guojia ruan shili* 国家软实力” (national soft power) can be traced back to Joseph S. Nye’s soft power theory, “this formulation and enunciation has already been assigned connotations that are different from its original meaning” (*zhe yi tifa yu biaoshu yijing bei fuyule yu qi yuanyi butong de neihan* 这一提法与表述已经被赋予了与其原义不同的内涵) (Ibid.). To a certain extent, the deep rooted relation to the “theory of power” (*quanli lilun* 权力理论) present in the Western concept of soft power has been eliminated, shifting from the search for hegemony to the goal of better satisfying the people’s demands and basic interests, more vigorously assuming international responsibilities, and promoting global justice, thus incarnating the fundamental difference with Western soft power (Ibid.). This is why, placing the word “*wenhua*” in front of “*ruan shili*” to form the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*” can be said to represent an attempt to soften the close link with the reality of power politics of the Western concept of soft power, in contrast to a more comprehensive, perhaps less confrontational, view which focuses on domestic practices without neglecting the sphere of foreign politics. As has been previously pointed out, this represents the process that Liu Deding (2013, p. 38) defines “a rectification of the excessive political use and instrumental nature of the Western concept of soft power” (Ibid.).

In regard to the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*”, Liu Deding (2013, p. 39) points out that its first appearance occurred in 2005, in a news report in the newspaper *Guangming Ribao* 光明日报 (*Guangming Daily*) entitled “*Wenhua ruan shili chengwei Zhejiang zonghe jingzhengli de zhongyao bufen* 文化软实力成为浙江综合竞争的重要部分” (Cultural soft power becomes an important part of Zhejiang’s comprehensive competitiveness). In a similar way, the use of “*wenhua ruan shili*” in academic circles could be found in contexts related to the reform of the cultural system in various areas, as a component of regional competitive strength in terms of cultural undertakings and cultural industries (Ibid.). Conversely, it was indeed from 2007 that the research on cultural soft power started to be more related to national power (*guojia shili* 国家实力), and in particular after Hu Jintao explicitly talked about enhancing the country’s cultural soft power, that of “*guojia wenhua ruan shili*” (national cultural soft power) became the most popular school of thought<sup>76</sup>. Nevertheless, although a great number of analyses regarding the connotations of cultural soft power, its importance, its current development, and its

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<sup>76</sup> The various schools of thought which have arisen in China in relation to soft power were discussed in Section 4.4.



enhancement have been produced by many scholars, based on their own fields of research, the exact meaning of this concept has yet to find a unanimous explanation (Ibid.).

Notwithstanding the lack of widespread consensus on the nature of cultural soft power, after 2007, following the acceptance of the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*” into the CPC’s political jargon, there was an escalation in the popularity of anything related to the topic of soft power, not only in the official discourse of the Chinese leadership but also in the Chinese media. As previously mentioned, Guo Jiemin (2012, p. 17) states that the term “*ruan shili*” has become a “high-frequency word” (*gaopin ci*) in the Chinese press and media, while Liu Deding (2013, p. 2) points out that following the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*” has been constantly appearing in the cultural sphere and in news reports, increasingly attracting the attention of academics and politicians.

Chapter 7 will look more closely at the variety of derivatives, which, created on the basis of “*ruan shili*”, populate current discussions on soft power at all levels. Before moving on to the following section, which will introduce developments in the theory and practice of soft power in the years between 2007 and 2012, further investigating the relation between “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua ruan shili*”, it is interesting to look at some examples drawn from the media which testify to the acceptance of the expression “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” into the realm of official formulations (*tifa*) populating the Chinese political jargon.

The first example is a newspaper article written by Chinese scholar Wang Yiwei and issued in the *People’s Daily Overseas Edition* (*Renmin Ribao Haiwaiban* 人民日报海外版) on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014, which testifies to the fact that Chinese views on soft power have also reached the communities of overseas Chinese. The author corroborates what is expressed by the formulation “*wenhua ruan shili*”, which integrates soft power and culture, with a comment on a visit to Qufu (曲阜, the hometown of Confucius) by the father of the soft power theory, Joseph S. Nye, who, according to the article, stated that “China’s outstanding traditional culture is China’s most important soft power” (*Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua shi Zhongguo zui zhongyao de ruan shili* 中华优秀传统文化是中国最重要的软实力) (Wang Yiwei 2014).

The second example is drawn from the scholarly literature made available to the public through media outlets. It is a journal article written by Huang Lizhi in 2014 for the journal *Mao Zedong Deng Xiaoping Lilun Yanjiu* 毛泽东邓小平理论研究 (Studies on Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping Theories) and published, in the same year, on the website of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Bianyi Ju* 中共中央编译局). The article, which focuses on the relation between cultural soft power and China’s system of values, opens with the following indicative statement:

从 2007 年党的十七大到 2012 年的十八大,“提高”或“增强”国家文化软实力的提法一再为党的政治报告所认可。这意味着文化软实力建设已经进入中国国家战略构想。

(Huang Lizhi 2014)

From the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007 to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2012, the formulation “enhance” or “strengthen” the country’s cultural soft power has been approved, again and again, by the Party’s political reports. This signifies that building cultural soft power has already entered the conceptualization of China’s national strategy.

(Translated by the present author.)

Besides confirming the formalizing role of political reports, which, as discussed, have officially inserted cultural soft power into the CPC's political toolkit, this article also testifies to the strategic relevance of building cultural soft power. In particular, it highlights the relevance of the words "enhance" (*tigao*) and "strengthen" (*zengqiang* 增强) in China's official discourse on soft power.

Thus, to conclude, it is important to recall that in the Chinese leadership's vision, enhancing cultural soft power is indeed seen as a process in which soft power and its resources have to be built and promoted intentionally. Differently from Western countries, as was discussed in the previous chapter, China needs to build its soft power in order to regain the status of great power it enjoyed in the past, and bring China's culture back on the atlas of the most influential civilizations in the world; hence, the use of words belonging to the semantic field of "enhance", "increase", and "strengthen" in the official formulations. In this sense, one of the main characteristics of Chinese soft power is the active role of the government in building and promoting it. This role emerges not only in relation to the provision of a correct vocabulary to talk about soft power in the Chinese context, but also in executing the function of an involved and aware actor in the enhancement of soft power resources and the development of soft power projection strategies. The following section will continue to elaborate on these aspects.

### 6.3 From theory to practice: from the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC to 2012

The aim of this section is to continue the analysis presented in the preceding parts and outline even more clearly the characteristics that, thus far, have been designated as peculiar to the Chinese discourse on soft power, focusing on the years between 2007 and 2012. The Chinese leaders' determination to "enhance the country's cultural soft power" will appear to be supported by an articulated system of cultural reforms and development programs, declared in programmatic documents and discussed in state media reports and commentaries. Attention will be paid to the dissemination of the Chinese leadership's discourse on the cultural soft power theory among the general public, while, through the analysis of an increasingly complex and sophisticated panorama of official speeches, policy documents, and Party's and State's guidelines, it will be shown how this discourse has evolved from theory into practice, specifically taking the form of cultural policies affecting Chinese society in its entirety.

This discussion will take its lead from an article, briefly mentioned in Section 3.2 as well, which was published on the website Friends of Party Members and Cadres in July 2007, thus slightly prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress. Its relevance here lies in the fact that it not only speaks loudly about the role of culture in China's soft power discourse but also about the role of the government in terms of taking actions to turn the theory of cultural soft power into practice. Some extracts drawn from the paragraph that focuses on the belief that "in promoting soft power, culture leads the way" (*tisheng "ruan shili", wenhua xianxing* 提升“软实力”，文化先行) are reported below as they provide a detailed description of the value that culture-building holds for China's present and future development:

综观世界，任何一个国家要想增强“软实力”，无一例外地需要有一个强大的文化产业基础。发展文化产业，是提升我国“软实力”的必由之路。

文化产业被称之为“无烟产业”，具有低消耗、高回报和经济波及效应大、对外输出不易产生摩擦等特点，对内，可以满足人们日益增长的精神文化需求，重拾日渐迷失的传统价值观；于外，可以传播本国优秀文化，树立文明古国风范，彰显文化价值追求方面的求同存异。应该说，中国并不缺少提升“软实力”的文化资源。5000 多年的中华文明足以令当今世界上任何一个文化大国为之侧目。

(Dangyuan Ganbu zhi You 2007)

Looking at the world, any country that wants to increase “soft power” must have, with no exception, a strong cultural industry at the base. Developing the cultural industry is the road China must follow to increase its “soft power”.

The cultural industry can be defined as a “non-smoking industry”, it possesses characteristics [such as] low consumption and high returns, a large economic ripple effect, and external exports that hardly produce any friction; domestically, it can satisfy the people’s increasingly growing spiritual and cultural demands and revive the traditional values that are going lost with each passing day; externally, it can disseminate the excellent culture of the country, establish the demeanor of a country with an ancient civilization, and manifest the search for common ground while holding back differences in the pursuit of cultural values.

It must be said that China does not lack cultural resources to upgrade its “soft power” at all. China’s civilization is more than five thousand years old, enough to shock any cultural great power in today’s world.

(Translated by the present author.)

Thus far, the development of the cultural industry appears to be identified as the main practical way to enhance the country’s cultural soft power. This is an aspect that is in line with the necessity to build and strengthen soft power resources at home, by means of a strategic plan promoted by the government, in order to enhance their projection in the world. The following pages will show in greater detail how this strategic plan has been reiterated by the CPC’s leaders on different occasions and put in practice through cultural policies.

Although praising China’s achievements on the global stage, mentioning that following the positive development of the country’s diplomatic work, China’s international image has gradually improved, as has its influence worldwide, with the international community approving of its efforts in maintaining peace in Asia and its theories related to the path of economic development and the creation of a harmonious society, the abovementioned article, reminds the audience that China must maintain a “sober awareness” (*qingxing de renshi* 清醒的认识):

就目前情况来讲，中国无论是在电影、音乐、快餐、软件领域，还是在价值观、意识形态、社会制度上，被世界接受的程度和拥有的影响力都不如某些发达国家。

(Dangyuan Ganbu zhi You 2007)

Considering the current circumstances, no matter if in the field of television, music, fast food, and software, or in regard to values, ideology, and social system, the degree by which China is accepted by the world and the influence it possesses are not as good as any developed country.

(Translated by the present author.)

As pointed out in Section 3.2, the betterment of China’s cultural industry, still considered as underperforming, becomes an urgent task that requires a collective effort, involving the government’s promotion and the participation of the entire population (Dangyuan Ganbu zhi

You 2007). It can thus be implied that, for such a strategic plan to be effectively turned into actions, its general orientation and detailed steps must not only be indicated in the government's guidelines but also disseminated among the general public.

As a matter of fact, the considerations made in the preceding discussions regarding the evolution of a Chinese soft power theory in the intellectual circles and the formation of an official discourse on soft power at the CPC's leadership level have had an influence also on the development of the related public discourse in China. Li Mingjiang (2009b, p. 23), for example, highlights how Hu Jintao's call to build China's cultural soft power in order to meet domestic needs and enhance international competitiveness gave rise to "a new round of interest in soft power throughout China", which saw discussions on China's cultural soft power being held at the local government and community levels and the terms "soft power" and "culture" featured in many newspaper headlines in the period following the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress. Similarly, according to Cao Qing (2011, p. 17), Hu Jintao's keynote speech, as a "primary policy document", received a great deal of attention by state media outlets and served as a provision of guidelines for soft power development. It is interesting to note that, without diminishing the important function of state media, such as the *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) and CCTV, in propagating official formulations related to the soft power discourse, Cao Qing also elaborates on the increasing role of wider media outlets in participating in a more open discussion on soft power in recent years (Ibid.). According to the author, the web has become the place where the concept of soft power has been disputed the most, displaying diverse opinions which, at times, contest the predominant official interpretation<sup>77</sup> (Ibid., pp. 17-19). Besides deriving from dynamics related to the Internet market, which is experiencing a rapid increase in the number of netizens, this has also been due to the operations undertaken by state media, which, in order to involve the general public, and thus giving voice to issues that not always appear in the print media, have opened online discussion forums, such as the Great Power Forum (*Qiangguo Luntan* 强国论坛)<sup>78</sup>, and to the participation of other websites, such as the intellectual Ai Sixiang 爱思想 (Love Thinking), which can be thought of as manifesting the ever-growing relevance of what the author calls the "people's character" of Chinese mass media (Ibid.).

In regard to the CPC's online mouthpiece, the Renmin Wang (People's Daily Online), an article drawn from the *Renmin Ribao* was published just a short time after the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress, in which the necessity to "enable the country's cultural soft power to have a large increase, while at the same time expanding economic power and science and technology strengths and reinforcing the force of national defense" (*bixu zai zhuangda jingji shili, keji shili he jiaqiang guofang liliang de tongshi, shi guojia wenhua ruan shili you yi ge da de tigao* 必须在壮大经济实力、科技实力和加强国防力量的同时，使国家文化软实力有一个大的提高) was proclaimed as a means for China to gain initiative in the intense international competition (Renmin Ribao 2007). Moreover, the characters for "*ruan shili*" were used 20 times in a relatively short commentary published on the same website and drawn from *Qiushi* 求是 (*Qiushi Journal*, "Seeking Truth", organ of the CPC Central Committee), and in 14 instances the term appeared collocated with the word "*wenhua*" (culture) (Qiushi 2008). Both these articles employ the exact formulation used by Hu Jintao, namely "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan*

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<sup>77</sup> This view was also articulated in Section 4.4, which discussed the presence in China of various schools of thought in relation to soft power.

<sup>78</sup> The forum is accessible from the homepage of the website Renmin Wang (People's Daily Online), sponsored by the *Renmin Ribao*: <http://bbs1.people.com.cn/boardList.do?action=postList&boardId=1>.

*shili*”, as their title. The latter provides a description of the concepts of “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua ruan shili*” that deserves quoting at length:

如果我们把由军事力量和经济实力组成的国家力量称作“硬实力”的话，那么通过政治价值观、外交政策和文化创造等体现出来的国家力量就可以称作国家的“软实力”，而文化方面的国家软实力就是“国家文化软实力”。

(Qiushi 2008)

If we call “hard power” the national power that is made up of military power and economic strength, then the national power that reflects through political values, foreign policy, and cultural creations can be called the country’s “soft power”, and national power on the cultural side is indeed “the country’s cultural soft power”.

(Translated by the present author.)

Moreover, the article continues:

与政治价值观和外交政策相比，文化作为国家的软实力，具有不可替代的重要作用。文化是民族创造力的重要源泉，一个民族所创造的文化成果，不仅丰富了本民族的文化宝库，也为人类文化增添了色彩；不仅为本民族所享用，也为其他民族所分享。一个文化创造力较强的民族，更容易赢得其他民族在观念上的尊重、情感上的亲近、行动上的支持。这种使其他民族尊重、亲近和支持的能力，就是“文化软实力”，而文化创造力则是其中重要的组成部分。

(Qiushi 2008)

Compared with political values and foreign policy, culture as the country’s soft power has an important role that cannot be substituted. Culture is an important source of a nation’s creativity and the cultural achievements brought about by a nation not only enrich that nation’s cultural treasury, but also add flavor to the culture of mankind; [they are] not only enjoyed by that nation, but also shared with the other nations. A nation with relatively strong cultural creativity more easily gains the respect of other peoples in terms of ideology, their closeness in terms of emotions, and their support in terms of actions. This kind of ability to make other nations respect, feel close to, and support is indeed “cultural soft power”, while cultural creativity is [one of] its important components.

(Translated by the present author.)

The role of state media in disseminating and explaining institutional views on China’s soft power is thus evident. In the aforementioned report, the goal of enhancing cultural soft power is also described as being related to three main aspects: the “international affinity (or approachability) of the country’s image” (*guojia xingxiang de guoji qinheli* 国家形象的国际亲和力和力), the “international influence of Chinese culture (*Zhonghua wenhua de guoji yingxiangli* 中华文化的国际影响力), and the “international competitiveness of the cultural industry” (*wenhua chanye de guoji jingzhengli* 文化产业的国际竞争力) (Qiushi 2008). In today’s world, which is still characterized by the existence of hegemony and power politics, the article continues, it is necessary to attach great importance to the reinforcement of hard strengths such as the economy and national defense, in order to defend national sovereignty and safeguard internal development, but at the same time it is also necessary to give free play to the role of culture in regard to national cohesion, and work hard for the construction of cultural soft power (Ibid.).

These considerations, together with the ones conveyed by Hu Jintao's speech, speak clearly in terms of how soft power is envisioned by the Chinese leadership, their action plan for its development, and the objectives of its enhancement, domestically and internationally.

Another example of the kind of official endorsement the soft power discourse has received in China is provided by the website Zhongguo Ruan Shili Luntan 中国软实力论坛<sup>79</sup> (China's Soft Power Forum), a platform entirely dedicated to the discussion of China's soft power. Although having recently fallen out of use, the website is still online and continues to constitute a very useful archive that allows for the analysis of a variety of topics presented in contributions that include speeches delivered by members of the leadership, analyses carried out by experts, and relevant news. For instance, a series of articles issued in 2008 by the Research Group on China's Soft Power (*Beijing Daxue Zhongguo Ruan Shili Ketu Zu* 北京大学中国软实力课题组) can be retrieved through the Forum, or on the website Renmin Wang in the section "lilun pindao 理论频道" (Theory). According to the Renmin Wang (2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d), the series, entitled "*Ruan shili zai Zhongguo de shijian* 软实力在中国的实践" (Soft power in China's practice), gathers the reflections produced as a result of the work carried out by the Group and is intended as an introduction to the topic of soft power for theorists and internet users who are also invited to take part in the discussion. It includes four parts covering the topic of "soft power" (*ruan shili*) (Renmin Wang 2008a), "national soft power" (*guojia ruan shili*) (Renmin Wang 2008b), "regional soft power" (*quyu ruan shili* 区域软实力) (Renmin Wang 2008c), and "cultural soft power" (*wenhua ruan shili*) (Renmin Wang 2008d). The definitions of these formulations are provided in the articles' openings and, apart from "*ruan shili*" and "*wenhua ruan shili*", here extensively debated, deserve quoting at length:

“软实力”概念的首创者美国哈佛大学教授约瑟夫·奈教授主要在国际政治领域谈论“软实力”，也就是说，他所谓的“软实力”，是以国家为主体的，也就是国家软实力。

(Renmin Wang 2008b)

The creator of the concept of "soft power", US Harvard University Professor Joseph Nye discusses "soft power" mainly in the sphere of international politics, that is to say that what he calls "soft power" takes the country as the subject, i.e. national soft power.

(Translated by the present author.)

如果以区域为对象来谈论软实力，就得到一个新的概念——区域软实力。这里的区域，指的是同一个国家内部的不同地区。

(Renmin Wang 2008c)

If soft power is discussed taking a region as the target, what is obtained is a new concept – regional soft power. Here, the region indicates different areas within the same country.

(Translated by the present author.)

Together with "*wenhua ruan shili*", these expressions constitute derivative terms created in the Chinese context on the basis of "*ruan shili*". Chapter 7 will explore their process of formation, evolution, and connotations. It is interesting to note that in regard to cultural soft power, the series of articles analyzed does not provide a clear-cut definition, but elaborates on

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<sup>79</sup> <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/166866/>.

this formulation from different points of view. In this sense, it raises an interesting point that deserves quoting at length:

应该说，“文化软实力”概念是从“文化影响力”、“文化感召力”、“文化竞争力”这些描述性语词中化来的。但“文化软实力”作为一个概念而被正式提出来，却是十七大报告。自此以来，“文化软实力”概念就铺天盖地于报纸、电视、广播、网络、讲话、报告、文章之中，但直到现在，这个叫响全球的概念，仅仅是一个满天飞的口号，并没有获得任何实质的内涵、外延或构成、功能定位。

(Renmin Wang 2008d)

It must be said that the concept of “cultural soft power” has derived from the descriptive terms “cultural influence”, “cultural appeal”, and “cultural competitiveness”. But it was the report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress to officially propose “cultural soft power” as a concept. Since then the concept of “cultural soft power” has been omnipresent in newspapers, television, radio, the Internet, speeches, reports, and articles, but right up to the present this well-known idea is only a slogan that has been present everywhere, without receiving any substantial localization in terms of connotations and extensions or composition and function.

(Translated by the present author.)

As can be seen, although recognizing the need for a more clear-cut definition of its meaning, this article speaks very highly of the relevance of the concept of cultural soft power, so much as to define its pervasive use in the public discourse with the idiom “*putian gaidi* 铺天盖地”, which can be literally translated as “hiding the sky and covering the earth”. The interest shown by research centers and universities across China in hosting or sponsoring conferences related to the topic of soft power is also a clear indicator of the booming attention paid to the subject by Chinese intellectuals and policy-makers, indicating its ever-increasing dissemination among the general public. The China Foreign Languages Bureau in Beijing, the International Public Relations Research Center at Fudan University, the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, the Institute of Strategic Studies of the Central Party School, and other prestigious universities, such as Tsinghua University, Beijing University, and China Foreign Studies and Culture University, have all been involved in the organization of forums and symposia on soft power (Li Mingjiang 2009b, pp. 23-24; Shambaugh 2013, p. 210).

At the time of writing, a search in the website Renmin Wang reveals the presence of over 80 thousand articles with the expression “*ruan shili*” in their texts, more than 18 thousand of which are published in the section “*Zhongguo Gongchandang xinwen* 中国共产党新闻” (News of the CPC). A search for the formulation “*wenhua ruan shili*” produces 30,448 and 9,182 results respectively. Special areas of soft power research featured on the website include topics ranging from the very popular “*wenhua ruan shili*” to “*quyu ruan shili*” (regional soft power), or also “*kexue fazhan yu ruan shili* 科学发展与软实力” (scientific development and soft power), and bear evidence to the fact that the Chinese discourse on soft power has become increasingly varied and sophisticated, an aspect that will be further investigated in Chapter 7.

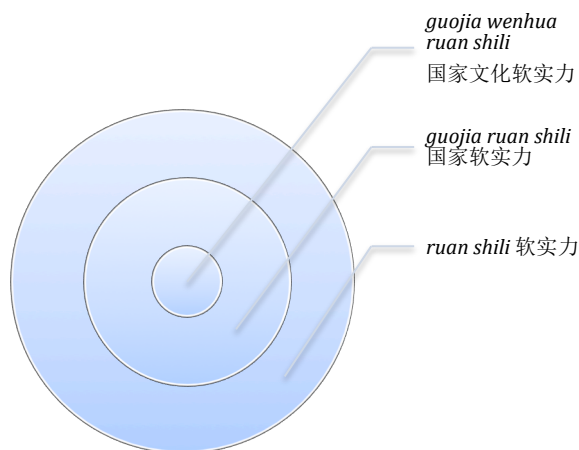
Turning now to a more in-depth analysis of the government’s involvement in the definition of cultural policies aimed at putting the Chinese theory of soft power into practice, in Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, pp. 82-83) it is highlighted how “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” has become an important cultural development strategy, with “*wenhua ruan shili*” featuring many times as a popular subject of discussion among the members of the National People’s

Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (*liang hui* 两会) from 2007 to 2009, thus marking the incessant development and refinement of the Party's cultural soft power theory as part of a series of important cultural strategies, and officially making soft power a new effort in terms of national development strategies. According to this volume, the ultimate goal of building cultural soft power is the realization of "cultural awareness" (*wenhua zijue* 文化自觉), which means that the people that live within a determined culture must have "self-knowledge" (*zizhi zhi ming* 自知之明), understanding their own culture's history, process of formation, characteristics, and development orientation (Ibid.).

In this sense, another contribution worth mentioning is Hu Jintao's discussion with the participants in the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference (*Quangguo Xuanchuan Sixiang Gongzuo Huiyi* 全国宣传思想工作会议) on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, which linked propaganda work to cultural soft power. In his important speech, the leader stressed the need to promote the development and prosperity of socialist culture even more consciously and actively, raise a new wave in socialist culture construction, and enhance the country's cultural soft power, in order to better safeguard the basic cultural rights of the people, make the cultural life of the society more rich and colorful, and elevate the spiritual ethos of the people even more (Xinhua Wang 2008). Moreover, Hu Jintao highlighted how this would fully reflect the "accurate grasp" (*zhunque bawo* 准确把握) of the Party on the current development trend, international and domestic, and the status of China's cultural construction, also posing new demands to the propaganda and ideology work (Ibid.). In order to implement the blueprint portrayed by the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the propaganda and ideology work is thus called to "unify ideology" (*tongyi sixiang* 统一思想) and bring into play the "force of aggregation" (*ningju liliang* 凝聚力量), of which it bears responsibility (Ibid.).

Another important contribution is an interview with then-Minister of Culture Cai Wu, held on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009, during the Publicity Department and China Central Television Joint Forum (*Zhongxuanbu yu Zhongyang Dianshitai Lianhe Jiangtan* 中宣部与中央电视台联合讲坛). On this occasion the political leader spoke about soft power answering the questions asked by a host. Elaborating on the enquiry as to what the concrete meaning of cultural soft power is, Cai Wu explained that an example of soft power is the way in which the Chinese cultural content of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games conquered the entire world (Renmin Wang 2009). To understand what cultural soft power is, he continued, one needs to first grasp the meaning of Joseph S. Nye's "soft power"; after becoming a topic of research and discussion in Chinese academic circles, the soft power concept also penetrated into the policy decision-making levels, especially after the CPC Central Committee put forward the principle of "Scientific Outlook on Development" (Ibid.). Cai Wu also provided a very useful explanation of the relationship between the concept of soft power and that of cultural soft power by means of an image schematically represented by the present author in Figure 1 below.





**Figure 1:** *San ge tongxin yuan* 三个同心圆 - Three concentric circles.

Cai Wu explained that in the Chinese theoretical system the three formulations (*tifa*) “*ruan shili*”, “*guojia ruan shili*”, and “*guojia wenhua ruan shili*” are like “three concentric circles” (*san ge tongxin yuan* 三个同心圆), where “*ruan shili*” is the most external and biggest circle, “*guojia ruan shili*” is the middle circle, and “*guojia wenhua ruan shili*” is the most internal circle that shares the center and some connotations with the other two; their conceptual extensions, however, are different, as “*ruan shili*” is the most general of the three concepts and does not necessarily refer to the country’s soft power, covering a wider scope (Renmin Wang 2009). National soft power (*guojia ruan shili*) is specific and includes both cultural soft power and those aspects of soft power that cannot be defined as such, for example the capability to govern of a country’s leadership, its model, and its efficiency (Ibid.). Conversely, a country’s cultural soft power (*guojia wenhua ruan shili*) includes its national image, national spirit, system of core values, political institutions, development model, and “cultural creations in a narrow sense” (*xiayi de wenhua chuangzao* 狭义的文化创造), all elements that are embodied in “national cohesion” (*minzu ningjuli* 民族凝聚力), “creativity” (*chuangzao li* 创造力), “development power” (*fazhan li* 发展力), and “the vitality of the nation” (*minzu de shengmingli* 民族的生命力) domestically, and the “influence” (*yingxiangli* 影响力), the “appeal” or “power to inspire” (*ganzhaoli* 感召力), and the “power to rally supporters” (*haozhaoli* 号召力) internationally (Ibid.).

Another important point raised by the then-Minister of Culture is the relevance of traditional culture and values that emerges from the cultural revival triggered by the country’s soft power strategy. Echoing some of the viewpoints presented in the preceding discussions, Cai Wu called for enhancing the internationalization of Chinese culture and its power to exercise influence in the international arena by actively propagating Chinese traditional, but also modern, culture abroad; this part of his interview is worth quoting at length:

我们对传统文化，要抱一种什么样的态度呢？传统的文化是我们这个民族赖以生存、延续、我们这个文明发展传承的源泉、根源，也是维系我们这个民族的最重要的精神纽带，这是毫无疑问的。中华民族之所以成为中华民族，就是因为我们五千年甚至更长历史的这种文化把我们维系在一起。大概中华文明是世界上几大古代文明中间唯一一个没有中断，而传承下来的。其他所有的古代文化都中断了，古罗马、古希腊的文化、巴比伦的文化、印度的文化、玛雅文化、

阿斯忒克文化这些文化都中断了，历史都中断了，但是只有我们中华文化，特别是有文字记载以来，我们的文化是一脉相承传下来的，是非常丰厚的，这是我们民族凝聚力的一个最重要的因素、源泉。

(Renmin Wang 2009)

What kind of attitude should we have towards traditional culture? Traditional culture is the fountainhead and source upon which our nation has relied to exist and last, and develop and pass on our civilization; it has also been the most important spiritual bond to hold together our nation, and this is unquestionable. The reason why Chinese people have become the Chinese people is because this culture, with a history of five thousand years or more, has kept us together. The Chinese civilization is probably the only one among the world's ancient civilizations that has not been interrupted and has been passed on. All the other ancient civilizations have been broken off, ancient Rome and ancient Greece, Babylon, India, the Maya, and the Aztec people, all these civilizations were cut short, their history has been cut short; but our Chinese culture, especially passed on in writing, is a culture inherited from the same origin, an extraordinarily ample culture, and this is an important factor and source for our national cohesion.

(Translated by the present author)

Cai Wu also focuses on the process behind the formation of the Chinese system of values:

价值观，特别是一个国家和一个民族的核心价值观，它是一个国家和民族在长期的历史发展的过程中形成的，包括思想道德，包括理想信念等一系列的这种观念，这种总则的一个综合，它源于人民的社会生活和社会实践，它体现在延绵不绝的传统文化中间。所以核心价值观是文化软实力的核心内容。

(Renmin Wang 2009)

Values, and in particular the system of core values of a country and a people, are formed, over a long period of time, in the course of their process of historical development; they include ideology and morality, ideals and beliefs, and a series of this kind of notions. This type of comprehensive synthesis finds its origins in the people's social life and practice, and is reflected in the continued and uninterrupted extension of traditional culture. Therefore, the system of core values is the core content of cultural soft power.

(Translated by the present author.)

In the years following the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress suggestions on how to treat China's enduring culture and traditions continued being inserted in political documents. For instance, the "Proposal for the Formulation of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the Citizens' Economy and Society" promulgated by the Central Committee of the CPC (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Zhiding Guomin Jingji he Shehui Fazhan Di Shi'er Ge Wunian Guihua de Jianyi* 中共中央关于制定国民经济和社会发展第十二个五年规划的建议) for the period between 2011 and 2015 included an article specifically dedicated to the great development and prosperity of culture and the promotion of cultural soft power (Xinhua She 2010a). Article 9, in fact, largely reiterated the concepts put forward by Hu Jintao in 2007, recapping the strategies required to take full advantage of the potential of Chinese culture, in order to strengthen China's cultural soft power, including: improving the ethical quality of the whole nation; promoting cultural innovation; and prosperously developing cultural undertakings and cultural industries (Ibid.). More specifically, the first strategy included reference to the

construction of a code of conduct and ethics that can pass on China's traditional virtues, conform to the demands of socialist spiritual culture, and adapt to socialist market economy (Ibid.). The relevance of cultural policies was described as follows:

文化是一个民族的精神和灵魂，是国家发展和民族振兴的强大力量，必须坚持社会主义先进文化前进方向，弘扬中华文化，建设和谐文化，发展文化事业和文化产业，满足人民群众不断增长的精神文化需求，充分发挥文化引导社会、教育人民、推动发展的功能，建设中华民族共有精神家园，增强民族凝聚力和创造力。

(Xinhua She 2010a)

Culture is a nation's spirit and soul, it is a powerful force for the development of the country and the revival of the people; it is necessary to persevere with the progressive orientation of the advanced socialist culture, promote Chinese culture, build a culture of harmony, develop cultural undertakings and the cultural industry, satisfy the ever-growing spiritual and cultural needs of the masses, adequately bring into play the capability of culture to guide society, educate the people, and push forward development, and build a common spiritual home for the Chinese people, strengthening national cohesion and creativity.

(Translated by the present author.)

The Twelfth Five-Year Plan would then be approved in March 2011<sup>80</sup>.

The leadership's action plan to boost China's cultural soft power was once again reiterated during the Sixth Plenum of the 17<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CPC (*Zhongguo Gongchandang Shiqi Jie Liu Zhongquanhui* 中国共产党十七届六中全会) in October 2011 which ended with the adoption of specific guidelines for cultural reform contained in the "Central Committee's Resolutions on the Important Issues of Deepening the Reform of the Cultural System and Promoting the Great Development and Great Flourishing of Socialist Culture" (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Shenhua Wenhua Tizhi Gaige, Tuidong Shehuizhuyi Wenhua Da Fazhan Da Fanrong Ruogan Zhongda Wenti de Jueding* 中共中央关于深化文化体制改革、推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣若干重大问题的决定). This policy document confirms that, especially since 2007, cultural development has been conceived as a means to strengthen the nation and project China's cultural soft power internationally:

中国共产党第十七届中央委员会第六次全体会议全面分析形势和任务，认为总结我国文化改革发展的丰富实践和宝贵经验，研究部署深化文化体制改革、推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣，进一步兴起社会主义文化建设新高潮，对夺取全面建设小康社会新胜利、开创中国特色社会主义事业新局面、实现中华民族伟大复兴具有重大而深远的意义。

(Xinhua She 2011)

The Sixth Plenum of the 17<sup>th</sup> CPC Central Committee, having comprehensively analyzed circumstances and tasks, believes that summing up the rich practice and valuable experience in the development of China's cultural reform, studying the implementation of the intensification in the reform of the cultural system and the promotion of the great development and flourishing of socialist culture, and taking the upsurge in the construction of socialist culture one step higher poses an

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<sup>80</sup> *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guomin Jingji he Shehui Fazhan Di Shi'er Ge Wunian (2011-2015) Guihua Gangyao* 中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十二个五年(2011—2015年)规划纲要, available at: <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2011-03-17/055622129864.shtml>.

important and far-reaching meaning for the attainment of a new victory in the overall construction of a moderately prosperous society, the launch of a new phase in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the achievement of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people.

(Translated by the present author.)

The “Central Committee’s Resolutions” are presented as the result of the work of the Party and suggest that the cultural reforms already put in place in China have markedly increased the ideological and moral, as well as the scientific and cultural, inner qualities of the entire nation and promoted the people’s overall development, significantly increasing the country’s cultural soft power and providing a formidable spiritual force for the preservation and development of socialism with Chinese characteristics (Xinhua She 2011). The document advocates persistence on the path towards the development of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics and working hard for the construction of a “socialist cultural great power” (*shehuizhuyi wenhua qianguo* 社会主义文化强国) (Ibid.). Commenting on the Sixth Plenum, Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, p. 84) state that the meeting represented the first time for the Party to specifically discuss issues related to the development of cultural reform during a plenary session, the first time that dispositions about the topic were made in the form of resolutions, and the first time that such a grand goal and strategic task as building a “socialist cultural great power” was proposed, indicating the “organic blending” (*youji de ronghe* 有机的融合) of cultural and economic building, and pushing the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristic towards a new historical phase.

The Sixth Plenum of the 17<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CPC received a great deal of attention from the media. According to a Xinhua News Agency’s report, the leaders’ discussions in the course of the plenary session focused on topics related to the deepening of the reform of China’s cultural system, including issues such as improving the work of China’s cultural industry and protecting China’s “cultural security” (*wenhua anquan*) by means of enhancing the country’s own soft power and the international influence of its own culture (Xinhua News Agency 2011). Emphasis was also placed on the fact that since culture was emerging as an important part of China’s comprehensive competitiveness, it was imperative for the country to not only take care of its people’s material life, but also provide a healthy and rich cultural life while improving the Chinese citizens’ sense of identity and confidence in Chinese culture (Ibid.).

The guidelines put forward on this occasion were also commented by Li Junru 李君如, former vice-President of the Party School of the Central Committee of the CPC (*Zhongyang Dangxiao* 中央党校), in an interview published in December 2011 on the website *Zhong Zhi Dang Jian Wang* 中直党建网, sponsored by the *Renmin Wang*. Once again the ties between spiritual and cultural needs, between domestic and international needs, and between ancient and modern China emerge. Li Junru discusses the increasingly fervent desire of the Chinese people for a rich spiritual and cultural life, as culture is not only “the nation’s blood and soul” (*minzu de xuemai he linghu* 民族的血脉和灵魂) but also an “important support for the economic and social development” (*jingji shehui fazhan de zhongyao zhicheng* 经济社会发展的重要支撑), and explains how the emphasis on cultural awareness and cultural confidence, on the reform of the cultural system, and on the initiation of a new phase of cultural construction is not only aimed at solving the problem of domestic cultural construction, but also at further increasing the role of culture in China’s soft power within the scope of the global competition for overall

national strength, transforming China from a country with ancient culture and a cultural power to a “socialist cultural great power” (Zhong Zhi Dang Jian 2011). The *Renmin Ribao* joined this discussion as well, with an editorial, also mentioned in Section 3.1, which, besides identifying a strong culture as a lever to “stand straight within the world’s forest of nations”, greatly praised the work of the Party members involved in the Sixth Plenum, defining the “Central Committee’s Resolutions” as a symbol of the Party’s profound grasp of the historical mission it bears, its scientific assessment of domestic and international circumstances, and its high degree of awareness in culture-building, fully reflecting the common desires of all nationalities in China and establishing itself as the “programmatically document” (*ganglingxing wenjian* 纲领性文件) to guide China’s cultural reform and development today and in the times ahead (Renmin Wang 2011).

Finally, one China Media Project observer in Hong Kong, notes that the “Central Committee’s Resolutions” also marked the entrance of the expression “*shehuizhuyi wenhua qiangguo*” (socialist cultural great power) into the CPC’s political discourse and goes as far as stating that the phrase, which did not appear in Hu Jintao’s 2007 political report, can be seen as representing the Party’s view on media and culture, namely “a country that is culturally strong and vibrant in a way that serves the Party’s own political objectives” (Bandurski 2012).

Before moving on to more recent times, the issuing of three other specific policy documents deserves attention. In 2012, the Ministry of Culture published important directives regarding the reform and development of China’s cultural system: the “Ministry of Culture’s Plan for Doubling Cultural Industries during the Twelfth Five-year Plan Period” (*Wenhuabu “Shi’er Wu” Shiqi Wenhua Chanye Beizeng Jihua* 文化部 “十二五” 时期文化产业倍增计划) and the “Ministry of Culture’s Program for Cultural Reform and Development during the Five-year Plan Period (*Wenhuabu “Shi’er Wu” Shiqi Wenhua Gaige Fazhan Guihua* 文化部 “十二五” 时期文化改革发展规划)” (cited in Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, pp. 84-85). The second document, in particular, by means of a detailed explanation of the rationale, goals, and tasks of the cultural development program, aimed at thoroughly implementing the spirit of the Sixth Plenum, in order to deepen the reform of the cultural system, promote the great development and great flourishing of socialist culture, and incessantly increase the country’s cultural soft power (Ibid., p. 85). A third document was also issued in 2012: the “Outline for the National Program of Cultural Reform and Development during the Five-year Plan Period” (*Guojia “Shi’er Wu” Shiqi Wenhua Gaige Fazhan Guihua Gangyao* 国家 “十二五” 时期文化改革发展规划纲要), published by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Bangongting* 中共中央办公厅) and the General Office of the State Council (*Guowuyuan Bangongting* 国务院办公厅), which, revolving around the grand goal of building a “socialist cultural great power” and the disposition of the overall completion of cultural reform and development by 2020, enumerated the goals to be reached by 2015 in the field of cultural reform and development (cited in Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, pp. 84-85). According to a news article, the “Outline” represented the Party’s intention to build for China a modern cultural industry system, which would also entail the transformation of the industry’s development mode and a series of market actions aimed at improving production and consumption of cultural products, such as support for medium and small cultural enterprises and subsidies and price-cuts for local communities (Xinhua News Agency 2012a).

On balance, it has been shown how the cultural policies proposed after 2007, and which were to be implemented in particular during the five-year period 2011-2015, manifested the

Chinese leadership's intention to build a modern cultural industry system able to become a key contributor to the country's overall growth and increase cultural soft power. It has been highlighted how culture has been envisioned as the "spirit and soul" of the nation, but also as a "non-smoking industry" that can be exploited for internal and external purposes. Criticism has sometimes been expressed in regard to the extreme economization of these cultural programs. For instance, an article published in Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post* after the approval of the Twelfth Five-year Plan in March 2011, compared the Chinese leadership's plan to transform the cultural industry into a "pillar industry", an operation that, according to the article, is aimed at boosting economic development but also at making Chinese culture known to the world, thus improving the country's attractiveness and, consequently, its ability to wield soft power, with the views of some critics on this cultural campaign, which they feared would entail massive investments, yet failing to produce the desired outcomes, leading to a large waste and essentially constituting a "Great Leap Forward in culture" (Jiao 2011).

To conclude, the analyses presented in this chapter have attempted to delineate the process through which the leadership's discourse on China's soft power has progressively reached a higher level of complexity and sophistication so much so as to turn the soft power theory into detailed practice. It has been shown how the active role of government directives, one of the main characteristics of Chinese soft power, has helped create the foundations upon which to build and promote cultural soft power. As pointed out by Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, p. 85), the CPC has developed an increasingly clear and profound knowledge of the power of culture, and culture has become an important method to "govern the country" (*zhili guojia* 治理国家); from the point of view of the "Scientific Outlook on Development", this responds to the search for an even more scientific path of development. The Chinese Marxist theory of cultural soft power, of which the political report to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress is the "synthesizer" (*jidachengzhe* 集大成者), is unceasingly developing and improving, and has provided "an important theoretical support and practical orientation" (*zhongyao de lilun zhicheng he shijian daoxiang* 重要的理论支撑和实践导向) to the development of China's economy, politics, society, and culture (Ibid., pp. 85-86).

It can thus be implied that, in the course of the evolution of the Chinese soft power theory prior to 2007, and even more so in the years between 2007 and 2012, the Party and the State have not only actively engaged in the definition of a theoretical framework supporting their intention to "enhance the country's cultural soft power", but also committed to the development of a system of actions aimed at reaching the desired goals. State media and the general public have also joined the discussion and contributed to the dissemination of increasingly important cultural policies, in a collective effort involving Chinese society in its entirety. Chapter 7 will continue to elaborate on theoretical and practical aspects of the Chinese soft power discourse and its diffusion in the years after 2012 and up to 2015.

### *Closing remarks*

This chapter has explored the evolution of the soft power theory into a national project, promoted by the Chinese leadership, popularized nationwide, and implemented through cultural policies in the contemporary Chinese context. Focusing on the period between 1990 and 2007, but also tapping into China's communist tradition, the analysis has explored the process through

which the formulation “*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*” (enhance the country’s cultural soft power), formally sanctioned by Hu Jintao in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2007, was conceptualized and progressively outlined. It has been explained that the discourse adopted by the Chinese leadership has set the boundaries for the definition of what soft power is in the Chinese context, carrying out its function of political authority in guiding the orientation of the related debate and defining the implementation of the related policies. This task has been carried out by breaking down this political expression into its components and analyzing them from different angles. By examining the evolution of the concept of “*ruan shili*” (soft power) into that of “*wenhua ruan shili*” (cultural soft power) it has been demonstrated that the theory of soft power, although having been adopted from the West, has been progressively adjusted to the characteristics of the Chinese context based on a specific rationale. Placing “culture” in front of “soft power” has, first and foremost, detached the Chinese discourse on soft power from its Western origins, showing how this theory can be considered the inheritance of the relevance always placed on culture-building in China’s communist tradition. The “made-to-measure” interpretation of soft power in the Chinese context, also outlined in the previous chapter, is thus confirmed, with culture, and especially traditional culture, being placed at the core. This aspect is relevant because it has been shown that, by opening up new spaces for a use of soft power through its culture-building focus, the ultimate aim of China’s cultural soft power becomes the achievement of an all-around betterment of China’s domestic and international conditions in the age of China’s rise. Progressively moving from theory to practice, it has been shown how this process of culture-building, which can also be interpreted as identity-building, through the enhancement of cultural soft power, is not only supported by a theoretical framework provided by the leadership’s official discourse on cultural soft power, but also by a system of policies aimed at reaching the goal of enhancing culture as part of the country’s soft power. In fact, identifying the need to “enhance” (*tigao*) China’s cultural soft power, the Party and the State have put forward a series of cultural policies primarily aimed at reinforcing China’s national identity and cohesion and fulfilling the spiritual and cultural needs of the people, through the reform and development of the cultural industry. This, in turn, stimulates the contribution of cultural resources to the country’s economic strength, as well as the competitiveness of Chinese culture worldwide. Through the analysis of official speeches, policy documents, and Party’s and State’s guidelines, and their popularization through state media, it has been shown how the task of building and enhancing China’s cultural soft power is envisioned as a collective effort which involves the Party’s leadership, government departments, media, and general public.

It can thus be concluded that, although not completely independent from the Western interpretation and still negotiating a clear-cut definition of connotations and resources suitable for the context of contemporary China, the Chinese discourse on soft power offers an original vision, encapsulated in the formulation “*wenhua ruan shili*”. Autochthonous approaches to soft power have claimed distance from the Western conceptualization, while elements representing the presence of interest in national culture-building in both China’s ancient doctrines and the official discourse of successive generations of CPC leaders have contributed to reclaiming propriety on a foreign concept progressively “made Chinese” and enriched with Chinese experience. Confusion between the concepts of “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua ruan shili*” can lead to a misreading of the *Chinese discourse on soft power*, and consequently to a misuse of the relevant distinction between this and the *discourse on Chinese soft power* at an international level. Chapter 7 will take this analysis a step further by looking at how the considerations made above are in line with the imperative to give China the right to construct its own narrative.





## 7. Current approaches to China's cultural soft power

This chapter, divided into three sections, will examine the latest developments in the Chinese discourse on cultural soft power, focusing on the period between 2012 and 2015 and making it possible to draw some conclusions on the peculiar characteristics of the topic of this research. Section 7.1 will take its lead from an examination of the keynote speech delivered by former President Hu Jintao to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in November 2012 and will allow for a comparison of this policy document with the preceding speech in 2007. The 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress represents a crucial political event for China as it marked Hu Jintao's departure from his posts and the installment of the fifth generation of Chinese leaders, led by Xi Jinping. Examining a selection of speeches delivered by the current President and Party General Secretary, further evolutions in the CPC's vision of China's cultural soft power will emerge in Section 7.2, reflected in the rather newly-set goal of making China a "socialist cultural great power" (*shehuizhuyi wenhua qiangguo*). Throughout the chapter, attention will also continue to be paid to the deployment of cultural policies aimed at enhancing China's cultural strength and cultural soft power. Moreover, by looking at a selection of media commentaries and recent scholarly writings, the analysis will stress the progressive complexity and originality of the Chinese discourse on soft power, in an attempt to find an answer to the question as to whether or not it is possible to talk about "soft power with Chinese characteristics". Section 7.3 will examine this aspect from a terminological point of view, shedding light on how the peculiar features of Chinese soft power are reflected in the terminology used in the related intellectual and political discourse, and thus finding a positive answer for the abovementioned question. The choice of the formulation "*ruan shili*" as the most suitable Chinese translation equivalent for the English expression "soft power" will thus be supported by the description of the intrinsic connotations of the term "*shili*", which will appear to be in line with the objectives China intends to achieve through the use of soft power. The formulations "*ruan shili*" and "*wenhua ruan shili*" will thus be portrayed as the most efficient terminological vehicles for expressing the connotations of "soft power with Chinese characteristics".

### 7.1 Cultural soft power in today's China: ever-growing awareness of and confidence in Chinese culture

To open this section, it is once again necessary to take into consideration a government document, namely the political report delivered by Hu Jintao to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in November 2012. The first excerpt that requires attention is contained in the third section of the former President's keynote speech, entitled "*Quanmian jianshe xiaokang shehui he quanmian shenhua gaige kaifang de mubiao* 全面建成小康社会和全面深化改革开放的目标" – "The Goal of Completing the Building of a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Deepening Reform and Opening Up in an All-Around Way", in which the grand objective of completing the overall building of a "moderately prosperous society" (*xiaokang shehui*) is set for 2020 (Xinhua She 2012; Xinhua News Agency 2012d). Five years after he sanctioned the debut of the concept of "*wenhua ruan shili*" (cultural soft power) in the Party's political discourse, Hu Jintao inserts the notable increase in the status of China's cultural soft power among the "new requirements that, according to the reality of China's social and

economic development, need to be realized with great effort, on the basis of the objectives established by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> National Congresses for the overall completion of the construction of a moderately prosperous society” (*genju woguo jingji shehui fazhan shiji, yao zai shiliu da、shiqi da queli de quanmian jianshe xiaokang shehui mubiao de jichu shang nuli shixian xin de yaoqiu* 根据我国经济社会发展实际，要在十六大、十七大确立的全面建设小康社会目标的基础上努力实现新的要求) (Xinhua She 2012). The passage related to cultural soft power drawn from this section of the speech reads as follows:

文化软实力显著增强。社会主义核心价值观体系深入人心，公民文明素质和社会文明程度明显提高。文化产品更加丰富，公共文化服务体系基本建成，文化产业成为国民经济支柱性产业，中华文化走出去迈出更大步伐，社会主义文化强国建设基础更加坚实。

(Xinhua She 2012)

The English version of the extract reads:

The country’s cultural soft power should be improved significantly. Core socialist values should take root among the people, and both the level of civility of citizens and the moral and ethical standards of the whole society should be significantly raised. More cultural works should be created; a system of public cultural services should be basically in place, and the cultural sector should become a pillar of the economy. Even greater progress should be made in taking Chinese culture to the global stage. By taking these steps, we will lay a more solid foundation for developing a strong socialist culture in China.

(Xinhua News Agency 2012d)

The blueprint suggested to increase the effectiveness of China’s cultural soft power emerges in a rather clear way: for China to achieve the goal of becoming a “socialist cultural great power” (*shehuizhuyi wenhua qiangguo*) the key lies in a formula that sums together the “system of socialist core values” (*shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi*) as the basis to upgrade the character of the nation, in terms of civil, moral, and ethical standards, a thriving domestic cultural environment as a prerequisite to make culture a “pillar industry of the economy” (*jingji zhizhuxing chanye* 经济支柱性产业), and an upgrade in the level of appeal and influence that Chinese culture can exercise in the international arena as a foreign policy strategy. How to make these components work together is explained in greater detail in the sixth section of Hu Jintao’s political report which, with the title “*Zhashi tuijin shehuizhuyi wenhua qiangguo jianshe* 扎实推进社会主义文化强国建设” – “Developing a Strong Socialist Culture in China”<sup>81</sup>, forms the core of the leader’s guidelines regarding cultural strength and cultural soft power. As was the case for Hu Jintao’s 2007 speech, given the length of the section drawn from the political report and considered here, the full transcription, both in Chinese and English, will be provided as an Appendix to this work. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, a summary of the most salient topics addressed by the Chinese leader in the part of the speech examined will be presented below. The introduction to the section is worth quoting at length:

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<sup>81</sup> This title includes the expression “*shehuizhuyi wenhua qiangguo*” and the English translation indicated is “a strong socialist culture in China”. The present author, however, opts for the wording “socialist cultural great power”.

文化是民族的血脉，是人民的精神家园。全面建成小康社会，实现中华民族伟大复兴，必须推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣，兴起社会主义文化建设新高潮，提高国家文化软实力，发挥文化引领风尚、教育人民、服务社会、推动发展的作用。

(Xinhua She 2012)

The English version of the speech reports the following translation:

Culture is the lifeblood of a nation, and it gives the people a sense of belonging. To complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and achieve the great renewal of the Chinese nation, we must create a new surge in promoting socialist culture and bring about its great development and enrichment, increase China's cultural soft power, and enable culture to guide social trends, educate the people, serve society, and boost development.

(Xinhua News Agency 2012d)

First and foremost, it is evident that many of the aspects discussed in the previous chapters, regarding, in particular, the representation of the role of culture in the official discourse on soft power, are reiterated in the extracts considered here. For instance, the “Proposal for the Formulation of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the Citizens' Economy and Society”, promulgated in 2010 by the Central Committee of the CPC for the period between 2011 and 2015, and the “Central Committee's Resolutions on the Important Issues of Deepening the Reform of the Cultural System and Promoting the Great Development and Great Flourishing of Socialist Culture”, adopted following the Sixth Plenum of the 17<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CPC in 2011 as an action plan to boost China's cultural soft power, both represented culture as China's spirit, blood, and soul as well as an important trigger of economic and social development. In particular, in the first document, Article 9 was specifically dedicated to the great development and prosperity of culture and the promotion of cultural soft power, and defined culture as “a nation's spirit and soul” and “a powerful force for the development of the country and the revival of the people” (Xinhua She 2010a). Similarly, the second document stated as follows:

文化是民族的血脉，是人民的精神家园。在我国五千多年文明发展历程中，各族人民紧密团结、自强不息，共同创造出源远流长、博大精深的中华文化，为中华民族发展壮大提供了强大精神力量，为人类文明进步作出了不可磨灭的重大贡献。

(Xinhua She 2011)

Culture is the lifeblood of a nation, it is the spiritual home of the people. In the process of development of China's civilization, which is more than five thousand years [long], the inseparably close unity and unremitting self-improvement of all ethnic groups have jointly produced a well-established and broad and deep Chinese culture, providing a formidable spiritual force to the development and strengthening of the Chinese people and offering an indelible major contribution to the progress of human civilization.

(Translated by the present author.)

Moreover, this document advocated persistence on the path towards the development of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics and encouraged working hard for the construction of a “socialist cultural great power” (*shehuizhuyi wenhua qianguo*). As previously pointed out,

China observers have noticed how building a “socialist cultural great power” is a new concept which was not employed in Hu Jintao’s 2007 political report, but used for the first time in the abovementioned “Central Committee’s Resolutions” (Bandurski 2012). Similarities have indeed been found between the statements dedicated to culture and cultural soft power in Hu Jintao’s political report to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress and the contents of the 2011 “Central Committee’s Resolutions”, with the former nevertheless representing “nothing fresh or surprising” in comparison to the 2007 political report (Ibid.).

That being said, it is noteworthy that, in 2012, Hu Jintao reiterated the relevance of the goal of building a “socialist cultural great power”, a fact that, the present discussion posits, signals a certain degree of innovation in the development of the Chinese discourse on culture-building and cultural soft power. As well, the action plan aimed at reforming and further developing the Chinese cultural system, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, translates into the outlining of concrete cultural policies and their implementation by government departments, is once again stressed through Hu Jintao’s proclamation of the leadership’s intention to transform the cultural industry into a “pillar industry” (*zhizhuxing chanye* 支柱性产业) (Xinhua She 2012). This intent had in fact been expressed in the 2011 “Central Committee’s Resolutions” which called for accelerating the development of the cultural industry and pushing its transformation into a pillar industry for the nation’s economy (Xinhua She 2011). In particular, developing the cultural industry was equated to an “important way to meet the people’s diversified spiritual and cultural demands” (*manzu renmin duoyanghua jingshen wenhua xuqiu de zhongyao tujing* 满足人民多样化精神文化需求的重要途径), making it a “new point of economic growth” (*xin de jingji zengchang dian* 新的经济增长点), an “important fulcrum in the strategic adjustment of the economic structure” (*jingji jiegou zhanlüexing tiaozheng de zhongyao zhidian* 经济结构战略性调整的重要支点), and an “important acting point in the transformation of the economic development mode” (*zhuanbian jingji fazhan fangshi de zhongyao zhuoli dian* 转变经济发展方式的重要着力点) (Ibid.).

Thus, the cultural industry appears to have been envisioned as being able to provide a major contribution to China’s economic growth in a more sustainable way. In search of a more sustainable path to development, the Chinese leadership has started to consider the cultural sector as a means to “provide major support to the promotion of scientific development” (*wei tuidong kexue fazhan tigong zhongyao zhicheng* 为推动科学发展提供重要支撑) (Xinhua She 2011). This is an aspect that is in line with the vision of the cultural sector embodied in the metaphor that compares it to a “non-smoking industry” (*wuyan chanye* 无烟产业) that can be exploited for internal and external purposes, as previously described (Dangyuan Ganbu zhi You 2007).

Based on these premises, it is thus possible to briefly compare Hu Jintao’s approaches to cultural soft power in 2007 and 2012 by looking at the culture-related rhetoric employed in the introductions to the sections of the two keynote speeches analyzed. From being described as an increasingly important source of national cohesion and creativity, a factor of growing significance in the competition for overall national strength, and a response to the growing demands of the Chinese people for a richer spiritual and cultural life (Xinhua She 2007; Xinhua News Agency 2007), culture seems to assume an even more profound meaning in the 2012 speech: its concrete shape as the “lifeblood of a nation” (*minzu de xuemai* 民族的血脉) and “spiritual home for the people” (*renmin de jingshen jiyuan* 人民的精神家园), already expressed in 2011, is reiterated; its function is enhanced as Hu Jintao calls for giving free rein to

its capacity to “guide social trends” (*yinling fengshang* 引领风尚), “educate the people” (*jiaoyu renmin* 教育人民), “serve society” (*fuwu shehui* 服务社会), and “boost development” (*tuidong fazhan* 推动发展); and “increasing the country’s cultural soft power” (*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*), together with the further development of “socialist culture” (*shehuizhuyi wenhua* 社会主义文化), becomes a way to complete the overall building of a moderately prosperous society and achieve the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (*Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing*).

Throughout the text of Hu Jintao’s 2012 speech, emphasis is placed on the development of socialist culture, as was the case in 2007, but this time with the aim of making China a “socialist cultural great power” (*shehuizhuyi wenhua qiangguo*). This aspect is repeatedly reiterated and requires following the path of “socialist cultural development with Chinese characteristics” (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi wenhua fazhan* 中国特色社会主义文化发展) and “enhancing the vitality of the cultural creativity of the whole nation” (*zengqiang quan minzu wenhua chuangzao huoli* 增强全民族文化创造活力); in this way, “the basic cultural rights and interests of the people will be better ensured” (*renmin jiben wenhua quanyi dedao geng hao baozhang* 人民基本文化权益得到更好保障), “the ideological and moral qualities of the people as well as their scientific and cultural qualities will be fully upgraded” (*renmin sixiang daode suzhi he kexue wenhua suzhi quanmian tigao* 人民思想道德素质和科学文化素质全面提高), and “the international influence of Chinese culture will continuously increase” (*Zhonghua wenhua guoji yingxiangli buduan zengqiang* 中华文化国际影响力不断增强) (Xinhua She 2012). Among the methods to reach these goals Hu Jintao suggests the following, as reported online:

1. “Strengthening the construction of a system of socialist core values” (*jiaqiang shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi jianshe* 加强社会主义核心价值观体系建设): recognizing the importance of socialist core values as a system that represents the “soul invigorating the country” (*xingguo zhi hun* 兴国之魂) and decides the “orientation for the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi fazhan fangxiang* 中国特色社会主义发展方向), they should be used to “guide the society’s way of thinking and aggregate social consensus” (*yinling shehui sichao*、*ningju shehui gongshi* 引领社会思潮、凝聚社会共识); the study of and education in the system of socialist core values should be thoroughly developed as they should be spread through the people, in order to unite and rally them under the “great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi weida qizhi* 中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜). In order to cultivate and respect core socialist values, “wealth and power” (*fuqiang* 富强), “democracy” (*minzhu* 民主), “civility” (*wenmin* 文明), and “harmony” (*hexie*) should be promoted, “freedom” (*ziyou* 自由), “equality” (*pingdeng* 平等), “justice” (*gongzheng* 公正), and “the rule of law” (*fazhi* 法治) upheld, “patriotism” (*aiguo* 爱国), “dedication to work” (*jingye* 敬业), “integrity” (*chengxin* 诚信), and “friendship” (*youshan* 友善) advocated.

Regarding this first point, it is interesting to note that there has been a change in the wording employed: while in 2007 Hu Jintao called for “building up” (*jianshe* 建设) the system

of socialist core values, in 2012 he advocates the “strengthening” (*jiaqiang* 加强) of their construction (Xinhua She 2007; Xinhua She 2012). It could thus be implied that this process is envisioned as having already begun, but continues to require attention. The report continues:

2. “Fully improving the inner quality of civic morality” (*quanmian tigao gongmin daode suzhi* 全面提高公民道德素质): this task, which is the basis for strengthening socialist virtues, focuses on educating the people to conduct their lives in a moral and ethical way, promoting “traditional Chinese virtues” (*Zhonghua chuantong meide* 中华传统美德) and the “new trends of the time” (*shidai xinfeng* 时代新风). By doing so, people will be able to “exalt the true, the good, and the beautiful and reject the false, the evil, and the ugly” (*hongyang zhen shan mei 、 bianchi jia en chou* 弘扬真善美、贬斥假恶丑); “good customs of knowing honor and disgrace, practicing integrity, encouraging dedication, and promoting harmony” (*zhi rongru、 jiang zhengqi、 zuo fengxian、 cu hexie de lianghao fengshang* 知荣辱、讲正气、作奉献、促和谐的良好风尚) should be cultivated, also following the examples of models of virtue.
3. “Enriching people’s spiritual and cultural lives” (*fengfu renmin jingshen wenhua shenghuo* 丰富人民精神文化生活): in order to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in an all-around way, “more and better nourishment for the mind” (*genghao geng duo jingshen shiliang* 为人民提供更好更多精神食粮) should be provided for the people. This can be done by providing a variety of cultural services, which will include building a system able to pass on the excellence of traditional culture and promote outstanding traditional Chinese culture; the “use of the country’s common language and script should also be popularized and standardized” (*tui Guang he guifan shiyong guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi* 推广和规范使用国家通用语言文字).
4. “Reinforcing the overall strength and competitiveness of culture” (*zengqiang wenhua zhengti shili he jingzhengli* 增强文化整体实力和竞争力): recognizing the relevance of cultural strength and competitiveness as an “important symbol of the country’s wealth and power as well as of national renewal” (*guojia fuqiang minzu zhenxing de zhongyao biao zhi* 国家富强民族振兴的重要标志), it is imperative to promote the all-around flourishing of cultural undertakings and the rapid development of the cultural industry, and persist on both social and economic benefits, but placing priority on the former. The cultural sphere should open up even further to the outside world and actively draw on cultural achievements attained by foreign countries.

The ultimate purposes indicated by Hu Jintao’s guidelines are those of “persevering with the progressive orientation of advanced socialist culture” (*jianchi shehuizhuyi xianjin wenhua qianjin fangxiang* 坚持社会主义先进文化前进方向), “establishing a high level of cultural awareness of and confidence in culture” (*shuli gaodu de wenhua zijue he wenhua zixin* 树立高度的文化自觉和文化自信), and striving to achieve the “grand objective of building a socialist cultural great power” (*jianshe shehuizhuyi wenhua qianguo hongwei mubiao* 建设社会主义文化强国宏伟目标) (Xinhua She 2012).

All in all, the contents of Hu Jintao’s 2012 speech appear to be following the discourse initiated in 2007. “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi*) continues to receive attention, in particular in relation to the development of a system of

socialist core values which adapts Marxism to China's conditions in current times. The same can be said for the case of traditional Chinese culture and morals and ethics inherited from the past. Emphasis continues to be placed on the complete development of the spiritual and cultural spheres of the people's lives, this time also including aspects related to the overall personal wellbeing, such as fitness activities (*jianshen yundong* 健身运动) and "recreational and competitive sports for the masses" (*qunzhong tiyu he jingji tiyu* 群众体育和竞技体) (Xinhua She 2012). Language standardization and promotion at the national level is also taken into consideration as a fundamental need to upgrade the people's intellectual and cultural life<sup>82</sup>.

According to Bandurski (2012), if one focuses on the role of media and culture in Hu Jintao's 2012 political report, three main points can be considered when summarizing the considerations presented above, which appear to be very similar to the contents of the 2007 political report: media and culture can raise "the 'civilized' conduct and character of the nation generally", contribute to economic growth because culture is seen as a "new 'pillar' industry", and increase "China's cultural profile internationally", with soft power being officially viewed as "a critical component of the country's comprehensive national strength". In regard to the last point mentioned here, the present analysis posits that, by equating the role of cultural strength and competitiveness to a symbol of China's "wealth and power" (*fuqiang*) and the "renewal" (*zhenxing* 振兴)<sup>83</sup> of the Chinese nation, Hu Jintao's 2012 keynote speech emphasizes the reach of cultural soft power with even more force than in 2007. While on the former occasion the call to enhance culture as part of China's soft power stemmed from the realization that culture was an increasingly important source of national cohesion and creativity, occupying ever-growing space in overall national strength, culture is now a concrete indicator of the level of "wealth and power" that China displays and a symbol of the revitalization of the Chinese nation's prosperity.

Moreover, in the fourth point raised by Hu Jintao, an enhancement of cultural strength and competitiveness is associated to the development of cultural undertakings and the cultural industry as a whole, including philosophy and social sciences, the press and publishing, radio, television, and films, and literature and art. These aspects are considered in relation not only to economic but also to social benefits, as the betterment of China's cultural market is seen as a means to favor both the people's intellectual and material lives. In this way, persisting on the path of socialist cultural development with Chinese characteristics fits well within the leadership's domestic policy of scientific development which, as previously discussed, advocates for a more balanced and all-around development, while producing positive effects for the role of Chinese culture on the global stage. Culture can "boost development" (*tuidong fazhan*), as stated by Hu Jintao (Xinhua She 2012) because, according to an article published on the website of the Xinhua News Agency on the occasion of the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress, China's economic prosperity and social stability have been continuing for more than 30 years but the country is now facing a conflict between resources and development (Xinhua News Agency 2012b). Paying more attention to culture, heritage, and art allows for leveraging the cultural industry as a "natural focus for economic transition", as it uses fewer sources while generating bigger profits (Ibid.). In 2013, the "Ministry of Culture's Outline for Implementing the Construction of the Public Cultural Service System during the Five-year Plan Period"

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<sup>82</sup> Constituting the case study of the present analysis, this aspect will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

<sup>83</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, reconstructing the origins of the word "*fixing*" (rejuvenate), Schell and Delury (2013, Chapter 15) report that the similar word "*zhenxing*" dates back to Sun Yat-sen's call in 1894 to "reinvigorate" the country.

(*Wenhuabu “Shi’er Wu” Shiqi Gonggong Wenhua Fuwu Tixi Jianshe Shishi Gangyao* 文化部十二五时期公共文化服务体系建设实施纲要) was officially issued with the aim of proposing even more clearly the target of building a public cultural service system which would “cover the city and countryside and with a rational structure, robust capabilities, and practical efficiency” (*fugai chengxiang*、*jiégou heli*、*gongneng jianquan*、*shiyong gaoxiao* 覆盖城乡、结构合理、功能健全、实用高效) (cited in Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 85). This fully reflected the importance attached by the State to the construction of a public cultural service system, making clear how important a meaning this aspect held in regard to the construction of a “great cultural power” (*wenhua qianguo* 文化强国) (Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 85). Together with the other plans and programs discussed in the previous chapter and summarized here, this document once again testifies to the determination of the Chinese leadership to turn the discourse on cultural soft power from theory into practice. As stated by Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, p. 86), in fact, from Deng Xiaoping proposing that “socialist material and spiritual culture must be both addressed at the same time and attached the same importance to” (*shehuizhuyi wuzhi wenming he jingshen wenming “liang shou zhua、liang shou dou yao ying”* 社会主义物质文明和精神文明“两手抓、两手都要硬”), to Jiang Zemin stressing that socialist culture with Chinese characteristics is an important sign of CNP, and Hu Jintao considering the important role and effect of culture from a strategic height, the Party has firmly taken the initiative of cultural development and elucidated “cultural programs and struggle objectives in keeping with the times” (*yushijujin de wenhua gangling he fendou mubiao* 与时俱进的文化纲领和奋斗目标) and embodying a “profound cultural awareness” (*shenke de wenhua zijue* 深刻的文化自觉).

Thus far, through a brief comparison of Hu Jintao’s keynote speech to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2012 to the preceding 2007 policy document and further examining examples drawn from the system of cultural policies aimed at enhancing China’s cultural soft power, it has been shown that there have been additional evolutions in the related discourse, with the goal now being the construction of a socialist cultural great power and cultural strength becoming a symbol of China’s domestic triumph and ever-growing international competitiveness. The discussion will now continue with the analysis of even more recent developments in the discourse on and practice of cultural soft power in the Chinese context, focusing in particular on contributions by incumbent President and Party General Secretary Xi Jinping.

## 7.2 Views on cultural soft power in the Xi Jinping era

The first speech delivered by Xi Jinping considered here was given at the 12<sup>th</sup> Group Study Session of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Zhengzhiju Di Shi’er Ci Jiti Xuexi* 中共中央政治局第十二次集体学习) on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, a meeting entirely dedicated to the study of the topic of enhancing China’s cultural soft power (Xinhua Wang 2013). On this occasion, the President and Party General Secretary stressed the relation between building a socialist cultural great power and striving to enhance China’s cultural soft power, reiterating many of the points raised by Hu Jintao’s political report to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress, but highlighting with even more force that enhancing the country’s cultural soft power is linked to the achievement of the “Two Centenary Goals”



(“*liang ge yi bai nian*” *fendou mubiao* “两个一百年” 奋斗目标)<sup>84</sup> and the fulfillment of “the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (*Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing Zhongguo meng* 中华民族伟大复兴中国梦) (Ibid.). In order to enhance China’s cultural soft power, four requirements must be stressed: the need to “build a solid foundation for the country’s cultural soft power” (*hangshi guojia wenhua ruan shili de genji* 夯实国家文化软实力的根基); the need to “propagate contemporary Chinese values” (*chuanbo dangdai Zhongguo jiazhi guannian* 传播当代中国价值观念); the need to “display the unique charm of Chinese culture” (*zhanshi Zhonghua wenhua dute meili* 展示中华文化独特魅力); and the need to “enhance international discourse power” (*tigao guoji huayu quan* 提高国际话语权) (Ibid.). Xi Jinping thoroughly discussed methods to respond to these requirements, including “persevering on the path of socialist cultural development with Chinese characteristics” (*jianchi zou Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi wenhua fazhan daolu* 坚持走中国特色社会主义文化发展道路), “deepening the cultural system reform” (*shenhua wenhua tizhi gaige* 深化文化体制改革), and “thoroughly developing the study of and education in the system of socialist core values” (*shenru kaizhan shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi xuexi jiaoyu* 深入开展社会主义核心价值观体系学习教育), among other aspects (Ibid.). Attention must also be paid, according to the Chinese leader, to the “shaping of China’s national image” (*suzao woguo de guojia xingxiang* 塑造我国的国家形象), focusing on portraying the image of a civilized power with a rich history, ethnic unity, and harmonious cultural diversity, as well as that of an Eastern power with a well-ordered government, developed economy, cultural prosperity, national unity, and beautiful mountains and rivers (Ibid.). In order to do so, China’s “discourse power” (*huayu quan* 话语权) in the international arena must be increased, as indicated by the following statement:

要加强国际传播能力建设，精心构建对外话语体系，发挥好新兴媒体作用，增强对外话语的创造力、感召力、公信力，讲好中国故事，传播好中国声音，阐释好中国特色。

(Xinhua Wang 2013)

It is necessary to reinforce the construction of international communication capabilities, build with utmost care an external discourse system, bring into play the role of the new media, increase the creativity, appeal, and credibility of the external discourse, tell the stories of China well, spread the voices of China well, and explain Chinese characteristics well.

(Translated by the present author.)

It is interesting to note that Xi Jinping raises an important point when discussing the construction of China’s national image, that is the concept of “*huayu quan*”, translated by the present author with the expression “discourse power”. This is a rather new, oft-debated topic in Chinese intellectual and strategic circles that fits well within the discussion on China’s soft power. Zhang Zhongjun 张忠军 (2012, p. 56), for instance, explains that, following the increase

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<sup>84</sup> According to the website China.org.cn (2014), the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC called for achieving the “Two Centennial Goals” (or “Two Centenary Goals”) in order to build “a comprehensively moderate prosperous society and accelerate socialist modernization”. The goals are: “to complete the building of a comprehensively moderate prosperous society and double China’s 2010 GDP and per capita income for both urban and rural residents by the time the CPC celebrates its centenary in 2021”; and “to build China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious and reach the level of moderately developed countries by the time the People’s Republic of China celebrates its centenary in 2049” (Ibid.).

in China's CNP since the promulgation of the policy of reform and opening-up, although China's international influence has been increasing steadily, China's national image has been improving distinctly, and China's "international discourse power" (*guoji huayu quan* 国际话语权) has had a certain degree of promotion, there is still a gap between these aspects and China's CNP, its international status, and the need to protect national interests. The issue of how to improve the country's international discourse power needs to be addressed if China wants to respond to international competition and protect its national interests (Ibid.). The definition of "*huayu quan*" provided by this author deserves quoting at length:

话语权既是一种说话的“权利”（right），也是一种说话的“权力”（power）。作为“权力”意义上的话语权，不仅是指有说话的权利，而且是指能够通过语言的运用，使自己的理念和主张得到他人的尊重和认可，以非暴力、非强制的方式改变他人的思想和行为。

(Zhang Zhongjun 2012, p. 56)

Discourse power is both a kind of "right" to speak and a kind of "power" to speak. Discourse power in the sense of "power" does not only indicate having the right to speak but also being capable of making one's own ideas and viewpoints obtain the respect and approval of others by means of the use of language, and change the way of thinking and behaviors of others with non-violent, non-coercive manners.

(Translated by the present author.)

It is evident that many of the ideas expressed by Zhang Zhongjun are similar to the main features of the soft power theory. In fact, the author continues, discourse power is an important component of both a country's soft power and CNP, and having discourse power means possessing the "comprehensive capacity of setting up topics of discussion, drawing up standards and regulations, and decide right or wrong in international affairs" (*zai guoji shiwu zhong shezhi yiti、zhiding biao zhun he guize yiji pingpan shifeiquzhi de zonghe nengli* 在国际事务中设置议题、制定标准和规则以及评判是非曲直的综合能力), "guiding the trend of public opinion" (*yindao yulun zouxiang* 引导舆论走向), and "shaping a good national image" (*suzao lianghao guojia xingxiang* 塑造良好国家形象) (Zhang Zhongjun 2012, p. 56).

In regard to the topic briefly discussed here, also of note are the opinions recently expressed by Zhang Weiwei, Professor of Politics at Fudan University and Director of the Center for China Development Model Research, published on the online Chinese page of *The New York Times*. The article reports extracts of an interview in which Zhang Weiwei elaborates on the question as to why it is imperative for China to "craft its own '*huayu quan*'": China's "*huayu quan*" is the "Chinese discourse" or "Chinese narrative," also corresponding, in certain contexts, to the "Chinese political narrative", and it indicates that "there is a rightful place for Chinese discourse in the world" (Tatlow 2015). A country that is rising as rapidly as is the case for China must learn to "explain itself clearly and confidently to its own people and to the outside world", a demand that requires new narratives, which must be comprehensive, thorough, robust, international, and understandable to both Chinese people and the foreign audience, in order to overcome the barrier of an official political discourse that is not always easy to grasp and, ultimately, offset the ideological bias of Western media (Ibid.). This has been understood by President Xi Jinping who has personally taken the initiative in changing the style of communication with the people (Ibid.).

Apart from the topic of “*huayu quan*”, in the abovementioned speech delivered by Xi Jinping in 2013, another aspect emerges: the relevance of the system of socialist core values. As explained in Chapter 1, the construction of a system of socialist core values has been advocated since the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2007 as a set of “common moral pillars” (*gongtong de jingshen zhizhu* 共同的精神支柱) constituting a vast, yet firm and substantial, ideological basis for the perseverance with and development of socialism with Chinese characteristics (Xu Zhigong 2008). In his 2012 political report to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress, Hu Jintao reiterated the importance of “strengthening the construction of a system of socialist core values” (*jiaqiang shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi jianshe*), making socialist core values “enter deeply into the people’s hearts” (*shenru renxin* 深入人心) (Xinhua She 2012). As reported by the state media, strengthening socialist core values “has evolved into a national campaign to rebuild faith amid concerns that the world’s second-largest economy has lost its moral compass during its three-decade economic miracle” (Xinhua News Agency 2014a). In 2013, Xi Jinping’s statement that the study of and education in the system of socialist core values needed to be thoroughly developed reiterates the message previously communicated by Hu Jintao, which appeared as follows:

推进马克思主义中国化时代化大众化，坚持不懈用中国特色社会主义理论体系武装全党、教育人民，深入实施马克思主义理论研究和建设工程，建设哲学社会科学创新体系，推动中国特色社会主义理论体系进教材进课堂进头脑。[...] 大力弘扬民族精神和时代精神，深入开展爱国主义、集体主义、社会主义教育，丰富人民精神世界，增强人民精神力量。

(Xinhua She 2012)

We should continue to adapt Marxism to China’s conditions in keeping up with the times and increase its appeal to the people, work hard to equip the whole Party with the system of theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics and educate the people in these theories. [...] We should vigorously foster China’s national character and promote the underlying trend of the times, intensify education in patriotism, collectivism and socialism, and enrich people’s cultural life and enhance their moral strength.

(Xinhua News Agency 2012d)

According to media reports (Ng and Li 2013; Xinhua News Agency 2013), in December 2013, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee issued guidelines that called for the inclusion of socialist core values into the national education plan. As was briefly introduced in Chapter 2, socialist core values can be divided into three groups including national, social, and individual values: prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony; freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law; patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship (Xinhua News Agency 2013). The state media reported on the incorporation of these values into the school curriculum as a way of “pooling positive energy to realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation” and a factor that will play an important role in the enhancement of China’s soft power, and highlighted the collectivity of such an endeavor which involves all sectors of society in the diffusion and promotion of the socialist core value system, including the media, the news and publishing sectors, radio and television, and the Internet, but also activities such as “red tourism” (Xinhua News Agency 2013). Nevertheless, the reaction of other commentators was somewhat less positive, with the *South China Morning Post*, for instance, describing the inclusion of socialist core values into the education system as a “sweeping Marxist education campaign”

aimed at filling a moral void left by decades of rapid economic development and reinvigorating the Chinese society's faith in the CPC (Ng and Li 2013).

Another concrete example of the implementation of the study of and education in socialist core values among the people is the speech delivered by Xi Jinping at Beijing University on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The relevance of this date, which marked the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the May Fourth Movement (*Wusi Yundong* 五四运动)<sup>85</sup>, is the first aspect addressed by the Chinese leader who highlights that with said movement the patriotic, progressive, democratic, and scientific spirit were lunched, promoting the foundation of the CPC (Renmin Wang 2015c). In a similar way, Beijing University is praised as the heart of the New Culture Movement (*Xin Wenhua Yundong* 新文化运动)<sup>86</sup>, the place of origin of the May Fourth Movement, and the “witness of this glorious historical period” (*zhe duan guangrong lishi de jianzheng zhe* 这段光荣历史的见证者) (Ibid.). In brief, Xi Jinping calls the youth attending the conference to conscientiously put into practice socialist core values. Every era has its own spirit and its own system of values; but to what core values should contemporary China adhere? Xi Jinping's following statements answer this question:

经过反复征求意见，综合各方面认识，我们提出要倡导富强、民主、文明、和谐，倡导自由、平等、公正、法治，倡导爱国、敬业、诚信、友善，积极培育和践行社会主义核心价值观。富强、民主、文明、和谐是国家层面的价值要求，自由、平等、公正、法治是社会层面的价值要求，爱国、敬业、诚信、友善是公民层面的价值要求。这个概括，实际上回答了我们要建设什么样的国家、建设什么样的社会、培育什么样的公民的重大问题。

(Renmin Wang 2015c)

Through repeatedly soliciting ideas and summing up all aspects, we propose that we should advocate for wealth and power, democracy, civility, and harmony; advocate for freedom, equality, justice, and rule of law; advocate for patriotism, devotion to work, integrity, and friendship; and actively exercise and put into practice socialist core values. Wealth and power, democracy, civility, and harmony are values demanded at the national level; freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law are values demanded at the social level; patriotism, devotion to work, integrity, and friendship are values demanded at the citizens' level. This sum, as a matter of fact, answers the important questions as to what type of country we should build, what type of society we should construct, and what type of citizens we should cultivate.

(Translated by the present author.)

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<sup>85</sup> As stated by Furth (1983, pp. 322-323), the May Fourth demonstrations that erupted in 1919 symbolized an “intellectual campaign for a totally ‘new culture’” and targeted the traditional moral and social order in the aftermath of the reform movement of 1898, which had been aimed at remodeling the inherited political order. While this first attempt at an institutional change had led to modernizing efforts in the last phase of the Qing dynasty, and eventually its collapse in 1911, the May Fourth Movement was triggered by the desire of students and intellectuals, educated within the new, modernized system of schools and universities, to establish a scientific and democratic “new culture”, markedly detaching themselves from traditional core values, progressively accepting foreign models and ideas, and ultimately standing outside political power (Ibid.).

<sup>86</sup> The New Culture Movement is part of the background of the May Fourth Movement inasmuch as it was inaugurated by the foundation of the magazine *New Youth* (*Xin Qingnian* 新青年) in 1915, through which intellectuals advocated science, democracy, and literary revolution (Furth 1983, pp. 396-397). The mobilization against foreign imperialism and the warlord government in Beijing gave rise to the May Fourth demonstrations in 1919, reflecting the strengthening of a “progressive political force” (Ibid.).

Even though, on this occasion, Xi Jinping does not specifically bring up the topic of cultural soft power, the link between this and socialist core values has appeared in many other instances. For example, in a speech delivered on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014, during the 13<sup>th</sup> Group Study Session of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee (*Zhonggong Zhongyang Zhengzhiju Di Shisan Jiti Xuexi* 中共中央政治局第十三次集体学习), Xi Jinping stressed that core values are the “soul of cultural soft power” (*wenhua ruan shili de linghun* 文化软实力的灵魂) and a “focal point” (*zhongdian* 重点) in its construction, constituting the “deepest factor in deciding the nature and orientation of culture” (*jueding wenhua xingzhi he fangxiang de zui shencengci yaosu* 决定文化性质和方向的最深层次要素) (Xinhua Wang 2014a). A country’s cultural soft power depends on the “vitality” (*shengmingli* 生命力), “cohesiveness” (*ningjuli*), and “appeal” (*ganzhaoli*) of the system of core values and, for China, “cultivating and promoting a system of socialist core values should be based on China’s outstanding traditional culture” (*peiyu he hongyang shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhiguan bixu lizu Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua* 培育和弘扬社会主义核心价值观必须立足中华优秀传统文化) (Ibid.).

Before moving on to the final stage of this analysis, that is the attempt to answer the question as to whether or not it is possible to talk about “soft power with Chinese characteristics” from a terminological point of view, it is interesting to briefly examine one of the socialist core values discussed by Chinese top leaders on several occasions, including both Hu Jintao’s political report to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress and Xi Jinping’s 2014 speech at Beijing University: the concept of “*fuqiang*” (wealth and power). In Western literature, this two-character expression gives the title to a seminal work by Orville Schell and John Delury, *Wealth and Power: China’s Long March to the Twenty-first Century*. This volume depicts China’s journey from poverty, backwardness, and humiliation to prosperity, renewal, and triumph. It traces the long road to “rejuvenation” (*fixing*), following the yearning for “wealth and power” (*fuqiang*). In doing so, the book constitutes a “historical reflection on the backstory to China’s ‘economic miracle’ [...] emphasizing the perspectives of the Chinese themselves” (Schell and Delury 2013, Chapter 1). The authors explain that the origins of the term “*fuqiang*” can be traced back to the Warring States period when the expression “*fuguo qiangbing* 富国强兵” was coined with the meaning “enrich the state and strengthen its military power” (Ibid.). As a result, the term “*fuqiang*”, an abbreviation of said expression, is mostly translated in the English language as “wealth and power”, with another possible translation being “prosperity and strength” (Ibid.). The phrase, in fact, which was revived in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when China saw the decline of its empire and was faced with the aggression from the West, lost the “sense of aggressiveness” it had in antiquity and came to reflect the desire of Chinese reformers for a restoration of the preeminence the country enjoyed in the past (Ibid.). When the term appears translated into English in the Chinese state media, different versions coexist, for example “power and prosperity” (Xinhua News Agency 2012d) or just “prosperity” (Xinhua News Agency 2013; Xinhua News Agency 2014a). In each individual translation proposed by the present author, Schell and Delury’s definition and wording as “wealth and power” has been employed.

On different occasions, it has been shown that, at the present time, the concept of “*fuqiang*” vividly re-emerges in Chinese top leaders’ speeches, in a historical conjuncture that sees China as being on the cusp of achieving the goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In his speech to the students of Beijing University in 2014, Xi Jinping praises the achievements reached in pursuing this goal, to which the country has never been so close in any

other historical period, having more confidence and capability than ever before (Renmin Wang 2015c).

On balance, as stated in an editor's commentary published on the website Renmin Wang in June 2015, "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" (enhance the country's cultural soft power) is a "major strategic task for the Party and the State" (*dang he guojia de yi xiang zhongda zhanlüe renwu* 党和国家的一项重大战略任务) and constitutes an important aspect within Xi Jinping's ideological system of governance (Renmin Wang 2015b). Soft power expert Zhang Guozuo 张国祚<sup>87</sup> makes this clear in a scholarly article, which can be retrieved from the webpage Renmin Wang, in which he explains that while the proposal of the concept of cultural soft power in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress represented an important sign that China's soft power had developed its own characteristics, manifesting the relevance of culture, the important contributions offered by Xi Jinping after the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress embody the fact that, for China, building cultural soft power "is based on me and is for me to use" (*yi wo wei zhu, wei wo suo yong* 以我为主，为我所用); this means that, all in all, China's cultural soft power represents a "substantial transformation and innovation of Western soft power" (*dui Xifang ruan shili de shizhixing gaizao he chuangxin* 对西方软实力的实质性改造和创新) (Renmin Wang 2015a).

This brings the present discussion to the final stage of the analysis of the evolution of the Chinese discourse on soft power which, in particular throughout Chapters 5 and 6, has described the process through which Joseph S. Nye's soft power theory has been enriched with Chinese practice, in order to construct a vision which has been progressively shaped according to China's conditions, to almost completely break away from its Western counterpart. What has been developed in a relatively short period of time, less than three decades between 1990 and 2015, can be thought of as the embodiment of what has been called, by at least one Western scholarly article (Glaser and Murphy 2009), "soft power with Chinese characteristics", of which the development of the innovative concept of "*wenhua ruan shili*" is a powerful symbol. Taking into consideration the observations made by Zhang Guozuo in the abovementioned contribution allows for the confirmation of this view. The scholar affirms that after having been disseminated in China, just as "the tasty orange, grown in Southern China, would turn sour once it is grown in the North" (*ju sheng Huai nan ze wei ju, sheng yu Huai bei ze wei zhi* 橘生淮南则为橘，生于淮北则为枳)<sup>88</sup>, soft power has absorbed "the water and soil, and sunshine and rain of Chinese culture" (*Zhonghua wenhua de shuitu he yangguang yu lu* 中华文化的水土和阳光雨露), a fact that not only has allowed for it to live on but also to manifest "distinct Chinese characteristics" (*xianming de Zhongguo tese* 鲜明的中国特色) and form its own "unique force" (*dute lilian* 独特力量) (Renmin Wang 2015a). Zhang Guozuo explains in great detail what these characteristics are, but specifies that this absolutely does not mean "artificially posing a narrow-minded nationalistic boundary" (*renwei de huading yi tiao xia'ai de*

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<sup>87</sup> Zhang Guozuo is reported to be the director of the Research Center on China's Cultural Soft Power (*Zhongguo Wenhua Ruan Shili Yanjiu Zhongxin* 中国文化软实力研究中心) (Renmin Wang 2015a). Another research center with a similar name, *Guojia Wenhua Ruan Shili Yanjiu Zhongxin* 国家文化软实力研究中心 (Center for Soft Power Studies Peking University, <http://www.softpower.pku.edu.cn/>) was established in September 2014 at Beijing University's Institute of International Relations with the aim of creating a think tank for the study and dissemination of cultural soft power, in order to propagate Chinese culture and contemporary core values (Xinhua Wang 2014d).

<sup>88</sup> Translation drawn from CIPG Training Center (<http://www.cipgtraining.org/>).

*minzuzhuyi jiexian* 人为地划定一条狭隘的民族主义界限) to the concept of soft power (Ibid.). The most relevant excerpts explaining the nature of the peculiar characteristics of Chinese soft power are reported below, while, given its relevance, the original transcript of Zhang Guozuo's article is provided as an Appendix to this work.

改变了软实力的宗旨。美国把软实力作为推行霸权主义和强权政治的一个重要手段。中国则把提高文化软实力作为增强综合国力和国际影响力的重要途径：对内，是为了加强社会主义核心价值观建设，弘扬中华优秀传统文化，培育高尚思想道德，增强全党、全军、全国人民的凝聚力；对外，是为了传播中国的立场和声音，树立良好的国际形象，营造良好的国际环境，推动构建和平、和谐、合作的世界。

(Renmin Wang 2015a)

The objectives of soft power have been transformed. The United States views soft power as an important method to put into effect hegemony and power politics. On the contrary, China views the enhancement of cultural soft power as an important way to increase comprehensive national power and international influence: domestically, it serves the purpose of strengthening the construction of socialist core values, promoting China's outstanding traditional culture, cultivating noble ideology and ethics, reinforcing the cohesiveness of the Party, the military, and the people; externally, it serves the purpose of disseminating China's standpoint and voice, establishing a positive international image, constructing a favorable international environment, and promoting the construction of a peaceful, harmonious, and cooperative world.

(Translated by the present author.)

This extract is a succinct yet insightful summary of the considerations made throughout this work and fully confirms the overall assumption made by the present author that the Chinese discourse on soft power is original and innovative. The other aspects discussed by Zhang Guozuo are that the connotations of soft power have been expanded and a new theoretical system has been built; in regard to the first aspect, the author clarifies that, in the Chinese context, soft power is not only limited to the attractiveness of culture, institutions, and system of values and the capacity to master international discourse, but covers all elements related to "spiritual, intellectual, and emotional strengths" (*jingshen*、*zhihui*、*qinggan de liliang* 精神、智慧、情感的力量) (Renmin Wang 2015a). And, of course, in regard to the second aspect, emphasis is once again placed on the role of culture:

中国不再一般地谈论软实力，而是在软实力前面冠以文化二字，使文化成为软实力的核心词；不再把文化同构成软实力的其他要素并列，而是确立文化在软实力中最高层次的定位，强调文化对软实力其他要素的引领作用。这是因为制度、价值观、掌握国际话语权、外交谋略等软实力要素，无不深受文化的制约和影响。

(Renmin Wang 2015a)

China no longer talks about soft power in a general way, but places the two characters for *wenhua* in front of soft power, making culture become the core word of soft power; it no longer juxtaposes culture together with the other components constituting soft power, but allocates to culture the highest level in soft power, emphasizing the leading role of culture towards the other constituents. This is because institutions, systems of values, control of international discourse, and foreign strategies all receive, without exception, the restrictions and influence of culture.

(Translated by the present author.)

In China, culture plays a superior role in the soft power discourse. While Western scholars describe soft power as culture, system of values, institutions, policies, and the capacity to master international discourse power, Chinese people believe that culture occupies an “irreplaceable special position” (*buke tidai de teshu diwei* 不可替代的特殊地位) in soft power: “it is the soul and longitude and latitude of soft power” (*shi ruan shili de linghun he jingwei* 是软实力的灵魂和经纬) and “must not be juxtaposed to the other factors” (*bu ying he qita yaosu binglie* 不应和其他要素并列) (Renmin Wang 2015a). As the soul, the value orientation of culture dictates the direction of the development of soft power, its objectives, and reasoning, while its function as the longitude and latitude means that cultural elements penetrate every aspect, every segment, and every “logic chain” (*luoji liantiao* 逻辑链条) of soft power (Ibid.). Traditional culture is the most profound foundation of China’s cultural soft power, with many features that possess a value and meaning that can surpass the boundaries of space, time, and nationality (Ibid.). In leveraging the power of traditional culture it is nonetheless important to pick and choose what is best and most suitable for the modern Chinese society: “It is clear that thoroughly exploring, sorting out, refining, sublimating, and promoting the excellent traditional Chinese culture are indispensable major tasks in the enhancement of China’s cultural soft power” (*Ke jian, shenru fajue、shuli、tilian、shenghua、hongyang Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua, shi tigao Zhongguo wenhua ruan shili bukehuaque de zhongyao renwu* 可见，深入发掘、梳理、提炼、升华、弘扬中华优秀传统文化，是提高中国文化软实力不可或缺的重要任务) (Renmin Wang 2015a). Moreover, in China, soft power is defined as every “strength that is intangible, hard to quantize, and non-coercive” (*wuxing de、nanyi lianghua de、fei qiangzhixing lilang de shili* 无形的、难以量化的、非强制性力量的实力), and that results in attracting (*xiyin* 吸引), cohering (*ningju* 凝聚), rallying (*ganzhao* 感召), mobilizing (*dongyuan* 动员), persuading (*shuofu* 说服), inducing (*youdao* 诱导), affecting (*ganran* 感染), resonating (*gongming* 共鸣), assimilating (*tonghua* 同化), and influencing (*yingxiang* 影响) the “will of the people” (*renxin* 人心) (Ibid.). All these can be thought of as keywords in the Chinese discourse on soft power.

Last but not least, another aspect discussed by Zhang Guozuo that requires a more in-depth examination is the binary approach to soft power. This characteristic of the Chinese discourse on soft power has been thoroughly discussed throughout this work in order to support the thesis, put forward by many scholars, that, in the Chinese context, soft power embraces two different yet related dimensions, one internal and one external. Scholars have thus defined Chinese soft power as “holistic” (Glaser and Murphy 2009, p. 20), “inward-looking and outward-looking” (Barr 2011), and “both internally and externally directed, focusing primarily, however, on changing domestic priorities and practices to develop soft power resources” (Cao Qing 2011, p. 12), while its purpose has been defined as “dualistic” (Aukia 2014). In this sense, Zhang Guozuo’s statements regarding the binary interpretation of soft power deserves quoting at length:

中国发展软实力，不但着眼在国际上树立良好形象、掌握国际话语权；更着眼在国内统一思想、凝聚人心、坚定理想信念、树立良好道德、提高民族素质、弘扬光荣传统、倡导爱国主义等，有着更为丰富的战略目标。

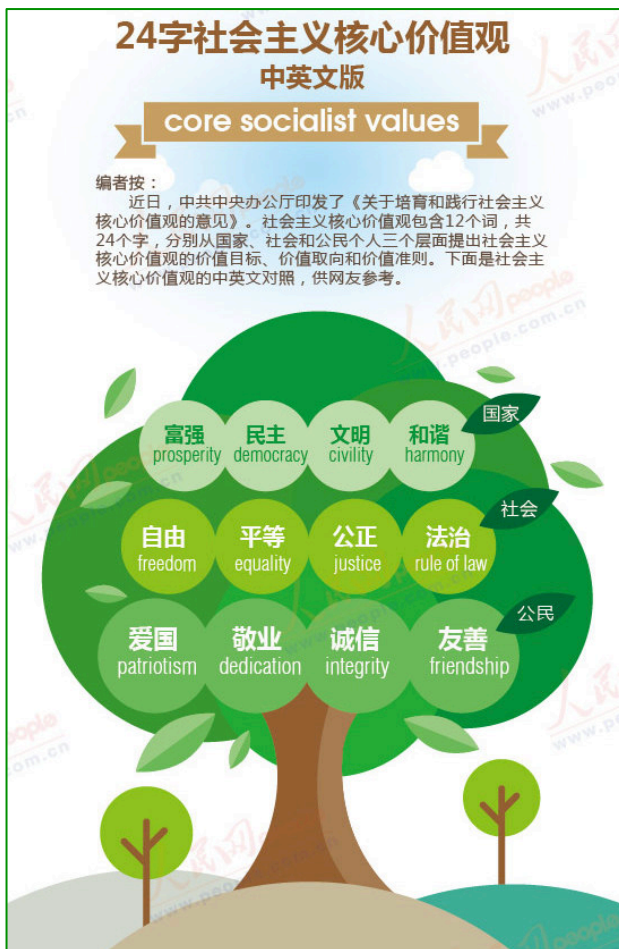
(Renmin Wang 2015a)



In China, soft power development focuses not only on establishing a positive image and controlling international discourse power on the global stage; it focuses even more on unifying ideology, aggregating the will of the people, strengthening ideals and beliefs, establishing good virtues, enhancing the inner qualities of the nation, promoting glorious traditions, and advocating for patriotism domestically, which has an even richer strategic objective.

(Translated by the present author.)

Zhang Guozuo concludes his examination by encouraging Chinese people to have more confidence in China’s own path, theories, institutions, and system of values, as well as in the fact that, in the field of soft power, China’s cultural soft power has already tentatively given shape to its own distinctive characteristics and force: “In recent years, Western scholars who research China and are amicable to China are more and more, but Chinese people must be asked more how they consider, how they define Chinese affairs” (*jinnian lai, yanjiu Zhongguo qie dui Zhongguo youhao de Xifang xuezhe yuelaiyue duo, dan Zhongguo de shi hai dei duo wen Zhongguo ren zenme kan 、 zenme shuo* 近年来，研究中国且对中国友好的西方学者越来越多，但中国的事还得多问中国人怎么看、怎么说) (Renmin Wang 2015a). This is precisely the reason why the following section will discuss the concept of soft power in the Chinese context from a terminological perspective, in an attempt to give voice to Chinese sources and show even more how the intrinsic peculiarities of the related discourse are, in the first place, embedded in the terminology used.



**Figure 2:** *24 zi shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi guan – zhongyingwen ban* 24字社会主义核心价值观 – 中英文版 (The 24-character socialist core value system – Chinese-English version). The caption reads: “Today, the General office of the CPC Central Committee has issued the ‘Suggestions regarding the cultivation and implementation of socialist core values’. The socialist core value system includes 12 words and a total of 24 characters, and its goals, value orientation, and standards are put forward on the basis of the three different levels of the nation, the society, and the individual citizen. Below is the Chinese-English parallel text of the socialist core values, for the netizens’ reference” (People’s Daily Online 2013).

### 7.3 Translating “soft power”

Supporting the thesis according to which the term “*ruan shili*” and its related collocations have become part of the “high-frequency” (Guo Jiemin 2012, p. 17) and “hot” (Hong Xiaonan et al. 2013, p. 96) vocabulary used in China’s academic, political, and media circles, the preceding chapter described a search on the website Renmin Wang, carried out at the time of writing, that reveals the presence of over 80 and 30 thousand articles with the expression “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua ruan shili*” in their texts respectively. Besides the very popular “*wenhua ruan shili*”, other topics featured on the website include “*guojia ruan shili*” (national soft power), “*quyu ruan shili*” (regional soft power), and even “*qiye ruan shili* 企业软实力” (enterprise soft power). These constructions, which juxtapose an attribute in front of the term “*ruan shili*”, belong to the ample range of derivative terms that have emerged in the Chinese discourse on soft power conveyed by means of the Chinese language. This variety bears evidence to both the originality of the Chinese interpretation of soft power, which already came through in the description of the vicissitudes concerning the creation of the concept of “*wenhua ruan shili*” presented in the preceding chapters, and also the increasing complexity of the related discourse, which, at times, can bring about ambiguities and misinterpretations.

It is indeed important to note that the degree of innovation displayed in the Chinese discourse on soft power is not always regarded as a positive aspect. In Section 4.4 and Chapter 6, the examination carried out by Chinese scholar Gu Junwei (2011) was presented in order to explain how the lack of “singleness” and “uniformity” in the use of the terminology employed to talk about soft power in the Chinese context, together with the creation of derivative terms on the basis of the expression “*ruan shili*”, not only violates the rules of monosemy and mononymy but also impedes the smooth development of scientific dialogue. The type of “creative restlessness” (*chuangxin de zaodong* 创新的躁动) shown by some Chinese scholars, who strive for the fulfillment of the need for “localization” or “local adaptation” (*bentuhua*) in the translation process, does not correspond to any kind of breakthrough in regard to the conceptual system of the original idea, and “there is indeed nothing that can be said to be innovative” (*meiyou shenme chuangxin ke yan* 没有什么创新可言) about it (Gu Junwei 2011, p. 67). The “*ruan shili*’ *shuyu* ‘软实力’术语” (soft-power terminology) pinpointed by Gu Junwei include, besides “*wenhua ruan shili*”, collocations such as “*jingji ruan shili* 经济软实力” (economic soft power), “*junshi ruan shili* 军事软实力” (military soft power), and “*chengshi ruan shili* 城市软实力” (urban soft power) (Ibid.).

This issue is also addressed in an article from Shanghai’s news outlet *Wenhui Bao* 文汇报 (*Wenhui News*) which discusses an interview with Joseph S. Nye, carried out following a lecture given by the Professor at Shanghai’s Fudan University in December 2010 and reported on the website Xinhua Wang. The existence of “too many misunderstandings and misuses” (*tai duo de wujie he lanyong* 太多的误解和滥用) in approaching the topic of soft power is examined in relation, in particular, to the expressions “*quyu ruan shili*”, “*jingji ruan shili*”, and “*wenhua ruan shili*” (Ji Guibao 季桂保 and Tian Xiaoling 田晓玲 2010). The article posits that “*quyu ruan shili*” seems to be in contrast with the concept of soft power proposed by Nye’s works, which is centered around the attractiveness that a country’s shared system of values can generate, with a system of core values and a guiding ideology being necessary at the national level; “*jingji ruan shili*” represents what the journalists writing the article call “a neologism that

is neither fish nor fowl” (“*feilüfeima*” *de xinci* “非驴非马”的新词) as it confuses hard and soft power, an aspect that Nye is reported to have explicitly discussed in the course of the interview, specifying that even though economic wealth can generate both hard and soft power, the economy is not part of soft power because, while hard power is strongly supported by the economy, soft power is the power of attraction and persuasion, which can at times be corroborated by economic wealth; and, finally, “*wenhua ruan shili*” can be seen as a rather problematic expression as it runs the risk of equating cultural soft power to the cultural industry, while Nye specifies in the interview that culture can indeed produce influence but can also be of no use if it fails to help a country generate attractive force and a favorable impression in others, which is an entirely different thing from providing cultural products that are appreciated by the public (Ibid.).

Looking more closely at the multiformity of the Chinese soft power terminology, another contribution is worth mentioning. It is a scholarly article written by well-known researcher Guo Jiemin, a member of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, in which the author confirms the breadth of the discourse on soft power which emerged through the preceding considerations by making reference to the effects of a so-called phenomenon of “generalization” (*fanhua* 泛化): accompanying the progressive re-elaboration and expansion of the theoretical system of soft power in the Chinese context, this phenomenon has resulted in the current use of the term “*ruan shili*” as a slogan in every area of Chinese society and in every branch of the State (Guo Jiemin 2012, p. 17). This is evidenced by the existence of expressions such as “*wenhua ruan shili*”, “*guojia ruan shili*”, “*guojia wenhua ruan shili*”, “*qiyu ruan shili*”, “*qiye ruan shili*”, “*junshi ruan shili*”, “*zhengzhi ruan shili* 政治软实力” (political soft power), and even “*siwei ruan shili* 思维软实力” (thought soft power), as well as news titles such as “*Zhongcan ye shi ruan shili* 中餐也是软实力” (Chinese food is also soft power) and “*Chengguan bainian tixian ruan shili* 城管拜年体现软实力” (The city management’s New Year’s greetings embody soft power) (Ibid.). As will be further explained, this indicates that “*ruan shili*” is a different concept from Nye’s idea and that it also presents differences from the concept of “*ruan quanli*”, one of the alternative translations for the expression “soft power” (Ibid.)<sup>89</sup>.

In a similar vein, the present author has also detected the existence of another collocation, that is “*yuyan ruan shili* 语言软实力” (language soft power), featured in the title of a scholarly article written by Wang Yue 王越 and Lü Meijia 吕美嘉 in 2011, in which the authors describe language as a vehicle and important constituent of culture, representing one of the major indicators to measure a country’s soft power. Due to the relevance of this topic in the analysis of

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<sup>89</sup> The various Chinese translations of the expression “soft power” were introduced in Section 4.4 and will be further expounded upon in this section. It is interesting to note that, in a preceding scholarly article written by the same author, other examples drawn from the media were also reported in order to bear witness to the difference existing between the intrinsic characteristics of national power connoting Nye’s concept and those of “*ruan shili*”, proving that “*ruan shili*” and “*ruan quanli*” are more than just different translations of the same term and pertain to different situations (Guo Jiemin 2009, p. 13). The news titles mentioned include: “*Chongsu Guangdong de ruan shili* 重塑广东的软实力” (Reconstructing Guangdong’s soft power), “*Meiti shi yi zhong zhongyao de ruan shili* 传媒是一种重要的软实力” (The media is an important type of soft power), “*Guanzhu jiaoyu ‘ruan shili’* 关注教育‘软实力’ ” (Paying attention to cultivating “soft power”), “*Qiye ruan shili: pinpai、shengyu he fuwu* 企业软实力：品牌、声誉和服务” (Enterprise soft power: brands, reputation, and service), and “*Ruan shili: Zhongguo qiye de yi ge yingzhang* 软实力：中国企业的下一个硬仗” (Soft power: a tough battle for China’s enterprises) (Ibid.). The relevance of these extended concepts is also noted by Western scholars, such as Aukia (2014) and Barr (2011).

the case study proposed in this thesis, this contribution will be further discussed in the following chapter.

In her scholarly article “*Cong guojia ‘ruan shili’ dao guoji ‘ruan quanli’* 从国家‘软实力’到国际‘软权力’” (From national “soft power” to international “soft power”), Guo Jiemin (2012) elaborates on the different terms used to translate “soft power” in the Chinese context and proposes a potential distinction between what can be envisioned as “national soft strength” (*guojia ruan shili*) and “international soft power” (*guoji ruan quanli*). Guo Jiemin’s analysis draws upon a thorough examination of the terminology used to talk about soft power in China, which delineates a picture that is almost immediately clear to a well-informed Mandarin-literate audience, thanks to the different Chinese characters used, but loses its acuteness in the English translation which would normally be proposed for the aforementioned title. In order to understand this assumption, it is important to reiterate that there exist a number of possible translations employed to convey the meaning of the English term “soft power” in the Chinese language. According to a number of scholars (Liu Qing and Wang Litao 2007; Cho and Jeong 2008; Glaser and Murphy 2009; Guo Jiemin 2009, 2012; Qu Xiaoying 2010; Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan 2010, among others), they include: “*ruan shili*”, “*ruan quanli*”, “*ruan liliang*”, and “*ruan guoli*”, as well as Taiwanese variations such as “*rouxing*” and “*ruanxing*” for “soft”, “*quanli*”, “*guoli*”, and “*liliang*” for “power” (Wang Hongying and Lu Yeh-Chung 2008, p. 426). Generally speaking, all the terms used on the mainland are translated into English as “soft power”, which is why the acute observation Guo Jiemin makes in the title of her paper, opposing the expressions “*ruan shili*” and “*ruan quanli*”, is not evident in English. Moreover, as will be further expounded upon, the crux of the problem lies in the specific interpretation of the concept of power and the word chosen to translate it among the prevalent options “*shili*”, “*liliang*”, “*quanli*”, and “*guoli*”<sup>90</sup>.

How, then, can scholars and translators make sense of this variegated terminology without falling into the trap of being “lost in translation”? Analyzing the complex issue regarding the translation of the English term “soft power”, Chinese scholars express diverse opinions which can be roughly divided between those that support the thesis according to which all the aforementioned terms are synonyms that can be chosen based on the translator’s or researcher’s will and those that oppose this view. Belonging to the first cohort, Chinese scholar Zhang Xiaoming (2005), for instance, looks at the foreign origins of the term “soft power”, translated as “*ruan quanli*”, in order to find the reason behind such a composite scenario. To a Chinese reader, the term “*ruan quanli*” is undoubtedly a “word of foreign origin” (*wailai cihui* 外来词汇), a loanword, and, as many other foreign words, it has many different transpositions in Chinese: apart from “*ruan liliang*”, which appeared in the first Chinese publications on the topic of soft power, and the translation “*ruan quanli*”, which was successively used by many authors, the author confirms that other translations include “*ruan shili*”, “*ruan guoli*”, and the Taiwanese “*rouxing guoli*” (Ibid.). Although preferring the term “*ruan quanli*”, given the fact that in previous literature “*quanli*” is generally used to translate the word “power”, and that the majority of Chinese scholars also adopt this translation, Zhang Xiaoming does not imply that the other translations are incorrect; on the contrary, recognizing the impossibility to always find a perfectly matching Chinese word for its foreign counterpart, the necessity to determine which

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<sup>90</sup> See also Section 4.4.

Chinese translations are most appropriate for the words “power” and “soft power” is here denied, as each interpretation can only achieve relative accuracy (Ibid.).

Zhang Xiaoming’s views are shared by other Chinese scholars. For instance, in Wang Chaoyi 王超逸 (2009), the term “soft power” is also classified as a loanword which is translated in many ways in Chinese: besides echoing Zhang Xiaoming in saying that the first Chinese publications on the topic opted for the term “*ruan lilian*” and that many successive works used the translations “*ruan shili*” or “*ruan quanli*”, with some writers also choosing the terms “*ruan guoli*” or “*rouxing guoli*”, the authors believe that in order to address this issue it is necessary to objectively and rationally analyze the process this concept went through from the time of its formulation to its appearance in China, as well as its spread and development there. However, if one looks at the existing literature concerning the concept of “power”, the Chinese translation mostly adopted is “*quanli*”, and this makes “*ruan quanli*” the obvious choice to translate “soft power”, also in accordance with the principle of adopting the translation which has been “established by popular usage” (*yueding sucheng* 约定俗成) (Ibid.). Although this interpretation appears to be more precise and in line with the original meaning intended by Joseph S. Nye, who looked at soft power from the perspective of a country’s capacity to influence other countries in the field of international relations, Wang Chaoyi believes, contrary to Zhang Xiaoming, that “*ruan shili*” is a more suitable term than “*ruan quanli*” to translate “soft power” in the Chinese context; the authors argue that Chinese people tend to prefer the former wording as the latter does not correspond to the Chinese devotion to qualities such as those embodied by the “Doctrine of the Mean” (*Zhongyong*) and the values of “harmony” (*hexie*), “balance” (*pingheng* 平衡), and “introversion” (*neilian* 内敛), while the word “*shili*” is more neutral and unbiased (Ibid.).

This is not the only example of scholars being inclined to the use of “*ruan shili*”: Professor Gong Wenxiang 龚文庠 also opts for this interpretation but explains that the word “power” also includes the meanings of both “*quanli*” and “*lilian*”; this is why, at times, “soft power” can be translated as “*ruan quanli*” and “*ruan lilian*” and every type of translation can be chosen based on the context (Renmin Wang 2007).

Before going on to further examine the preference for the term “*ruan shili*”, the use of which is nowadays widespread, it is indeed useful to elaborate on the meanings of the words “*shili*”, “*quanli*”, and “*lilian*”, which generally translate the word “power” but convey different nuances of meanings. It is interesting to note, first and foremost, that besides these three words there exist other options. Zhao Gang and Xiao Huan (2010, foreword, p. 1n1), for instance, also mention the correspondence of “power” to “*quanshi*” (power and influence) and “*daguo* 大国”<sup>91</sup>. Secondly, in Section 4.4, the explanations provided by Western scholars were presented to discuss the dissimilar interpretations of the concepts in question: Barr (2011), for instance, believes that “*ruan shili*” can be translated as “soft strength” and represent the term that is closest to the Western definition of soft power, while “*quanli*” refers to the authority to do something and “*lilian*” to physical strength. Aukia (2014), on the contrary, believes that the term that is more in line with Joseph S. Nye’s original concept is “*ruan quanli*”, which translates into “soft authority”; “*ruan shili*” takes a more domestic perspective, corresponds to

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<sup>91</sup> “*Daguo*” means “power” in the sense of “great power”. See: *Hanying Da Cidian (di er ban)* 汉英大辞典 (第二版) - Chinese-English Dictionary (Second Edition). Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaotong Daxue chubanshe, 2002, s.v. *dàguó* 大国.

“soft power”, and fits well into the context of cultural construction, while “*ruan lilian*” and “*ruan guoli*” can be translated as “soft strength” and “national soft power” respectively. Moreover, Zappone (2014, pp. 419-421) takes a very interesting approach and analyzes the etymology and historical evolution of the translation equivalents “*quanli*”, “*shili*”, “*lilian*”<sup>92</sup>. The author takes her lead from the character “*li* 力”, which is present in all the three words and originally means “physical strength” or “physical effort”, according to the Chinese dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字, and explains that the other elements to examine are the characters “*quan* 权”, “*shi* 实”, and “*liang* 量”: “*quan*” was originally used with the meaning of “weighing”, referring to the officials’ authority to evaluate a situation and deliberate, and today the concept of authority is precisely based on this idea of power, that is the ability to judge a situation in a balanced way; “*shili*” relates to an objective status of abundance and “wealth and power”; and “*lilian*”, etymologically more obscure, derives from the character “*zhong* 重”, which means “heavy”, and refers to the act of measuring. The author concludes that “*lilian*” can be considered to be a hypernym of “*quanli*” and “*shili*”, with the former taking on a more subjective perspective, indicating the will and ability to deliberate, and the latter referring to the objective realization of power (Ibid., p. 421). This view is confirmed by Gu Junwei (2011, p. 65) who, defining “*lilian*” a “*shangyici* 上义词” (hypernym, superordinate) of “*shili*” and “*quanli*”, without a subjective stance, states that “*shili*” refers to the actual nature and an objective description of power, while “*quanli*” projects the “agent’s will and controlling force” (*zhuti de yizhi he kongzhi li* 主体的意志和控制力).

The considerations made thus far show the reason why it can be assumed that the distinction between “national soft strength” (*guojia ruan shili*) and “international soft power” (*guoji ruan quanli*) proposed by Guo Jiemin (2012) and discussed above is very much intrinsic to the characters used, but loses its saliency when translated into English as “national soft power” and “international soft power”. A more appropriate translation for the title of Guo Jiemin’s article could then be “From national ‘soft strength’ to international ‘soft power’”. It is evident that Guo Jiemin does not support the general belief according to which the existence of different translations for the English term “soft power” in Chinese is simply caused by the “richness” (*fengfuxing* 丰富性) of this language, depending only on the translator’s or user’s preference, and thus representing non-substantial differences (Guo Jiemin 2012, pp. 16-17). The distinction the author makes between the two kinds of soft power, besides being determined by the adjectives “*guojia*” (national) and “*guoji* 国际” (international), is based on the very own connotations of “*shili*” and “*quanli*” in the first place. As a matter of fact, apart from “*ruan lilian*”, which the author believes has a neutral connotation, covering a larger extension and being able to substitute the other translations, “*shili*” and “*quanli*” both have specific meanings on which it is worth elaborating: according to the explanations provided by the Chinese-English dictionary published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2010, “*quanshi*”, also mentioned above, can be translated as “power and influence”, “*quanli*” as “power; authority”, and “*shili*” as “actual strength; strength”; this shows that “*quanli*” and “*quanshi*” can be thought of as the same idea, embracing power, the power possessor, the power vector, the

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<sup>92</sup> The author notices that there is consensus regarding the Chinese equivalent of the adjective “soft”, usually translated as “*ruan*” (Zappone 2014, p. 418). This is confirmed also by Chinese authors such as Qu Xiaoying (2010, p. 103) and Gu Junwei (2014, p. 66). In particular, Gu Junwei praises the effect achieved with the translation “*ruan*”, which follows the nature of “foreignization” (*yihua* 异化) (Ibid.).

target of power, and other constituents that form a “dynamic chain of relations having something to do with power” (*youguan quanli de yi ge dongtai guanxi lian* 有关权力的一个动态关系链), while “*shili*”, on the other hand, refers only to the qualities and characteristics of an object itself and represents a rather “static concept” (*jingtai de gainian* 静态的概念) (Guo Jiemin 2012, p. 17). Thus, being built on the basis of “*shili*” and “*quanli*”, “*ruan shili*” and “*ruan quanli*” cannot certainly be equivalent (Ibid.). From the point of view of the meaning of characters, between “*shili*” and “*quanli*” there exist discrepancies related to “semantics and instinctive understanding of the language” (*yuyi he yugan* 语义和语感), and the dissimilarities between these two expressions, characterized by both overlapping and non-overlapping aspects and applying to distinct circumstances, are gradually emerging in the concrete Chinese practice (Guo Jiemin 2009, p. 13).

A number of Chinese scholars have attempted to shed light on the aforementioned discrepancies, achieving interesting results. For instance, according to Qu Xiaoying (2010, p. 102), in China, the study of soft power has been characterized by the development, among scholars, of a controversy regarding the correct transposition of this concept in the Chinese language, which may impede its scientificity if not resolved. In line with this discussion, the author believes that the key to the problem primarily rests with the translation of the word “power” because in English dictionaries the definition given comprises the meanings of “*quanli*”, “*liliang*”, and “*shili*” in the Chinese language: based on its connotation as “*quanwei* 权威” (authority), it can be translated as “*quanli*” while according to its interpretation as “*yingxiang* 影响” (influence) it can be translated as “*liliang*” and “*shili*”, but the fundamental meaning of “power” remains “*kongzhi li* 控制力” (controlling force), that is “*kongzhi ren huoshi de yi zhong nengli* 控制人或事的一种能力” (the ability to control people or things) (Ibid., p. 103). On the other hand, the author continues, in contemporary Chinese dictionaries the differences in meaning among these three distinct terms, “*liliang*”, “*shili*”, and “*quanli*”, are clear and easy to see, even though in certain circumstances they all have the meaning that “power” acquires in the English language: “*liliang*” includes the meanings of “*liqi* 力气” (strength), “*nengli* 能力” (ability, power), and “*xiaoli* 效力” (efficacy); “*shili*” refers more to “actual strength or power”; and “*quanli*” emphasizes power and authority in a political perspective, or the “scope of one’s official power” (Ibid., pp. 103-104). From the explanations provided by English dictionaries one can see that “*liliang*” and “*shili*” are interchangeable, as they both belong to the category of “*yingxiangli*” (influence), and appear to be closer in meaning than “*quanli*”, which, conversely, emphasizes “authority”; in Chinese dictionaries, in addition, “*liliang*” and “*shili*” both indicate the resources something has or its intrinsic attributes, being different only insofar as the former emphasizes natural properties, while the latter emphasizes meanings of a social nature (Ibid.). The political objective and controlling nature of “*quanli*” are evidently higher, thus making it inappropriate to substitute this term with the other two (Ibid.). Although suggesting that it is best to avoid choosing among “*liliang*”, “*shili*”, and “*quanli*” based solely on one’s wishes, and that the most appropriate term can be selected according to the object being researched, the author, on the basis of the elements constituting the theory of soft power as presented by Joseph S. Nye, believes that “*ruan quanli*” reflects the original meaning of the concept in the most complete way, thus representing the best choice when translating the works by the Harvard Professor (Ibid., pp. 106-107).

The saliency of this debate in the Chinese context is indeed evidenced by the co-existence of various translations even in regards to Joseph S. Nye’s books and papers. The controversy

over the translation of the term “soft power” is a particular problem Chinese scholars have encountered, and it has not been resolved even when a standard translation has been proposed: even though for the Chinese edition of Nye’s *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, published in 2005 with the title *Ruan Liliang: Shijie Zhengtan Chenggong zhi Dao* 软实力: 世界政坛成功之道, it was agreed to use the term “*ruan lilian*”, supported by the American scholar himself, a collection of Nye’s papers issued in the same year with the title “*Ying quanli yu ruan quanli* 硬权力与软权力” (Hard and soft power), translated by the well-known Chinese scholar Men Honghua, did not use “*ruan lilian*” but opted for “*ruan quanli*”<sup>93</sup> (Qu Xiaoying 2010, pp. 102-103). In regard to the former, Liu Qing and Wang Litao (2007, p. 38) point out that, in order to find an appropriate translation for the term “soft power” and put an end to the confusion surrounding this topic, the translators of Nye’s work communicated several times with the author, who considered the term “*ruan lilian*” a rather precise way to express his thought. Nevertheless, more recently, in 2009, the Chinese version of an article written by Joseph Nye and Wang Jisi not only made use of yet another term, “*ruan shili*”, but also deliberately evaded the question as to which translation is most suitable (Qu Xiaoying 2010, p. 103). Nye and Wang’s statements regarding this issue drawn from the English version of this article are reported in Section 4.4, but it is interesting to briefly consider here that the Chinese version of the same piece clearly states that Chinese scholars continue to “stick to their own opinions” (*ge chi jijian* 各持己见) when it comes to deciding how to translate “soft power”, thus conveying subtle nuances of meaning according to the translation they choose (Nye and Wang 2009b). This is confirmed also by Liu Qing and Wang Litao (2007, p. 38) who describe the terminological choices made by several influential authors in the literature related to global politics and international relations when dealing with the topic of soft power; Yan Xuotong, for instance, has opted for the use of the term “*ruan shili*”, while other academics, such as Zhang Xiaoming and Liu Debin, prefer “*ruan quanli*”, and others again “*ruan lilian*” (for example, Pang Zhongying). According to the two authors, this phenomenon embodies the richness of the debate revolving around the soft power theory in China, but, at the same time, it is somehow inconvenient for its thorough understanding and popularization (Ibid.).

In recent years, as noticed by Gu Junwei (2011, p. 66), another translation equivalent for “soft power” has appeared: “*ruanli* 软实力”. The controversy, however, remains unresolved, as when this translation is employed scholars do not even seem to understand clearly what scientific field is being explored (Ibid.). For all these reasons, a proper discussion on the Chinese interpretation of the soft power theory needs to include a thorough look at the terminology used in intellectual and official jargon when talking about soft power in the Chinese context. Throughout the present discussion, the expression “*wenhua ruan shili*” has been pinpointed as the formulation that best represents all the most important characteristics of the Chinese discourse on soft power. This section has narrowed down the analysis to the level of terminology, focusing on the meaning of the words “*shili*”, “*quanli*”, and “*lilian*”, and the following pages will go even deeper into this research layer. In fact, as stated by Aukia (2014, p. 79 and p. 80), “[a]n understanding of the multifaceted nature of the Chinese soft power rhetoric requires a brief look into the landscape of local terminology” because, as has been demonstrated, “it is indeed difficult to find any consensus in the rhetoric; it is scattered and multiple variations exist”.

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<sup>93</sup> These translations were presented and discussed in Section 5.3.



One aspect that has been strongly highlighted throughout the present work is that starting from the 1990s, when the theory of soft power was first introduced into the Chinese context, the concept coined by Joseph S. Nye's has rapidly gained popularity within Chinese intellectual and policy circles, developing an interpretation, elaborated by the Chinese academia and adopted by the Chinese leadership, that has gradually expanded beyond the original conceptualization to acquire peculiarities specific to the Chinese context. To answer the question as to whether or not the Chinese discourse on soft power in China can be summarized with the expression "soft power with Chinese characteristics", it is thus useful to investigate how the conceptual differences that set Chinese soft power apart from Western soft power are embodied in the peculiar Chinese terminology utilized, ultimately representing different ideological orientations. What was affirmed in 2007 by Chinese scholar Liu Jie 刘杰 is emblematic: even though the translation "*ruan quanli*" seems to reflect relatively well the original meaning that Nye had in mind when analyzing the trends of American hegemony through the concept of soft power, continuing to use this term and rely on Nye's definition, even after Chinese academia has attached importance to this theory and popularized it in China, can give rise to serious ambiguities and misunderstandings due to the "outward-looking, coercive, and relative nature" (*waixiangxing*、*yazhixing he xiangduixing* 外向性、压制性和相对性) that is peculiar to the American interpretation of soft power (cited in Liu Qing and Wang Litao 2007, p. 38). Similarly, Gu Junwei (2011, p. 66), who examines the issue from the point of view of Chinese deconstructivism (*jiegouzhuayi* 解构主义), insofar as it tends to consider the translator as a creator, and makes reference to the binary relationship between "foreignization" (*yihua*) and "domestication" (*guihua* 归化) in approaching the translation process, points out that behind the choice the translator makes among the terms "*shili*", "*quanli*", and "*liliang*" lie divergent translation principles: while the supporters of "*quanli*" choose the principle of foreignization, respecting the "intentional nature" (*yoyixing* 有意性) and "controlling force" (*kongzhi li*) intrinsic to the concept of power and remaining faithful to the source language, those who choose "*liliang*" and "*shili*" adopt the tactics of domestication and want to eliminate the subjective character of soft power, namely its intentionality and controlling force. Preferring a more neutral approach seems to have been the reason why the translator of the previously mentioned book by Joseph S. Nye, *Ruan Liliang: Shijie Luntan Chenggong zhi Dao*, opted for "watering down" (*danhua* 淡化) the nature and meaning of the term "*quanli*", using "*liliang*" in its place, regardless of the fact that this would somehow impede the accurate communication of Nye's point of view (Wang Chaoyi 2009). On balance, behind the linguistic choices made by Chinese translators and scholars, it is possible to detect three motivations: making clear that in promoting its soft power China does not have, unlike the United States, any hegemonic ambitions; making clear that the aim of Chinese scholars researching soft power, unlike scholars in the United States, is not that of aiding China to proclaim itself as the world's hegemon; and carrying out "academic innovation" (*xueshu chuangxin* 学术创新) in the name of "local adaptation" (Gu Junwei 2011, p. 66). In this sense, Zappone (2014, p. 416) argues that the terminological distinctions proposed by Chinese scholars debating soft power serve the purpose of creating ideological distinctions, in particular between the American and the Chinese context, in order to prevent the risk of stirring up antagonism between the two countries in the field of soft power. This is specifically true for those who choose to employ the terms "*ruan shili*" and "*ruan liliang*", which stress that, for China, behind the enhancement of soft power there are no hegemonic ambitions (Ibid., p. 421).

All in all, the panorama that provides the tools to discuss soft power in China appears to be complex and variegated from both a terminological and conceptual, or ideological, point of view. Chinese scholars do not only disagree on which term, among the ones proposed, is the most suitable to convey the meaning of the expression “soft power” in the Chinese context, but also argue as to the relevance of determining whether or not the Chinese equivalents for “power” are synonyms or represent different concepts; among the ones who believe in making a distinction, the overall opinion is that “*quanli*” is closer to the concept of power Joseph S. Nye referred to when coining his soft power theory, thus making “*ruan quanli*” the most appropriate term to discuss soft power in relation to the American context. Conversely, in the Chinese context, the re-elaborated and expanded theoretical framework makes it more suitable to use the more neutral term “*ruan shili*” to discuss China’s soft power, thus toning down the subjective nature of the concept of power and providing an objective description of the country’s strength. An approach of this kind would set the Chinese discourse on soft power apart from its original conceptualization so much so as to constitute an independent concept that, although developing on the basis of Joseph S. Nye’s soft power, has acquired prominent Chinese characteristics.

A possible solution to the controversy described is precisely that proposed by Guo Jiemin (2009, 2012), who, as has been previously pointed out, believes that China’s “*ruan shili*” differs from Joseph S. Nye’s soft power and is not equivalent to the concept of “*ruan quanli*” either. According to the author, as a Professor of Political Science, Nye formulated his soft power theory from the perspective of international politics, as part of the larger debate around “power” and in a period, the 1990s, when the United States feared a weakening of their hegemonic position in the world, a possibility rejected by Nye who believed that his country was simply undergoing a transformation in terms of power status, which could be explained through the lenses of soft power (Guo Jiemin 2009, p. 13). In this sense, in the period following the end of the Cold War, the theory of power, which had long been the core of Western international relations, acquired new content and it is no coincidence that Nye’s theory appeared right at that time, as part of the domain of international relations and global politics (Ibid.). Based on this interpretation, it would seem appropriate to translate “soft power”, as an important concept within international relations theories, into “*ruan quanshi*” or “*ruan quanli*” in Chinese, and this is why, when Nye’s conceptualization was first introduced into the Chinese context in the early 1990s, many Chinese academics chose to use the latter term (Ibid.). This is due to the close-fitting transposition “*ruan quanli*” provides for the original meaning intended by Nye in analyzing the decline of American hegemony and the phenomenon of power reconstruction, as is also shown by the paper, previously discussed, written in 1993 by Wang Huning with the title “*Zuowei guojia shili de wenhua: ruan quanli*” (Culture as national power: soft power) (Ibid.).

Nonetheless, languages are always changing and, travelling in time and space, concepts acquire new meanings and connotations. This is what happened to Nye’s soft power concept once it entered and permeated the Chinese context. Guo Jiemin (2009, 2012) describes this process in terms of the capability of languages to develop and expand, with words being affected by all sorts of linguistic processes, being assigned new connotations and expanding, reducing, and shifting their meaning based on the different context, application, purpose, and focus. This is why, following the development of a deeper understanding of the topic of soft power, Chinese scholars began to pay more attention to China’s own soft power construction, as part of the country’s CNP, and think that “*ruan guoli*” and “*ruan shili*” would constitute more appropriate translations for the term “soft power” in this context (Guo Jiemin 2009, p. 14). Indeed, it is evident that the original domain of this expression has undergone a process of re-

elaboration and expansion when applied to the Chinese reality. Guo Jiemin (2009, p. 14) describes this process as an expansion of the range of application of the concept of soft power which has occurred thanks to the acquisition of “national factors” (*guoqing yinsu* 国情因素), and which has led to the “Sinicization” (*Zhongguohua* 中国化) of its usage, making it necessary to distinguish between “*ruan shili*” and “*ruan quanli*”. In the Chinese context, the concept of soft power has met a certain degree of innovation, which Guo Jiemin (2012, p. 17) describes by means of the idiom “*tui chen chu xin*” (to push out the old and bring in the new). Thus, the heart of the matter here is to distinguish between the “original meaning” (*benyi* 本义) of the concept of soft power and its “extended meaning” (*yinshenyi* 引申义), developed in the context of China’s “local adaptation” (*bentuhua*), because even though “*ruan shili*” and “*ruan quanli*” are interconnected, with the former being the foundation of the latter and both sharing the same origin, it is necessary to consider them as two nouns designating different meanings and objectives: in comparison to “*ruan shili*”, “*ruan quanli*” mainly designates a type of “relational power” (*guanxixing quanli* 关系性权力) between countries, which is characterized by an outward-looking, coercive, and relative nature; it refers to both the “actor and receiver of influence” (*yingxiangli de shidongzhe he shoudongzhe* 影响力的施动者和受动者) and concerns foreign affairs (*shewai* 涉外); and its effect is reflected onto its target (Ibid.). On the other hand, “*ruan shili*”, as a national strength, has an “introspective and inward-looking nature” (*neixingxing*、*neixiangxing* 内省性、内向性); its range of application is much vaster; and its semantic extension can reach levels as specific as those of a region, a company, a department, and even an individual (Ibid.).

It is precisely the expansion and extension that have characterized the use of soft power in China, as noted by Wang Chaoyi (2009), that have made it possible to develop the derivative terms built on the basis of “*ruan shili*” and previously discussed, which transcending the realm of international relations could not be represented by “*ruan quanli*”. Combining with the Chinese language and culture, soft power has already generated new meanings and categories for the understanding and study of which the use of “*ruan quanli*” is inappropriate (Ibid.).

For all of these reasons, it can be argued that the extended meaning of the concept of soft power is represented in China by the concept of “*ruan shili*”, which, despite being commonly translated as “soft power”, encapsulates a whole new range of meanings and connotations in comparison to Joseph S. Nye’s theory. Transcending the field of international relations, the domain of “*ruan shili*” touches upon a wider range of aspects than is the case for “*ruan quanli*”, which is thus insufficient to represent all the new developments arisen from the phenomenon of re-elaboration and expansion experienced in China by Nye’s conceptualization. China’s soft power is not only part of a foreign strategy, but also of a domestic strategy, being applied to the realm of national cultural policies. In a terminological perspective, this is made clear by the use of the term “*shili*”, which refers to an objective, neutral strength that characterizes the possessor of this type of power. In this sense, it comes as no surprise that culture is chosen, in the official discourse on China’s soft power, as the main resource of soft power, representing the inborn strength of China’s civilization, being deeply-rooted in China’s society, and having continued almost uninterruptedly throughout history.

When trying to distinguish between the two similar and interrelated concepts of “*ruan quanli*” and “*ruan shili*”, the role of culture as a strength that comes from the inside appears to be crucial, and that’s why in China it is possible to talk about “*wenhua ruan shili*” (cultural soft power). According to Guo Jiemin (2009, p. 14), distinguishing between the meaning of “*ruan*

*shili*” and “*ruan quanli*” implies knowing the “strategic goals of a country” (*yi ge guojia de zhanlüe mubiao* 一个国家的战略目标) and whether or not it is after hegemony (*baquan* 霸权) or self-improvement (*ziwo tisheng* 自我提升). In order to separate the subtle differences existing between the two concepts in different contexts, cultures, and purpose orientation, it is necessary to consider them as two words that do not completely coincide (Ibid.). In fact, upon inheriting Joseph S. Nye’s soft power theory, China has gradually enriched its discourse on soft power with Chinese characteristics, thus constructing an innovative, complex, and multilayered concept. As noted by Guo Jiemin (2009, 2012), when Nye proposed his theory he equipped it with “vivid ‘American characteristics’” (*qianglie de “Meiguo tese”* 强烈的“美国特色”), in light of a search for external “soft” (*ruanxing*) hegemony and assigning soft power rather pronounced utilitarian and pragmatic characteristics. Conversely, borrowing Nye’s theory, China has fit it into the strategy of peaceful development, in an attempt to promote the country’s “national cohesion” (*guojia ningjuli* 国家凝聚力) and “international affinity” (*guoji qinheli* 国际亲和力), under the guidance of the concept of harmony (Ibid.). What “*ruan shili*” places emphasis on is the promotion of one’s own strength and the construction of capabilities, with the aim of reducing misunderstanding and eliminating conflicts (Guo Jiemin 2012, p. 18). This is where the role of culture comes into play with great force, embracing both internal and external aspects. The construction of China’s soft power takes place from the angle of a cultural strategy: domestically, it promotes “objectives of a soft nature” (*ruanxing zhibiao* 软性指标) in terms of CNP, for example by promoting the prosperous development of culture, increasing cultural cohesion, and improving the national image; externally, it focuses on the power of culture to inspire, in order to promote communication and understanding between different countries and peoples, through cultural dialogue and exchange, thereby amplifying China’s international discourse power (*guoji huayu quan*) (Guo Jiemin 2012, p. 18). Thus, in spite of the fact that “*ruan shili*” and “*ruan quanli*” are closely related, as enhancing the former can naturally lead to exercising more attractiveness and influence towards other countries, failing to distinguish between them would result in confusing China’s pursued goals and strategic policies with those of the United States, regardless of their pronounced differences (Ibid.). Moreover, being able to attract and influence other countries internationally, realizing the country’s national interests, and deliberately seeking international power are two very different things, and the enhancement of “*ruan shili*” does not imply the synchronous enhancement of “*ruan quanli*” (Ibid.).

To sum up, the solution proposed by Guo Jiemin (2012, p. 18), which is supported also by the present author, is that of viewing “*ruan shili*” and “*ruan quanli*” as two concepts that are both connected and different, belonging to distinct categories: if one looks at soft power from the perspective of international politics, it seems quite appropriate to label it “*ruan quanli*”, as the theory of power (*quanli*) is a core concept in the field of Western international relations; yet, if the perspective is that of cultural strategy, then it seems more appropriate to use the formulation “*ruan shili*”, as strength (*shili*) is an attribute of the country, and culture is an important source of national cohesion and creativity which is becoming an increasingly significant factor in CNP. As a matter of fact, what has arisen from the reconceptualization presented in this section from a terminological point of view is precisely the basis upon which this potentially dual interpretation of the concept of soft power is built. In the Chinese context, the wording “*ruan shili*” has been chosen to translate “soft power” because of its intrinsic characteristics, which make it a more suitable label for the strategic objectives China aims to

attain through the construction and enhancement of the country's soft power. This brief overview has confirmed that the scope of soft power in China is broadly comprehensive, covering both the domestic and international fields. In this sense, "*ruan shili*" appears to somehow incorporate "*ruan quanli*", as a country that has a strong soft power domestically (*ruan shili*) may also be able to exercise attractiveness and influence more effectively on the global stage (*ruan quanli*). This is in line with the assumption, which the present work has attempted to demonstrate, that, in the Chinese context, there exists a binary interpretation of soft power, which is oriented both domestically and internationally. The domestic aspect is emphasized through the use of the formulation "*ruan shili*", and more specifically "*wenhua ruan shili*", while "*ruan quanli*" embodies the external aspect, with a more pronounced inclination towards international relations and global politics. As the former is officially employed in the Chinese leadership discourse, disseminated through the media, and thoroughly researched by Chinese scholars, it can be assumed that the domestic orientation of soft power in China is the most prominent and relevant feature of Chinese soft power, with culture as the core and leading to "*ruan quanli*" internationally; hence, "soft power with Chinese characteristics".

### *Closing remarks*

The ultimate aim of this chapter was to find an answer to the question as to whether or not it is possible to talk about "soft power with Chinese characteristics". This task has been carried out by looking at the latest developments in the Chinese discourse on cultural soft power, focusing on the period between 2012 and 2015, and taking into consideration terminological aspects related to the use of the formulations "*ruan shili*" and "*wenhua ruan shili*".

The first step of the research has facilitated the detection of a higher degree of innovation in the development of the Chinese discourse on cultural soft power in comparison to the years prior to 2012. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC, even more emphasis has been placed on the reach of cultural soft power, with the call to build a "socialist cultural great power" and the indication that culture is being envisioned as a symbol of China's renewed "wealth and power". By comparing Hu Jintao's 2007 and 2012 keynote speeches, and continuing to pay attention to the national plans and programs aimed at improving the Chinese cultural system, it has been highlighted how in turning cultural soft power from theory into practice, the State and the Party have shown increased awareness of and confidence in Chinese culture. This is continuing in the Xi Jinping era, as is shown by the Chinese leader's speeches analyzed, which demonstrate that enhancing China's cultural soft power is still today a major strategic task of the Party-State. Moreover, Xi Jinping's discourse emphasizes the role of socialist core values as the focal point of soft power construction and calls for greater assertiveness of China's international discourse power. Constituting the end of a journey that has described the evolution and re-elaboration of the concept of soft power in China, the conclusions this chapter has reached show that it is indeed possible to talk about "soft power with Chinese characteristics". The peculiar features detected include the key role of culture and the binary interpretation embracing both domestic and international objectives, but with marked attention to the construction of the country's internal cultural strength.

Following the same assumption, the second part of this chapter has detected a link between the aforementioned characteristics and the terminology used to refer to soft power in the Chinese context, narrowing down the analysis to the level of the meanings of the most

common words chosen to translate the word power, namely “*shili*”, “*quanli*”, and “*liliang*”. With the terminological panorama remaining complex and variegated, sometimes even contradictory, a certain degree of consensus can be found regarding the choice of the formulation “*ruan shili*” as the most suitable Chinese translation equivalent for the English expression “soft power”. This kind of approach is indicative of the objectives that China intends to attain through soft power; they differ from those articulated in the American context and include cultural construction aimed at reaching a variety of domestic and international purposes that are not strictly related to the pursue of hegemony. This sets the Chinese discourse on soft power apart from Joseph S. Nye’s conceptualization. The latter is more accurately represented by the use of the wording “*ruan quanli*”, which nonetheless implies a concept that is specifically related to international relations, political authority, and subjective use of power, in a way that does not reflect the Chinese practice of self-improvement through cultural soft power. Finally, from an opposite perspective, the present analysis has made clear that when translating “*ruan shili*” or “*wenhua ruan shili*” into “soft power”, as is a rather common practice in Western literature, the translator must be aware of the conceptual and ideological orientations embedded in this terminology, namely the Chinese characteristics of soft power.

## 8. Case study: *putonghua* as a resource of cultural soft power at home and abroad

The aim of this chapter is to provide a specific example of China's cultural soft power at work; that is the language policy expressed through the management of the domestic and international promotion of *putonghua*, the official language of the PRC. Throughout the study, it has been shown how enhancing cultural soft power is an increasingly important task the Chinese leadership intends to carry out with the aim of achieving strategic goals both at home and abroad. Having detected what these strategic goals are and having highlighted the peculiar elements that emerge in the discourse, or discourses, on China's soft power and cultural strength, after providing a background of China's language situation, the following pages will show how the field of Chinese language standardization and promotion, both at home and abroad, offers a clear display of the predominant traits of Chinese cultural soft power.

It is indeed relevant to recall that Hu Jintao drew attention to China's language situation in relation to the effort to “complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects” (*quanmian jiancheng xiaokang shehui* 全面建成小康社会) in his keynote speech to the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2012, when language standardization and promotion at the national level were taken into consideration as part of the fundamental requirements for the development of a strong socialist culture – the fulfillment of which would lead to the betterment of the level of health and richness of the people's intellectual and cultural lives (Xinhua She 2012; Xinhua News Agency 2012d). The discussion here takes its lead from a critical analysis of the “Outline of the National Medium-to-long-term Plan for the Reform and Development of the Cause of Chinese Language and Characters” *Guojia Zhong Changqi Yuyan Wenzhi Shiye Gaige he Fazhan Guihua Gangyao*) for the period 2012-2020 (hereafter, the “Outline”), specifically focusing on its preamble and presenting an overview of its guiding ideology, objectives, and tasks. As this document is contained in a report edited by the Department of Language and Script Information Management of the (PRC) Ministry of Education (*Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzhi Xinxi Guanlisi* 教育部语言文字信息管理司) and entitled *Zhongguo Yuyan Shenghuo Zhuangkuang Baogao 2013* (*Language Situation in China: 2013*), obtained in the course of a research trip to the PRC undertaken by the present author in April 2014, the following pages will also present the topics identified by the PRC Ministry of Education (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu* 中华人民共和国教育部) as focal points characterizing China's language situation, or what has been called “language life” (*yuyan shenghuo* 语言生活), as the title of said report indicates. Even though the “Outline” has been recognized as “having promoted the cause of the language and script to the height of a national strategy” (*jiang yuyan wenzhi shiye tisheng dao guojia zhanlüe de gaodu* 将语言文字事业提升到国家战略的高度) (Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzhi Xinxi Guanlisi 2013, p. 1), the potential and efficiency of such a majestic undertaking can only be evaluated on the basis of specific aspects which characterize the present-day Chinese society, in terms of development of language and culture and tapping into the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and sociology of language, such as the debates on the importance of safeguarding Chinese dialects in relation to the spread of *putonghua*, or seemingly less important aspects such as the discussion about the choice of

Pinyin or English on traffic signs and train tickets, as well as the cultural relationship between China and the world in terms of the global spread of the Chinese language<sup>94</sup>.

### 8.1 China's "language life": constructing a backdrop

As explained in its introduction, the volume *Zhongguo Yuyan Shenghuo Zhuangkuang Baogao 2013* is issued as part of the book series "Green Paper on Language Life in China" (*Zhongguo Yuyan Shenghuo Lüpishu* 中国语言生活绿皮书) released by the State Language Commission (*Guojia Yuyan Wenzhi Gongzuo Weiyuanhui* 国家语言文字工作委员会)<sup>95</sup> with the purpose of putting into effect the "Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Language of the People's Republic of China" (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Tongyong Yuyan Wenzhi Fa* 中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法) (hereafter, the "2001 Language Law"), advocating the principle of "language service" (*yuyan fuwu* 语言服务), guiding the harmonious development of the society's language life, and making a contribution to the construction of a harmonious society (Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzhi Xinxu Guanlisi 2013, introduction, p. 1). The "Green Paper" collection is divided into two series, A and B: series A is constituted by norms of a "soft nature" (*ruanxing*) which are denominated "*cao'an* 草案" (draft) so as to indicate that they differ from the norms officially promulgated by the State and reflect the probationary process language and script regulations have to go through before reaching the status of "rigid" (*yingxing* 硬性) rules, due to the degree of difficulty and complexity in regulating a subject whose primary aim is to

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<sup>94</sup> To better understand the following discussion, some clarifications are in order. First and foremost, it is necessary to clarify what is generally meant with the term "*hanyu* 汉语", "Chinese". DeFrancis (1984, pp. 38-39) clarifies that the term "Chinese" is used to refer to both a people, that is the segment of the Chinese population that is called "Han Chinese" (*hanzu* 汉族), after the name of the Han dynasty, and their language in both its written and spoken forms. The Chinese spoken by the Han Chinese, however, is far from being a uniform reality, as it comprises a number of mutually unintelligible forms of speech; the biggest portion of the Chinese-speaking population of China speaks what is called *putonghua* ("common speech") in Chinese and Mandarin in English (Ibid.). Moreover, a temporal factor has to be taken into account as both spoken and written Chinese have undergone significant changes over time (Ibid.). DeFrancis further explains that the official Chinese denomination for the major forms of speech is *fangyan* 方言 (dialect) and that the usual classification divides Chinese dialects into eight groups, with minor differences within each group and major differences among groups, so much so as to generate mutual unintelligibility (Ibid., pp. 54-58). Numerically speaking, the most important group is that of the Northern dialects, a term that is more or less equivalent to *putonghua*, or Mandarin (Ibid., p. 58). In the related literature, there exist different classifications of Chinese dialects, as will be further discussed.

<sup>95</sup> According to Rohsenow (2004, p. 30), the denomination "State Language Commission" is the one preferred in China to translate the Chinese name "*Guojia Yuyan Wenzhi Gongzuo Weiyuanhui*" even though a more accurate translation would be "National Committee for Language and Script Work". The State Language Commission has a long history that dates back to the foundation of the PRC in 1949 when this independent central government organization, was established under the name "Chinese Script Reform Association" (*Zhongguo Wenzhi Gaige Xiehui* 中国文字改革协会), reporting directly to the State Council (*Guowuyuan* 国务院) (Ibid., p. 23 and p. 30). It was later succeeded by the Chinese Committee on Script Reform (*Zhongguo Wenzhi Gaige Weiyuanhui* 中国文字改革委员会), which is often referred to as the Committee on Language Reform in order to indicate that its scope goes beyond the reform of Chinese characters (Ibid., p. 38n1). In 1985, the Committee was reorganized, taking the denomination "*Guojia Yuyan Wenzhi Gongzuo Weiyuanhui*" and remaining under the direct control of the State Council (Ibid., p. 30). From these brief observations, it emerges that language reform in China has prolonged over time and that its scope has included written Chinese characters but also other aspects of language use. The website China.org.cn (2013) reports that the State Language Commission was merged into the Ministry of Education in 1998, maintaining its name.



fulfill the many demands arising in the society's language life; series B describes the state of affairs of China's language life and contains analyses, surveys, and data regarding the Chinese language, as understanding China's internal and external language situation and researching the issues that affect the country's language life are conceived as tasks that have an extremely important significance for the formulation of a scientific language plan, the protection and development of language resources, and the guarantee of harmony and vitality for China's linguistic panorama (Ibid.). The report *Zhongguo Yuyan Shenghuo Zhuangkuang Baogao 2013* is part of series B and, more specifically, is labeled with the serial number B013 which indicates that it constitutes the thirteenth document of the series, that is, in the edition analyzed by the present author, the eighth "baogao 报告" (report) to be published after the series started with the 2005 *Baogao*. According to Li Yuming 李宇明 (2007), an important contributor to the work of the Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission, including editing the reports, the 2005 *Baogao* was the first report on the language situation in China to be issued in the government's name, constituting one of the rare examples of such reports in the world. The release of the "Green Paper" series by the State Language Commission constitutes a "concrete act of language planning in modern China" (*dangdai Zhongguo yuyan guihua de yi xiang juti jucuo* 当代中国语言规划的一项具体举措), embodying new concepts of state language management and new developments in linguistic research in China; their aim is to serve as reference in the State's decision-making process, offer services for language researchers, researchers and developers of language products, and other related people, and "guide the society's language life towards harmony" (*yinling shehui yuyan shenghuo zou xiang hexie* 引领社会语言生活走向和谐) (Ibid.). The list of contents of the 2013 *Baogao*, both in Chinese and in English, is reported as an Appendix to this work.

In order to comprehend the significance that language policy acquires in China, it is pertinent to provide a brief description of the background against which the "2001 Language Law" was formulated. This regulation, in fact, can be considered a milestone in the history of language reform in China. Although its proposal and drafting started in the mid-1990s, the law was passed in October 2000 at the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ninth Session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (*Di Jiu Jie Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui Changwu Weiyuanhui Di Shiba Ci Huiyi* 第九届全国人民代表大会常务委员会第十八次会议) and was signed by then-President Jiang Zemin (Rohsenow 2004, pp. 35-36). Effective as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001, the law aims to regulate the use of the spoken and written Chinese language, as stated by Article 1:

为推动国家通用语言文字的规范化、标准化及其健康发展，使国家通用语言文字在社会生活中更好地发挥作用，促进各民族、各地区经济文化交流，根据宪法，制定本法。

(Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu 2000)

This Law is enacted in accordance with the Constitution for the purpose of promoting the normalization and standardization of the standard spoken and written Chinese language and its sound development, making it play a better role in public activities, and promoting economic and cultural exchange among all the Chinese ethnic groups and regions.

(PRC Ministry of Education 2000)

By regulating and standardizing language use, the "2001 Language Law" normalized the status of *putonghua* as the official language of the PRC and its relationship with Chinese

dialects<sup>96</sup> and minority languages<sup>97</sup>. In regard to the first aspect, in fact, Article 2 states that, by standard spoken and written Chinese language, the law means *putonghua* and the standardized Chinese characters, while Article 3 states that the State is committed to the popularization of both. Moreover, the title of the law, which underwent changes in the course of the drafting process, makes it clear that the intent is to regulate China's "national commonly used" (*guojia tongyong* 国家通用) language and script, that is *putonghua* and simplified characters, and not all of China's languages and scripts, which are protected and regulated in accordance with the PRC Constitution (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Xianfa* 中华人民共和国宪法) (Rohsenow 2004, p. 36). In fact, Article 4 of the Constitution states that all nationalities in the PRC are equal and that the State protects the rights and interests of minority nationalities (*shaoshu minzu* 少数民族)<sup>98</sup> (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Zhongyang Renmin Zhengfu* 中华人民共和国中央人民政府 n.d.), while Article 8 of the "2001 Language Law" grants all ethnic groups the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, the minority languages and scripts (*shaoshu minzu yuyan wenzi* 少数民族语言文字) (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu* 2000). More will be expounded upon about this and other aspects related to the case of

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<sup>96</sup> DeFrancis (1984, pp. 41-42) notes that to have been chosen as the basis for *putonghua* and promoted as the national standard in China is the speech of educated speakers in Beijing. In a wider meaning, however, *putonghua* also embraces other local varieties, in contrast to the other "regionalects" and delineating a linguistic community that constitutes "the largest group of people in the world who speak the same language" (Ibid., p. 58). As for the classification of Chinese dialects, scholars propose a variety of divisions. Norman (1988, pp. 181-183), for instance, elaborates on the traditional classification, which comprises Beifanghua 北方话 (Mandarin), Wu 吴, Xiang 湘, Gan 赣, Kejia 客家 (Hakka), Yue 粤 (Cantonese), and Min 闽, and based on diagnostic features divides these seven varieties into three larger groups: the Northern group (Mandarin), the Southern group (Kejia, Yue, and Min), and the Central group (Wu, Gan, and Xiang). Ramsey (1987, p. 21) suggests that the Chinese language, similarly to China's geography, is divided into North and South: the Northern varieties of the language are usually known in English as "Mandarin dialects" and constitute a uniform group of dialects that are, for the most part, mutually intelligible; while the Southern varieties are usually referred to as "non-Mandarin dialects" and constitute a varied group of dialects with sharp differences even within a relatively small area. Mandarin dialects, therefore, coincide with the North, while all the other six groups, Wu, Xiang, Gan, Kejia, Yue, and Min, coincide with the South (Ibid., p. 87).

<sup>97</sup> Generally speaking, linguists classify Chinese as belonging to the Sino-Tibetan language family, which is composed of Chinese (Sinitic) and Tibeto-Karen, with the latter group divided into Karen and Tibeto-Burman (Norman 1988, pp. 12-16). Analyzing the term "Chinese" as used for both the people, the "Han Chinese", and their language, DeFrancis (1984, p. 39) specifies that the non-Han population consists of 55 ethnic minorities, while when the term "Chinese", or more specifically "spoken Chinese", is applied to the language, it refers to the Han Chinese, leaving out the ethnic minorities that speak non-Chinese languages. According to Ramsey (1987, p. 157), the PRC government recognizes 56 ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups, and only one of these is traditionally known as "Chinese", the Han group. The particular situation of China's minorities is described by the author as follows: "In a world neatly divided into nations and states, these people are Chinese – and yet they are not Chinese. They live in China and are citizens of the People's Republic, but they are not the heirs of Chinese civilization, literature, history, or tradition" (Ibid.). Ramsey elaborates on the fact that the Han group is recognized as the speaker of the national language and carrier of Chinese culture and history, but, nonetheless, the other 55 nationalities are also considered "*Zhongguo ren* 中国人" (Chinese, or "People of the Middle Country"); the word "Chinese" is thus not used as an ethnic term, but based on citizenship, with the ethnic majority being referred to as the Han and derivatives such as the "Han culture" and the "Han language" (*hanyu*) being used (Ibid., p. 158). For a visual representation of China's linguistic context, see Figure 3 reproduced at the end of this section.

<sup>98</sup> The 2010 population census released by the National Bureau of Statistics of China reports a total population of 1,370,536,875 for the entire Chinese territory (including Taiwan) of which 1,339,724,852 people constitute the population of the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities, and servicemen on the mainland of China; this amount is divided between 91.51% people of Han nationality and 8.49% belonging to various national minorities (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011).

China's minority languages and that of Chinese dialects in the following pages, while the complete text of the "2001 Language Law", both in Chinese and English, is provided as an Appendix to this work.

In brief, the content of the "2001 Language Law", as stated by Rohsenow (2004 p. 37), can be summarized into four points: 1) the standardization of the simplified characters and the Pinyin phonetic system is preserved; 2) the use of *putonghua* by government officials and in public interactions is strongly encouraged; 3) the use of dialects is permitted in necessary or appropriate situations; and 4) ethnic minorities are authorized to maintain their own spoken languages and scripts. It can thus be argued that, in the proposal and formulation of the "2001 Language Law", Chinese authorities took into consideration the limits of what can be called "social engineering" in terms of everyday language use, while emphasizing both the legal status of *putonghua* as China's commonly used national language and simplified Chinese characters as the script and the authoritative role of China's language reform bodies (Ibid.). The General Provisions of the "2001 Language Law", moreover, state that the law is enacted in accordance with the PRC Constitution, as reported above; this is because it was indeed the addition of an article to the revised Constitution of 1982 that declared the intent to popularize *putonghua* countrywide, as reported by Chen Ping (1999, p. 26). Article 19 of the Constitution states: "*Guojia tuiguang quanguo tongyong de putonghua* 国家推广全国通用的普通话" (The state promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua) (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Zhongyang Renmin Zhengfu n.d.; People's Daily Online n.d.).

As for a precise definition of what has come to constitute China's "common language and script" (*tongyong yuyan wenzhi* 通用语言文字), the process of language reform takes this discussion even further back in history than 1982. In 1955, two important conferences were organized by the PRC Ministry of Education and the Script Reform Committee: the National Conference on Script Reform (*Quanguo Wenzhi Gaige Huiyi* 全国文字改革会议) and the Symposium on the Standardization of Modern Chinese (*Xiandai Hanyu Guifanhua Xueshu Huiyi* 现代汉语规范化学术会议), which focused on the definition of *putonghua*, the drafting of a phonetic scheme, and the simplification of Chinese traditional characters (Chen Ping 1999, pp. 23-24; Rohsenow 2004, p. 23). Consequently, *putonghua* was officially chosen as the designation of the national norm (DeFrancis 1984, p. 231) and attributed the title of standard form of modern Chinese, while its formal definition was given in 1956 (Chen Ping 1999, p. 24). *Putonghua* is based on the vocabulary and grammar of the Northern (Mandarin) dialects<sup>99</sup>, with

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<sup>99</sup> Reconstructing the process of language reform from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ramsey (1987, pp. 3-7) stresses that the problem of standardization in China was affected by the extreme diversity of what was called the "Chinese language": although the fact that Chinese speakers could not understand each other due to the different dialects spoken did not make the Chinese case unique, the number and complexity of Chinese dialects, the interconnections among which are more similar to those within a family of languages, certainly made the Chinese case different (Ibid.). In fact, from a linguistic point of view, Chinese dialects could actually be considered different languages, if it was not for a number of cultural factors, such as the common heritage and faith in the unifying power of Chinese writing, that make the Chinese people believe they speak dialects of a single language (Ibid., p. 7 and pp. 16-18). The classification of Chinese dialects as variations of the same language or as different languages belonging to the same family is indeed a controversial subject: Norman (1988, p. 1), for instance, states that "the modern Chinese dialects are really more like a family of languages", while DeFrancis (1984, p. 54) explains that linguists often prefer to use the term "dialect" only for mutually intelligible forms of speech, while they call "languages" those that lack this characteristic. The dilemma, however, lies in the fact that "[t]o call Chinese a single language composed of dialects with varying degrees of difference is to mislead by minimizing disparities that [...] are as great as those

the Beijing dialect as its standard pronunciation and the grammar norms of *baihua* 白话 (the vernacular literary language)<sup>100</sup> as its standard written grammar (Rohsenow 2004, p. 24).

In regard to the other aspects of language that the reformers involved in the two conferences mentioned above aimed to regulate, it is important to mention the elaboration of the phonetic scheme *hanyu pinyin* 汉语拼音 (Pinyin) during the 1950s and its promulgation in 1958: it is the official phonographic scheme of the Chinese language, employed to represent the standard pronunciation of Chinese characters; adopting the roman alphabet and a phonemic representation, it is used in a variety of areas, such as schools and textbooks and other publications; and it constitutes the standard form for the transcription of Chinese words accepted in 1982 by the International Standardization Organization (ISO) (Chen Ping 1999, pp. 186-187). The peculiarities of the *hanyu pinyin*, which was promulgated with the official name “*Hanyu Pinyin Fang’an* 汉语拼音方案” (Phonetic Scheme of Chinese), are the fact that it is based exclusively on the pronunciation of the Beijing dialect and that its function is entirely auxiliary (Ibid., pp. 186-189). This is also shown by the role it has played in the promotion of *putonghua*, thanks to the practical and accurate way in which it indicates the pronunciation of modern standard Chinese, especially to speakers of Southern dialects (Ibid., p. 26)<sup>101</sup>.

A more in-depth analysis of every step of the reform and development of the Chinese language and script over the course of history goes beyond the scope of this chapter as the extension and complexity of the process which has led to China’s present-day language situation could not be described in just a few pages. It will suffice to mention here that there is yet another aspect that, as the phonetization of Chinese mentioned above, requires a step back into the history of the PRC. It is the simplification of the traditional writing system, which, according to Chen Ping (1999, p. 148), included two aspects: the reduction of the number of strokes per character and the reduction of the number of characters in use. The author argues that, starting from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the simplification of the writing system became an essential part of the overall process of modernization of the Chinese language, made increasingly urgent by the fact that the use of traditional characters lost its prestige with the abolition of the system of imperial examination (*keju* 科举) in 1905, and the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911, and started to be considered as an obstacle for the spread of a good level of literacy (Ibid., pp.150-151). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, emphasis was placed on the phonetization of the script in the hope that it could one day be replaced by a phonographic writing system, but after a few decades the attention was redirected towards the simplification of traditional characters, with a first glossary of simplified Chinese characters appearing in 1935, followed by the short-lived “First List of Simplified Characters”, which was repealed soon after

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between English and Dutch. To call Chinese a family of languages is to suggest extralinguistic differences that in fact do not exist and to overlook the unique linguistic situation that exists in China” (Ibid., p. 56).

<sup>100</sup> According to Norman (1988, p. 136), *baihua* can be defined as the “vernacular literary language” as opposed to the “classical literary language” (*wenyan* 文言); following the May Fourth Movement, the former replaced the latter as the ordinary form of written Chinese. Chen Ping (1999, pp. 67-82) describes in great detail the replacement of *wenyan* by *baihua* as the standard form of written Chinese, much closer to the contemporary vernacular than the classical literary language, which was almost completely different from the speech of its users.

<sup>101</sup> The design and promulgation by the Chinese government of the *hanyu pinyin* system, however, did not happen out of the blue, but can be thought of as an achievement reached after attempts carried out before the founding of the PRC in 1949, which include: *guanghua zimu* (1900), *zhuyin zimu* or *zhuyin fuhao* 注音符号 (1918) (for what concerns the diacritical marks indicating the four tones over the vowels), *guoyu luomazi* 国语罗马字 (1928), and the *latinxua sin wenz* (1931) (Chen Ping 1999, pp. 178-186; Rohsenow 2004, p. 23).

(Ibid., pp. 151-153). 1956 saw the approval of the first “Scheme for Chinese Characters Simplification”, according to which a complete list of simplified characters was published in 1964, with the title “General List of Simplified Characters” (*Jianhuazi Zongbiao* 简化字总表), and republished in 1986 with minor changes, constituting the official standard today (Chen Ping 1999, p. 154; Rohsenow 2004, pp. 23-24)<sup>102</sup>. A second scheme was promulgated in 1977 but strongly criticized and subsequently officially withdrawn in 1986, during the Second National Conference on Language and Script (Chen Ping 1999, pp. 155-156; Rohsenow 2004, pp. 27-29). On this occasion, it was decided to take a more cautious approach towards character simplification and a new agenda of language reform and development to be fulfilled by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was proposed, including the following goals: 1) *putonghua* to become the language of instruction in all schools nationwide; 2) *putonghua* to become the working language of government at all levels; 3) *putonghua* to be the language used in radio and television broadcasting, and in cinemas and theatres; and 4) *putonghua* to become the common language used among speakers of various local dialects (Chen Ping 1999, pp. 26-27; Rohsenow 2004, pp. 29-31). According to Chen Ping (1999, p. 27), these objectives were not very different from those set in the 1950s, a fact which shows that, despite having achieved great results, China still had a long way to go to reach the completion of the modernization of the Chinese language.

The vicissitudes described thus far have served the purpose of delineating the background against which the reform of Chinese language and script gradually progressed over time, to then result in the formulation of the “2001 Language Law”. Only a few episodes were selected as representative moments on the path of China’s language policy, focusing on the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially on the period after 1949. Simply put, in order to thoroughly comprehend the meaning that language planning had, and still has, for China, many other historical events and linguistic aspects should be taken into consideration. As stated by Norman (1988, p. IX), the Chinese language, which in all of its many dialectal forms has the highest number of speakers in the modern world, is one of the very few examples of contemporary languages whose history can be uninterruptedly traced back as far as the second millennium BC. The term “*hanyu*”, commonly used to refer to the Chinese language, literally means “the language of the Hans”, that is the ethnic Chinese, but, to be specific, it may also refer to any variety of spoken or written Chinese across time and space (Ibid., p. 137). However, despite its rather loose definition, the Chinese language, has been for China one of the symbols that has represented cultural, and also political, unity most powerfully, thanks in particular to a script, the Chinese characters, that is detached from the way it is pronounced in such a way that allows for the Chinese to consider their language as being uniform in space and constant in time (Ibid., pp. 1-2). This is the manifestation of a historical, cultural, and ethnic identity that neither the coexistence of different diatopic variations nor the diachronic evolutions leading to the shaping of *putonghua* and the modern writing system were able to shake. Despite being able to distinguish standard Chinese from non-standard dialects, *putonghua*, however, with the

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<sup>102</sup> According to Ramsey (1987, p. 146), the terms “simplified characters” (*jiantizi* 简体字) and “complex characters” (*fantizi* 繁体字) are neologisms coined close to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As will be further discussed, traditional Chinese characters continue to be used in Hong Kong (Xianggang 香港), Macau (Aomen 澳门), Taiwan (台湾), and overseas Chinese communities (Churchman 2011).

meaning of “common language”, does not convey the same strong reference to an ethnic and cultural bound (Norman 1988, p. 137).

It is also important to recall that the Chinese script, defined as logographic and with the Chinese character as its basis, has a history of thousands of years, reported to have started with the Xia 夏 (c. XXII-XVII BC) and the Shang 商 (c. XVII-XI BC) dynasties and continued through many evolutionary phases (Norman 1988, p. 4; Lam 2005, p. 34). Analyzing merits and faults of the Chinese writing system, Chen Ping (1999, pp. 139-146) states that one of the advantages of the Chinese script, besides the ability to differentiate homophonous morphemes, is the capacity to “span times and dialects” through the use of characters, which, assuming different phonetic values at different times and places, can be used to represent varieties of language spoken in different periods and geographic areas. This is why it is easier for Chinese people to read ancient texts and communicate in writing even when they speak mutually unintelligible dialects (Ibid.). Among the “faults” of Chinese characters, the author identifies the difficulty of learning how to read and write them, the difficulty to use them in terms of indexing and retrieving, and the fact that their “logographicity” can be considered to be a contributing factor to the dialectal assortment of the Chinese language, insomuch as the component of the writing system can assume different phonetic values in different dialects and fails to encourage the development of a common spoken standard (Ibid.).

The profound faith in the unifying ability of Chinese characters, however, has not precluded the reform of the Chinese writing system as part of the wider project of language modernization and standardization. In fact, actions for the unification of the Chinese language were taken starting from very ancient times and targeting the script in the first place. Highlighting the historical relation between language and state control, Zhou and Ross (2004, p. 2), for instance, identify the beginning of language planning in China with the standardization of the script, in the form of the “small seal style” (*xiaozhuang* 小篆), carried out by Emperor Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇 in 221 BC, in an attempt to consolidate his power over the newly-unified China. From that point onwards, a literate person could read and write a standardized form of written Chinese, regardless of the dialect spoken (Ibid.). With the Han dynasty, Chinese became an important “identity marker” for the Han Chinese and a direct link between language and nation was established; this link also lasted in the following centuries and was reinforced by China’s encounter with Western powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when, amid the various attempts to modernize, two linguistic ideas caught the attention of many Chinese intellectuals: the notion of “one state with one nation and one language” and the need to Romanize the Chinese writing system (Ibid., p. 3). In fact, the Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860) represented a real “turning point in the modern history of China” and the defeat suffered by the Chinese Empire made it clear that it was no longer as glorious as in the past; starting from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the efforts made by both the government and the general public to modernize the country also included reforming the language, as the uniformity of the spoken language, in a linguistic panorama which was made up of mutually unintelligible dialects, started to be perceived as a precondition for the country’s unity, together with the reform of the writing system (Chen Ping 1999, pp. 13-14). Rohsenow (2004, p. 22) highlights another aspect that is strictly related to the Chinese language reform and the intent to modernize the country, expressed first in the last years of the Qing dynasty and in the entire course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that is the necessity to rid the Chinese population of a high level of illiteracy. In this view, developing a modern standard spoken language and a common written style more closely resembling the spoken language

became the necessary preconditions for the modernization of the country, with the simplification of the archaic logographic system and the development of a phonetic notation system being key to that endeavor (Ibid.).

To conclude this brief overview of the historical roots of today's language life in China, a few considerations can be made in regard to the actual meaning of the concept of language reform in the Chinese context. Chinese linguist Zhou Youguang 周有光 (2003, p. 2) defines the modernization of Chinese language as “[...] a case of modern social change inducing a change in language and script” (*jindai de shehui yanbian yinqi le yuwen yanbian* 近代的社会演变引起了语文演变) and sums up the objectives of language reform into four points: 1) commonality of the Chinese spoken language (*yuyan de gongtonghua* 语言的共同化); 2) writing in a style close to the Chinese spoken language (*wenti de kouyuhua* 文体的口语化); 3) simplification of Chinese characters (*wenzi de jianbianhua* 文字的简便化); and 4) the Romanization of the Chinese phonetic system (*zhuyin de zimuhua* 注音的字母化). This would explain why to normally translate the Chinese term “*wenzi gaige* 文字改革” is the English expression “language reform” which encompasses a broader meaning than the actual, literal translation “writing reform” or “script reform”, as DeFrancis (1984, p. 223) points out. This is because in practice “*wenzi gaige*” covers an ampler range of meanings, depending on the user: at times it is used to indicate the sole reform of the “symbols” used in writing, other times it refers to the reform of the style of writing, and other times again it means the reform of spoken language; and because the word “reform” indicates a voluntary change, it can also be used to indicate the phenomenon of language planning or language policy, without excluding more or less natural developments in speech and writing (Ibid.). But the reform of the writing system is the most complex and perhaps most relevant of all these aspects (Ibid.). And, as will be described in the following pages, perhaps one of the most controversial in some of its implications.

This journey into the history of China's language planning also explains why, in one of the most authoritative volumes in the field of history and sociolinguistics of the Chinese language, Chen Ping (1999), the birth of modern Chinese is examined focusing on the periods starting from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and then in 1949 respectively, but also including descriptions of earlier evolutions, going back to the age of Confucius and pre-modern times, providing a thorough analysis of the evolution of old written Chinese into modern written Chinese, and describing the extended history of the Chinese script and the many vicissitudes experienced by the Chinese writing system. This in-depth study is carried out focusing on the three main aspects of the Chinese language, which have become the three main targets of the language reform in China, namely “Modern Spoken Chinese”, including the development of *putonghua*, “Modern Written Chinese”, including the replacement of *wenyan* with *baihua*, and “Modern Chinese Writing System”, including the process of simplification of traditional Chinese characters and the design of a phonetization system (Ibid.). Chen Ping concludes his seminal work by stating that starting from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and coinciding with many historical events, such as the defeat of China by Western powers, the overthrow of the Empire in 1911, the New Culture Movement in the late 1910s, and the founding of the PRC in 1949, all the efforts made by the PRC authorities to reform the Chinese language were triggered by the necessity to shape a language that would be more suitable for a modernizing China: the variety and diversity of spoken dialects, the gap between the style of writing and contemporary vernacular, and the logographic writing system were perceived as serious obstacles on the path towards modernization, correlating the linguistic necessity to reform the three fundamental

aspects of language, that is the spoken language forms, the written language styles, and the script, with historical, economic, and social factors (Ibid., pp. 202-203).

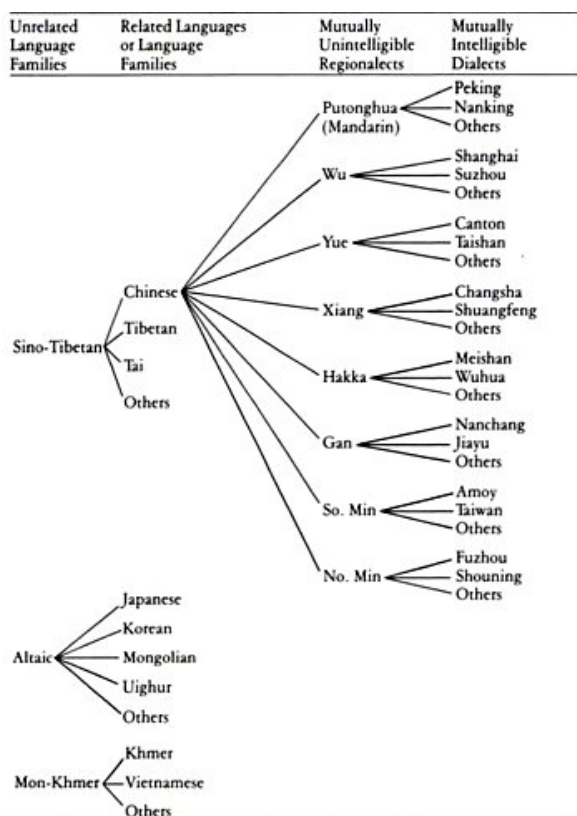


Figure 3: Chinese in its linguistic context (DeFrancis 1984, p. 67).

## 8.2 Language policy and cultural soft power

Historical, economic, and social factors affect China’s language policy still today. It must be kept in mind, in fact, that China is a multilingual and multidialectal country; the majority language group is the Han Chinese and, after 1949, promoting literacy among the members of this group became the main target, to be reached through the simplification and standardization of the script and the popularization of a standard dialect, *putonghua*, overcoming spoken dialectal variations with the help of the *hanyu pinyin* system (Lam 2005, p. 8 and p. 33). While these measures started to be implemented by the State in the mid-1950s, they are periodically reaffirmed, with more language policies being launched in recent years (Ibid., p. 33). In this sense, the 2013 *Baogao* fits perfectly into this discussion. It is also interesting to note that, according to a search carried out online at the time of writing, there are, in 2016, two more recent *baogao* published in 2014 and 2015 respectively. As well, it is noteworthy that some of the earliest volumes are now available in English thanks to the work of the publishing house De Gruyter, whose attention for the release of annual reports regarding the language life in China by the State Language Commission has made it possible to diffuse important information about China’s language policies, everyday language use, language standardization and language



engineering, and trends and events in the field of language planning at the national, provincial, and local levels<sup>103</sup>. According to an article in the *Renmin Zhengxie Bao* 人民政协报 (the newspaper of the CPPCC), a Korean edition is also available, starting from 2015 (Renmin Zhengxie Bao 2015).

In the case of the 2013 *Baogao*, one of the most salient components of its content regarding language standardization is the detailed analysis of the “Outline” for the period 2012-2020, an excerpt of which is reported as an Appendix to this work. According to the 2013 *Baogao* China’s language life in 2012 is “colorful” (*duocai* 多彩), “reflecting a China that is developing and progressing” (*fanying zhe fazhan jinbu zhong de Zhongguo* 反映着发展进步中的中国), and the “Outline” describes a “blueprint for the scientific development of the cause of the language and script” (*yuyan wenzi shiye kexue fazhan lantu* 语言文字事业科学发展蓝图) (Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzi Xinxi Guanlisi 2013, p. 1). Issued by the PRC Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission in December 2012, the “Outline” represents the first mid-to-long-term plan for the reform and development of the Chinese language and characters in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is the “programmatic document” (*ganglingxing wenjian*) that will guide the nationwide work in this field for the years to come (Ibid.). In the report’s words:

制定并实施《语言文字规划纲要》是贯彻落实党的十八大精神的重要举措，是实现教育现代化的必备条件，是推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣、推进社会主义文化强国建设的重要手段，是全面建成小康社会的重要内容。

(Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzi Xinxi Guanlisi 2013, p. 1)

Formulating and implementing the “Outline for the Language and Script Plan” is an important action to put into practice and carry out the spirit of the Party’s 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress; it is an essential prerequisite for the modernization of education; it is an important method to promote the great development and prosperity of socialist culture and advance the construction of a socialist cultural great power; and it is an important content of the all-around establishment of a moderately prosperous society.

(Translated by the present author.)

It can be seen that many of the words that were highlighted in the previous chapter as keywords characterizing the discourse on China’s cultural soft power practice, in light of the country’s increasing awareness of and confidence in the potentiality of Chinese culture, are reiterated here in relation to China’s language situation as a whole and, in particular, to the “Outline”, a plan which belongs to the field of language standardization and language engineering. In fact, as stated in the 2013 *Baogao*, the “Outline” sums up the achievements and experience accumulated in more than 60 years of language and script work in “New China” (*Xin Zhongguo* 新中国), it integrates them with the features of the time, and it clearly puts forward new objectives (Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzi Xinxi Guanlisi 2013, p. 1). But the relationship between language and cultural soft power emerges with even more clarity in the preamble to the “Outline”, which deserves quoting at length:

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<sup>103</sup> More information regarding the available English editions, which are part of the series “Language Policies and Practices in China” can be found on the publishing house’s website at: <http://www.degruyter.com/view/product/186365> and <http://www.degruyter.com/view/serial/184187>.

语言文字是人类最重要的交际工具和信息载体，是文化的基础要素和鲜明标志，是促进历史发展和社会进步的重要力量。语言文字事业具有基础性、全局性、社会性和全民性特点，是国家文化建设和社会发展的重要组成部分，事关历史文化遗产和经济社会发展，事关国家统一和民族团结，事关国民素质提高和人的全面发展，在国家发展战略中具有重要地位和作用。全面建成小康社会，构建中华民族共有精神家园，提高国家文化软实力，加快推进教育现代化，都对语言文字事业提出了新的要求。必须树立和增强高度的文化自觉和文化自信，努力推进语言文字事业全面发展，为全面建成小康社会、实现中华民族伟大复兴贡献力量。

(cited in Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzhi Xinxin Guanlisi 2013, p. 13)

Language and script are humanity's most important means of communication and vehicle of information; they are the fundamental element of culture and a distinctive symbol; and they constitute an important force for the promotion of historical development and social progress. The cause of the language and script has characteristics of a basic, global, social, and national nature; it is a major component in the construction of national culture and societal development, concerning the inheritance of history and culture and the development of the economy and society, having importance for the country's unification and national unity, and affecting the improvement of the nationals' inner quality and the people's all-around development; and it has an important position and role within the national development strategy. The comprehensive establishment of a moderately prosperous society, the construction of a common spiritual home for the Chinese people, the enhancement of the country's cultural soft power, the acceleration of the modernization of education, all put forward new requirements for language and script undertakings. It is necessary to establish and enhance a high level of cultural awareness and cultural confidence, make great efforts to promote the all-around development of language and script projects, and devote strength to the overall construction of a moderately prosperous society and the achievement of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people.

(Translated by the present author.)

The preamble highlights the important role that language, spoken and written, plays for humanity as a whole; it is the basic means of communication, a symbol of national culture and national unity, and a vehicle to pass down history and knowledge to the future generations. This is even truer for China, insofar as the implementation of a plan regulating the reform and development of the Chinese spoken and written language is considered as a resource that will facilitate national unity, the construction of a moderately prosperous society, and, in the end, the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people. It is indeed the necessity to enhance the cohesion of the Chinese people, against the background described in the previous section, their confidence in Chinese culture, and, ultimately, the country's cultural soft power that makes it imperative to undertake language and script work.

Based on the considerations made thus far, it comes as no surprise that the enhancement of China's cultural soft power is thought of as posing new challenges to the language and script work undertaken to regulate and normalize the country's language situation. A unified and harmonious language life is envisioned as one of the components taking part in the process of culture-building which, as has been described throughout this research, is at the basis of China's cultural soft power. This is also made clear in a scholarly article written by Wang Yue and Lü Meijia in 2011, also mentioned in Chapter 7 in regard to the use of the term "*yuyan ruan shili*" (language soft power), featured in the title, in which the authors describe language as a vehicle and important constituent of culture, representing one of the major indicators to measure a

country's soft power. The authors believe that as a new strategic focal point for the achievement of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, cultural soft power represents the spiritual force, intellectual support, and ideological guarantee behind the society's scientific development, being nonetheless an even more an important source of national cohesion and creativity and a key factor in the competition for overall national strength (Wang Yue and Lü Meijia 2011, p. 93). In this sense, language and culture are the core of soft power, having a fundamental and leading function in the process of national soft power construction and participation in the international competition (Ibid.). As well, as a vehicle of culture, language plays an extremely important role in accelerating the development of China's cultural industry and undertakings and promoting the country's cultural soft power (Ibid.).

Continuing the analysis of the "Outline", in terms of guiding ideology, objectives, and tasks, the text states the following:

高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜，以邓小平理论、“三个代表”重要思想、科学发展观为指导，全面贯彻《国家通用语言文字法》，[...] 大力推广和规范使用国家通用语言文字，科学保护各民族语言文字，[...] 增强国家语言实力，提高国民语言能力，构建和谐语言生活，服务教育现代化，服务社会主义文化强国建设，推进语言文字事业全面发展。

(cited in Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzhi Xinxin Guanlisi 2013, p. 13)

Holding high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, under the guidance of Deng Xiaoping's Theory, the important thought of the Three Represents, and the Scientific Outlook on Development, fully implement the "Law on the Standard and Written Chinese Language of the PRC", [...] vigorously popularize and regulate the use of the common language and script, scientifically protect every ethnic group's language and script, [...] increase the strength of the national language, enhance the language abilities of the nationals, build a harmonious language life, serve the modernization of education, serve the construction of a socialist cultural great power, and promote the all-around development of language and script undertakings.

(Translated by the present author.)

More specifically, the guiding principles include the following statement:

推广和普及国家通用语言文字是贯彻落实国家法律法规的基本要求，是维护国家主权统一、促进经济社会发展、增强中华民族凝聚力和文化软实力的重要内容。

(Ibid., pp. 13-14)

Spreading and popularizing the national commonly used language and script is the fundamental requirement of the implementation of the State law and regulations and an important content in the protection of national sovereignty and unity, in the promotion of socio-economic development, and in the strengthening of the cohesiveness of the Chinese nation and cultural soft power.

(Translated by the present author.)

As well as:

要加强语言文字规范标准建设，强化国家通用语言文字规范意识，提升国民语言文字应用能力，提高全社会语言文字规范化水平，增强国家文化软实力。

(Ibid., p. 14)

It is necessary to reinforce the establishment of norm and standards for the spoken and written language, intensify the awareness of standards for the national commonly used language and characters, upgrade the capability of citizens to use language and script, enhance the level of standardization of language and characters across the whole society, and increase the country's cultural soft power.

(Translated by the present author.)

The overall aim of China's current language policy is stated as follows:

到 2020 年，普通话在全国范围内基本普及，汉字社会应用的规范化程度进一步提高，汉语拼音更好地发挥作用。[...] 语言文字传承和弘扬中华优秀传统文化的作用进一步发挥。国家语言实力显著增强，国民语言能力明显提高，社会语言生活和谐发展。

(Ibid.)

By 2020, *putonghua* will have reached basic universality across the country, the degree of standardization in the society's use of Chinese characters will have further improved, *hanyu pinyin* will display its functionality in an even better way. [...] The role of language and script heritage and that of the outstanding Chinese culture will be further brought into play. The strength of the national language will markedly increase and the society's language life will develop harmoniously.

(Translated by the present author.)

Such a majestic undertaking requires the fulfillment of a number of major tasks, including: 1) energetically spreading and popularizing the national commonly used language and script (*dali tuiguang he puji guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi* 大力推广和普及国家通用语言文字); 2) pushing forward with the normalization, standardization, and informatization of language and script (*tuijin yuyan wenzi guifanhua biao zhunhua xinxihua jianshe* 推进语言文字规范化标准化信息化建设); 3) reinforcing supervision, inspection, and services related to the society's use of language and script (*jiaqiang yuyan wenzi shehui yingyong jian du jiancha he fuwu* 加强语言文字社会应用监督检查和服务); 4) increasing the nationals' ability to use language and script (*tigao guomin yuyan wenzi yingyong nengli* 提高国民语言文字应用能力); 5) scientifically protect every ethnic group's language and script (*kexue baohu ge minzu yuyan wenzi* 科学保护各民族语言文字); 6) promoting the dissemination of China's outstanding culture (*hongyang chuanbo Zhonghua youxiu wenhua* 弘扬传播中华优秀传统文化); and 7) reinforcing the construction of the legal system and institutions responsible for language and script (*jiaqiang yuyan wenzi fazhi jianshe* 加强语言文字法制建设) (cited in Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzi Xinxi Guanlisi 2013, pp. 14-17).

Taking into consideration the overall picture depicted in the preamble, guiding ideology and principle, objectives, and tasks of the regulation analyzed here, which can be considered to constitute an example of language policy, drawn from the ampler panorama of cultural policies, the field in which this discourse appears to be embedded is that of the enhancement of the country's strength, national unity, and sovereignty. The overall goal of the "Outline" is indeed an increase in the strength of the national language and the harmonious development of society's language life. As shown by the extracts translated above, it can be clearly noticed that the links between the discourse on the theory and practice of cultural soft power and that on language standardization and promotion are both numerous and well-defined. This is precisely why the field of language policy has been chosen as a case study for the present research, taking

the lead from the assumption that the Chinese language can constitute a key instrument through which Chinese culture is expressed to the outside world, but only based on the premise that China can present to the world a harmonious and cohesive cultural and linguistic environment; a goal which is achieved through language standardization and promotion at home in the first place. Language can become a tool to increase national cohesion and infuse into the people a sense of identity and belonging. Moreover, it can draw foreign people towards the appreciation of China. In practical terms this means that China's language policy ultimately aims to enhance linguistic uniformity as a key component of the country's self-improvement and cultural construction, participating in the enhancement of China's cultural soft power.

### 8.3 Managing the domestic promotion of *putonghua*

Before overviewing the topics contained in the 2013 *Baogao*, identified by the PRC Ministry of Education as crucial nodes in China's language life, and providing insights into a selection of aspects considered relevant to the present discussion, another official contribution is worth mentioning here. It is the speech delivered on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2006 by Zhao Qiping 赵沁平, at the time Chairperson of the State Language Commission, at a symposium on language standardization held in Beijing to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of two important documents: the "Resolutions Concerning the Publication of the Scheme for the Simplification of Chinese characters" (*Guanyu Gongbu Hanzi Jianhua Fang'an de Jueding* 关于公布汉字简化方案的决议) and the "Instructions Concerning the Promotion of *Putonghua*" (*Guanyu Tuiguang Putonghua de Zhibiao* 关于推广普通话的指示). These two documents were issued by the State Council following two conferences held in the same year, which included the National Conference on Script Reform, also mentioned above. In his speech entitled "*Guanzhu shehui yuyan shenghuo, zuo hao yuyan wenzi guifanhua gongzuo* 关注社会语言生活, 做好语言文字规范化工作" (Pay close attention to society's language life, efficiently carry out language and script standardization work), Zhao Qiping touches upon many aspects related to the research on language and the work on language standardization to be carried out in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in particular:

语言生活是社会生活的重要组成部分, 和谐社会需要和谐的语言生活。要处理好中国各民族语言之间的关系, 处理好共同语与方言之间的关系, 处理好母语同外语的关系, 处理好普通话的国内推广和国际传播之间的关系。应充分认识到, 健康和谐的语言生活, 是和谐社会的表现, 也是促使社会和谐的重要方面。

(Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu 2006)

Language life is an important component of social life; a harmonious society requires a harmonious language life. It is necessary to efficiently manage the relationships among the languages of China's various ethnic groups, efficiently manage the relationship between the common language and dialects, efficiently manage the relationship between the mother tongue and foreign languages, efficiently manage the relationship between the domestic popularization of *putonghua* and its international diffusion. It must be totally clear that a healthy and harmonious language life is the manifestation of a harmonious society, and is also an important aspect in stimulating social harmony.

(Translated by the present author.)

Based on Zhao Qiping's statement, it can be argued that the aim of China's language policy is to build a harmonious language life as part of the wider national program concerning the establishment of a harmonious society, discussed in Chapter 3. This aim is in line with the general purpose of the "Green Paper" collection, discussed in the previous section, and reflected in the contents of the 2013 *Baogao*, which, according to the table of contents in both English and Chinese, includes seven main parts divided as follows: 1) "Special Reports" (*te gao pian* 特稿篇), comprising the "Outline"; 2) "Language Work" (*gongzuo pian* 工作篇), exploring official documents and laws and regulations; 3) "Special Focuses" (*zhuantu pian* 专题篇), including, among others, topics such as the proficiency in *putonghua* of migrant workers and its impact on their social life and identity, the protection of minority languages, an overview of the most common language errors in 2012, the publication of the sixth edition of *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*, and the global spread of Chinese; 4) "Area Data" (*shuju pian* 数据篇), covering surveys in a variety of areas; 5) "Hot Topics" (*redian pian* 热点篇), including, among other topics, debates on alphabetic words, debates on the protection of dialects, an overview of popular phrases and expressions in 2012, and the use of Pinyin or English on traffic signs and train tickets; 6) "Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan" (*Xiang Ao Tai pian* 港澳台篇), overviewing the language use in these areas; and 7) "International Experience" (*cankao pian* 参考篇), exploring language policy in foreign countries.

Besides serving as a display for the State's language law and regulations in the field of language planning, it can be seen that the 2013 *Baogao* also touches upon all the points raised by Zhao Qiping in the aforementioned speech. The relationship amongst *putonghua*, Chinese dialects, and minority languages, the contact between Chinese and foreign languages, and the international promotion of *putonghua* are treated through the examination of language use by ordinary people and in a vast range of social areas, including appendices and glossaries that corroborate the analysis. Before elaborating on a selection of topics drawn from the report, which will primarily focus on the management of the promotion of *putonghua* at home and abroad, against the background of the debates on the protection of dialects and the role of the Confucius Institutes in the global projection of China's cultural soft power respectively, a few clarifications are in order.

Firstly, it must be once again pointed out that the language situation in China is unique and complex. According to an article in the *Renmin Ribao*, in 2010, the amount of Chinese people not able to communicate in *putonghua* was equal to 30%, with the remaining 70% including only 10% of people whose ability to use the standard common language could be said to be fluent (Renmin Ribao 2014). These percentages are drawn from a comparatively large-scale survey carried out by the PRC Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission in the three representative provinces of Hebei 河北, Jiangsu 江苏, and Guangxi 广西, which found that the highest concentration of *putonghua*-illiterate communities is in rural and remote areas and in the regions occupied by national minorities, especially among the elderly (Ibid.). In spite of the remarkable increase in *putonghua* proficiency in the last decade<sup>104</sup>, the article

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<sup>104</sup> A communiqué entitled "Zhongguo yuyan wenzi shiyong qingkuang diaocha zhuyao jieguo fabu 中国语言文字使用情况调查主要结果发布 (Main results of the survey on China's language and script usage released) issued by the PRC Ministry of Education contains the results of a survey on China's language situation carried out by the State Language Commission, the results of which were revealed in 2004: the amount of Chinese people able to communicate in *putonghua* was reported to be equal to 53.06%, while 86.38% of the population was reported to be

defines the task of increasing the nationals' ability to use the common language as "still extremely arduous" (*yiran shifen jianju* 依然十分艰巨) (Ibid.). Analyzing trends of *putonghua* promotion, Chen Ping (1999, pp. 27-30) identifies a variety of factors that, besides official measures, may have contributed to the outcomes of such an endeavor, such as the presence of a dialect able to compete with *putonghua* as *lingua franca* among speakers of mutually unintelligible dialects, as is the case for Cantonese<sup>105</sup>, in particular the variety spoken in Guangzhou and Hong Kong<sup>106</sup>, in Guangdong province and surrounding areas, the degree of

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able to communicate in a Chinese dialect and 5.46% in a minority language (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu n.d.).

<sup>105</sup> The term "Cantonese" (*Guangdonghua* 广东话) generally refers to the Yue dialect group, even though it should be reserved to the dialect of the city of Guangzhou (广州, Canton), as Norman (1988, pp. 214-215) notes. Yue dialects are spoken in the provinces of Guangdong 广东 and Guangxi, they predominate the deltas of the rivers Zhujiang 珠江 and Xijiang 西江, and are also used by overseas Chinese. The variety of language spoken in Guangzhou enjoys the status of standard language among speakers of Yue and other Southern dialects, constituting the standard dialect also in Hong Kong and Macau (Ibid.). Cantonese has a rich written folk literature for which special characters have been developed (Ibid.). Ramsey (1987, p. 99) specifies that these styles of colloquial writing make Cantonese the only modern Chinese dialect, besides Mandarin, with non-traditional graphs that are widely recognized and used for colloquial words and expressions. Largely suppressed in the PRC, these special characters continue to be used in Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities (Ibid.). The peculiar characteristics of Cantonese make it more than a dialect: it is a "genuine regional standard" which despite being challenged by *putonghua* enjoys such a high status that it is even used by some national minorities and whose speakers retain their own separate traditions (Ibid.). The Yue-speaking people feel relatively distinct from the Northern Chinese and although they are less numerous than the Wu-speakers their sense of identity is so deep-rooted that they can be said to constitute a sub-group of the Han Chinese: they identify themselves as "Cantonese", consider Canton the center of the local culture, and regard Cantonese dialect as the standard (Ibid., p. 98). Estimates report that there are approximately 63 million first-language speakers of Cantonese in the world (Lewis, Simons, and Fennig 2016), an amount which includes 5% of the Chinese population (Ramsey 1987, p. 87).

<sup>106</sup> The linguistic panorama of Hong Kong, before and after the 1997 handover to the PRC and the acquisition of the status of Special Administration Region (SAR), is historically unique. The interplay of historical and political dimensions and the direction pursued by national and local governments in the field of language policy are strictly connected: the relationship between Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, first, and that of the island with the mainland, then, are factors that have influenced the language policy implemented in the territory in the course of history, consequently reflecting on the use of language by Hong Kong's society, which is characterized by a shift from bilingualism (English and Cantonese) to tri-lingualism (English, Cantonese and *putonghua*) and policies such as that of "bi-literacy and tri-lingualism". According to Chen Ping (1999, p. 32), the Chinese language did not receive much attention during the colonial period. Zhang and Yang (2004, p. 145) specify that it was the enactment of the "Official Language Ordinance" in 1974 that declared that both English and Chinese were to be the official languages of Hong Kong. Chen Ping (1999, p. 32) specifies that the term "Chinese" in the context of Hong Kong means Cantonese in its spoken form and modern written Chinese in its written form. As well, the norm for the writing system remains the complex script (Ibid., p. 163). In the 1990s, as a result of the economic development enjoyed by Hong Kong and the city's transformation into a major center for international trade and business, English became the symbol of the internationalization of the city, gaining even more prestige than before (Poon 2004, p. 55). At the same time, the status of the Chinese language enjoyed an improvement since Cantonese became a unifying force for the Hong Kong community, which was aware of the renewed prestige of the city and had started to emerge internationally as a community in its own right (Ibid.). The years that followed the PRC reform and opening-up policy saw an increase in contact between Hong Kong and the PRC and the gradual penetration into the island of the "common speech": *putonghua* also became part of the linguistic scene of Hong Kong (Ibid.). This process reached its climax with the transfer of sovereignty in 1997: Zhang and Yang (2004, p.144) note that, although the formula of "one country, two systems" allows the SAR to make independent decisions on language policy, the Hong Kong government had to find a new balance between the three languages that populated the city's linguistic panorama and that of "bi-literacy and tri-lingualism" seemed to be an appropriate solution. "Bi-literacy" refers to Chinese and English in their written forms, while "tri-lingualism" refers to the spoken forms of English, Cantonese, and *putonghua* (Ibid., p. 145).

homogeneity of local dialects, the mobility of population and the dynamism of the local economy, and the degree of education of the speakers, and argues that because an ever-increasing number of people have access to radio and television programs the knowledge of *putonghua* is also steadily expanding. As well, with greater social and geographical mobility, *putonghua* is being increasingly used as a *lingua franca* among speakers of mutually unintelligible dialects, leading to a situation of bidialectalism in which the common speech is used together with the local dialects (Ibid.). According to Norman (1988, p. 252), the path China has taken is that of transforming from a multidialectal to a bidialectal country, with an increasing number of people learning and using *putonghua* but also continuing to employ their local dialects with their families and in social situations. In a situation of this kind, with *putonghua* being used alongside the local dialect by a growing number of people in non-Northern Mandarin dialect areas, a diglossic differentiation has developed, one in which the choice of language variety is determined by the functions, attitudes, and values attributed to the situation of language use: as the “high variety”, *putonghua* is used for literary, scholarly, and formal functions, is taught in schools, is the vehicle of a body of literature, and is the standard for television, radio broadcasting, and films and theatre (exception made for local operas); as the “low variety”, the primary local dialect is used in ordinary, everyday situations and at home (Chen Ping 1999, pp. 50-57). Therefore, modern Chinese society can be thought of as being characterized by both bilingualism and diglossia: people become bilingual in modern standard Chinese and the local dialect and geographical dialects assume the shape of social dialects, defined in terms of social functions and values (Ibid.)<sup>107</sup>.

Secondly, since 1949, the PRC government has applied a tolerant policy towards dialects, even though it was believed that the promotion of *putonghua* would progressively shrink their use (Chen Ping 1999, p. 57)<sup>108</sup>. Consequently, the measures applied to promote *putonghua* have

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<sup>107</sup> More precisely, the Chinese case could be defined as a situation of “standard-with-dialects” because, differently from the “high variety” in diglossia, a “standard” is also used more or less naturally as a medium of ordinary communication in a certain region or community, being often similar to the variety of that group and used as a superposed variety by others (Chen Ping 1999, pp. 55-56; Norman 1988, p. 250). *Putonghua* is not exactly identical to any local dialect, but practically it can be considered the same as the Beijing dialect (Norman 1988, p. 250). Chen Ping (1999, pp. 204-205n3) also clarifies that, in the Chinese case, the terms “language” and “dialect” are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to regional varieties: all the seven primary dialectal groups can be considered languages insofar as they are mutually unintelligible, embrace genetically related varieties, and are used by speakers of other dialects as *lingua franca* (such as Cantonese, the dialect of Guangzhou). Nonetheless, only Mandarin has an established writing tradition (Ibid.). To enrich this discussion, it is also interesting to recall the case of Hong Kong during the colonial period when, according to Poon (2004, pp. 54-55), the most suitable terms to describe the linguistic panorama, until the late 1980s, were “diglossia” and “superposed bilingualism”; English enjoyed a more prestigious status than Chinese as a consequence of colonialism and, even after the promulgation of the “Official Language Ordinance”, it continued to be used as a “high” variety of language in education, administration, and the legislature and judiciary sectors, while Chinese represented the “low” variety and was used by most people at home and for socialization. When *putonghua* also became part of the linguistic scene of Hong Kong, after 1978, this diglossic situation was gradually replaced by a situation of “triglossia”, with English as the high variety and Cantonese and *putonghua* as the low varieties (Ibid.).

<sup>108</sup> Analyzing the evolution of the relationship between *putonghua* and Chinese dialects, Guo Longsheng (2004) identifies three phases: the initial understanding, the reconsideration, and the redefinition. In the first phase, as dialects were considered an obstacle to China’s national unity, national security, and socialist construction, the goal to reach was their elimination, either artificial or natural; the second phase coincided with the beginning of the period of reform and opening-up, when diversity started to be reevaluated in comparison to the value placed on uniformity in the past, both in the field of economy and in that of linguistics (Ibid.). The realization that, even if the use of a national common language would be able to facilitate China’s modernization, the coexistence of various dialects would not necessarily harm it, as was evidenced by the economic success of Southern China, where many



focused on a positive encouragement rather than prohibitive actions towards the use of dialects (Ibid., p. 58). This is reflected also in the text of the “2001 Language Law”, with Article 19 clarifying on which public occasions the use of dialects is permitted:

本章有关规定中，有下列情形的，可以使用方言：

- (一) 国家机关的工作人员执行公务时确需使用的；
- (二) 经国务院广播电视部门或省级广播电视部门批准的播音用语；
- (三) 戏曲、影视等艺术形式中需要使用的；
- (四) 出版、教学、研究中确需使用的。

(Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu 2000)

Where the relevant provisions of this Chapter are concerned, local dialects may be used under the following circumstances:

1. When State functionaries really need to use them in the performance of official duties;
2. Where they are used in broadcasting with the approval of the Broadcasting and Television Administration under the State Council or of the Broadcasting and Television Department at the provincial level;
3. Where they are needed in traditional operas, films and TV programs, and other forms of art;
4. Where their use is really required in publishing, teaching and research.

(PRC Ministry of Education 2000)

On balance, it can be implied that *putonghua* and dialects continue to coexist in China’s language life; even if the diffusion of the former is encouraged energetically, local varieties of Chinese continue to be used. The PRC Ministry of Education defines this relationship as follows:

“普通话与方言并存分用”，“在公务场合使用普通话”是我国目前语言使用的主要格局。普通话作为通用语言，其使用比例与交际场合有密切关系，即场合越正式，普通话的使用比例越高。在家庭中最常使用普通话的比例为 17.85%，而在单位最常使用普通话的比例为 41.97%。汉语方言是家庭成员交流的主要用语，而在公共场合人们的主要交际用语则逐渐趋向普通话。

(Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu n.d.)

“*Putonghua* and dialects coexist and are used discriminately”, “in official contexts *putonghua* is used”: this is the primary pattern of China’s current language use. In its role as the common language, the proportion in the use of *putonghua* is closely related with the communicative situation, that is, the more formal the situation, the higher the percentage in the use of *putonghua*. At home, the proportion [of people] that uses *putonghua* the most is equal to 17.85%, but the percentage using *putonghua* the most at work is equal to 41.97%. Chinese dialects are the primary communicative choice among family members, but in public situations the people’s principal communicative choice is gradually taking the direction of *putonghua*.

(Translated by the present author.)

From these statements it appears that to determine the choice between the speaker’s primary dialect and *putonghua* are the values attached to the communicative situation. As Chen

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unintelligible dialects are spoken, made it possible to redefine the relationship between *putonghua* and dialects, in a way that is also reflected by the text of the “2001 Language Law” (Ibid.).

Ping (1999, pp. 56-57) states, a good level of education, intelligence, social refinement, authority, and formality are values usually associated with *putonghua*; solidarity, familiarity, sociability, and intimacy are values usually associated with the primary local dialect, together with a strong sense of regional belonging and identity.

The debates on language use, however, are not only statistical or theoretical; they trigger deep and shared passions among the members of those communities that still use regional and local dialects. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the 2013 *Baogao* contains a section entitled “Hot debates on the protection of dialects” (*Fangyan baohu reyi* 方言保护热议) in which three topics that, in 2012, became “subjects of conversation” (*huati* 话题) in the media and among society are analyzed: “Dialect announcement of the name of the stops on public means of transportation” (*gonggong jiaotong fangyan baozhan ming* 公共交通方言报站名), “Dialects in the classroom” (*fangyan jin ketang* 方言进课堂), and “Firms forbid speaking dialect” (*gongsi jinzhi shuo fangyan* 公司禁止说方言) (Xie Junying 谢俊英 2013, pp. 263-271). Vicissitudes that occurred in 2012 in relation to these three topics are described in detail and an evaluation is provided: for instance, in the first case, the facts are reported to have started in Shanghai at the end of 2011, when the bus line 785 began to use the Shanghai dialect in its announcements, and continued throughout 2012, affecting a number of other cities so much as to give rise to a sort of “agitation” (*fengchao* 风潮) over dialect announcements (Ibid., p. 263). In terms of the analysis proposed, the core of the debate is detected in the choice between the simultaneous use of *putonghua* and dialects and *putonghua*, dialects, and English, but not the sole use of dialects, with the opinions of both supporters and detractors being consistent in terms of the value attached to the matter: the former often look at dialect announcements on public means of transportation from the emotional point of view of the distinguishing characteristics of the dialect and the culture it represents, while the latter base their opinions on actual needs and development requirements (Ibid., p. 265). Although recognizing that, from the point of view of efficiency, dialect announcements can benefit local elderly that cannot understand *putonghua*, it is also true that announcements in *putonghua* can narrow the distance among all speakers of *putonghua*, young and old alike (Ibid.). But, above all, the debate over public announcements in dialect has a deep symbolic meaning: dialects bear the weight of cultural values and dialect announcements can clearly reveal the features of and feelings for the city or place (Ibid.). From the point of view of actuality and development, the level of modernization of the Chinese society is increasingly higher, and so is the degree of mobility and the speed of urbanization, thereby making the use of a common language a requirement for public means of transportation; being the language commonly used in public contexts, *putonghua* has already become part of the people’s general knowledge and this is one of the reasons why dialect announcements drawn attention and sparked a debate (Ibid.). On balance, in the 2013 *Baogao*, all sides of the problem are taken into consideration and, as the purpose of public announcements is conceived as the smooth communication of information to the passengers, thus satisfying the largest number of people, in the end the resolution of the issue falls within the scope of public services, with the message being that “the will of the people [comes] first” (*yi minyi wei xian* 以民意为先) (Ibid.).

In a final evaluation of the debate over these hot topics, the 2013 *Baogao* defines the protection of dialects as “actions taken through various ways and means with the aim of preventing dialects from changing, deteriorating or declining, and even disappearing” (*tongguo ge zhong fangshi、shouduan zuzhi fangyan bianhua、tuihua huo shuailuo naizhi xiaoshi de xingwei* 通过各种方式、手段阻止方言变化、退化或衰落乃至消失的行为); it highlights

that, having started to be voiced from a scientific point of view towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, worries of this kind are being increasingly expressed also in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, taking the form of substantial acts (Xie Junying 谢俊英 2013, p. 270). With today's fast flow of information, language issues have the potentiality to become a "wire [inducing] social and group conflicts" (*shehui qunti chongtu de daoxian* 社会群体冲突的导线), which is why comprehensively mastering China's language situation and correctly formulating, fully explaining, and effectively implementing language policies, in accordance with the nation's and society's development needs, are matters that demand immediate attention, together with clarifying the position of languages and dialects and reinforcing regional language programs (Ibid.).

Similar considerations can also be made in regard to less recent events, the effects of which continue to be felt, which took place in Guangdong province and Hong Kong in 2010. It is what the *Global Times* defined a "culture war", which burst out in Southern China in July 2010 over the proposal to use *putonghua* instead of Cantonese on the Guangzhou TV news and satellite channels, put forward by the local CPPCC (An Baijie 2010). The worries of many residents in Guangzhou that their local dialect, faced with the challenge posed by *putonghua*, could one day disappear, together with the rich Cantonese cultural heritage, were fueled by the potential ban on Cantonese from television broadcasting and a previous case of a local school forbidding students to communicate in Cantonese (Ibid.). The CPPCC's plan, which was made known on July 5<sup>th</sup>, suggesting that *putonghua* should become the only language for all programs on Guangzhou TV, or at least for prime time news shows and satellite channels, in preparation for the organization of the Asian Games in the city, triggered the establishment of Cantonese support groups on social media and the actual gathering of protesters against the proposal, not only in Guangzhou but also in other cities, including Hong Kong (Ibid.)<sup>109</sup>. Although it is

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<sup>109</sup> The fact that language-related disputes in Hong Kong can give rise to tensions within society is not surprising, given the linguistic panorama described above: the relationship between English, Cantonese, and *putonghua*, the three main languages that make up the SAR's linguistic landscape, is indeed historically delicate and complex. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 the former British colony celebrated the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its return to the motherland and the celebrations coincided with the inauguration ceremony of the new Chief Executive, Leung Chun-Ying, whose swearing-in was attended by then-President of the PRC Hu Jintao and conducted in *putonghua*, including Leung's inaugural address (Chen Te-Ping 2012). The choice made by the new Hong Kong leader to use *putonghua* instead of Cantonese, the dialect spoken by most of the local population, was seen by many as a sign of the growing influence of mainland China on the SAR, a "kowtow" to Beijing that gave rise to numerous debates (Ibid.). The media extensively reported on Leung Chun-Ying's alleged ties with the highest ranks of the CPC, giving him the nickname "the wolf" as a sign of mistrust (The Wall Street Journal 2012). In a mix of politics and linguistic matters, at stake is the identity of the people of Hong Kong, who find in Cantonese the most significant symbol to represent their community. Besides the potential "peril" faced by Cantonese, made worse by the fact that 70% of the city's 569 local primary schools and 40% of its 514 secondary schools use *putonghua* for Chinese-language lessons, marginalizing the language spoken by 90% of the population at home and the workplace (Chow 2014), there is also the news that, for the first time, the 2011 Population Census registered that the primary second language of Hongkongers, English, had been overthrown by *putonghua* (Chen Te-Ping 2012). Zhang and Yang (2004, p. 156) point out that the 1997 handover was for the people of Hong Kong a "political reunion" that has not been able, however, to resolve the issue of cultural identity; in the context of Hong Kong the use of *putonghua* symbolizes "a belonging to the Chinese people or citizenship to China", but the identification of the local culture with that of the motherland and the patriotism that could result from it are factors still too weak to serve as a drive for sympathizing with *putonghua*. It comes as no surprise that in a society in which people identify with the city and not with the State (Wong Edward and Wong Alan 2014), with only 18.1% of residents opting for "Chinese" (*Zhongguo ren*) and 40.2% choosing "Hongkonger" (*Xianggang ren* 香港人) as the first adjective to describe themselves (The University of Hong Kong 2015), incidents can erupt quite easily between residents and tourists or immigrants from mainland China, showing growing

unclear whether or not the government actually ordered Guangzhou TV to broadcast programs in *putonghua*, the station promised to do everything possible to continue to broadcast programs in Cantonese, according to the *China Daily* (Zheng Caixiong 2010a). More recent news reports (Lau 2014a, 2014b) indicate that the matter is not yet resolved as, in July 2014, Guangzhou residents expressed the desire to name July 25<sup>th</sup>, the date that represents the apex of the 2010 rallies, “Cantonese Day”, following reports that the provincial television station was once again planning to switch from Cantonese to *putonghua*, and this time without any clear notice. An online campaign was then launched to celebrate, through the establishment of a Cantonese Day, Cantonese culture and history, voicing support for Cantonese on social media, instead of in the streets, in an attempt not to trigger suspicion of any radical moves being planned (Lau 2014b). The opposition from the public, however, has been reported to have succeeded in stopping the plan for the TV network’s language switch (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, it appears that the memory of the events that took place in Guangzhou on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010 is still very vivid in the mind of Cantonese enthusiasts. It was indeed this protest that drew the most attention from both international and local media. According to *The Economist* (2010), the gathering of over a thousand Guangzhou citizens was organized thanks to young people, who were able to overcome the government’s censorship and spread the news through the social networks that are kept outside of China thanks to the powerful “Great Firewall”. Thus, more than the discontent over the decline of Cantonese, the protest seems to have embodied an example of what shape the youth’s resentment at the actions of the government could assume in situations other than protests against language practices and perhaps laden with political values, as shown by the large presence of the police on the said occasion (Ibid.). *The New York Times* called the outrage voiced in opposing this language policy a “politically delicate matter”, as indicated by the fact that only one national newspaper, the English language edition of the *Global Times*, reported extensively on the protests (Wong Edward 2010). Besides Southern China, worries that dialects and languages will be lost due to the spread of *putonghua* are becoming common both in other parts of China and abroad, involving ethnic minorities but also overseas Chinese living in Chinatowns in the United States, where many residents who traditionally spoke Cantonese are now being increasingly exposed to *putonghua* due to the arrival of immigrants from other parts of China (Ibid.). As well, the *Time* reported that a second protest was organized in Guangzhou on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010; this instance was met with stronger resistance from the city policy, with several people placed under detention (Ramzy 2010). Echoes of this protest were also felt in Hong Kong where people gathered to show support to their Cantonese counterpart in mainland China (Ibid.). The Guangzhou city government was reported to have said that the rumors about eliminating Cantonese to promote *putonghua* were false and that the people found responsible for spreading such rumors would be punished; accordingly, a suspect was placed under a five-day detention period (Zheng Caixiong 2010b).

As explained above, Chinese authorities place a great deal of importance on establishing and maintaining a harmonious language life for the Chinese society as a whole, as language conflicts have the potential to become mass conflicts. The events reported here, which could be

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intolerance simmering in the SAR (Magstad 2012). Perhaps one could even talk of an “anti-Chinese” sentiment, but it is certainly a fear for the future of the city, as the movie “Ten Years” portrays: Hong Kong in the near future is struggling under the tightening grip of the CPC and even Cantonese has been replaced by *putonghua* as the official language (Wong Alan 2016).

described in even greater detail and accompanied by other numerous insights diffused over the Internet by the Chinese and international media (among others, Speakman 2010; Zhang Junyu 张军瑜 2010; Zhongguo Qingnian Bao 中国青年报 2011), constitute a rather violent manifestation of the desire, widespread among Chinese people, to keep local dialects alive. As such, it can be argued that the Chinese government makes great efforts to limit the occurrence of episodes of this kind, fearing that protests and riots may undermine national unity, social harmony, economic development, and, ultimately, political consensus. Defending national union, ethnic unity, political cohesion, and social harmony are recurrent themes in the Chinese discourse on the purpose of language policy and the value attached to language and script work; as well, they constitute relevant aspects in the construction of cultural soft power. These considerations emerge clearly in the statements released in 2013 by Li Weihong 李卫红, a well-known political figure within the PRC Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission, reported below:

[...] 要充分发挥语言文字事业在加强社会主义核心价值体系、全面提高公民道德素质、丰富人民精神文化生活、努力办好人民满意的教育、增强文化整体实力和竞争力等方面的独特而不可或缺的作用 [...].

(Zhongguo Zhengfu Wang 中国政府网 2013)

[...] It is necessary to adequately bring out the unique and indispensable effect of language and script undertakings in relation to reinforcing the system of socialist core values, comprehensively increasing the citizens' inner ethic values, enriching the people's spiritual and cultural lives, striving to manage well a satisfactory education for the people, enhancing the strength of culture as a whole and [its] competitiveness, and other aspects [...].

(Translated by the present author.)

By persevering with the promotion and standardization of the national commonly used language and script, and maintaining a harmonious language life, the strength of China's language will be enhanced and the country's international influence upgraded, while protecting national union (*guojia tongyi* 国家统一), ethnic unity (*minzu tuanjie* 民族团结), and social harmony (*shehui hexie* 社会和谐) (Zhongguo Zhengfu Wang 2013). Two important points are raised by Li Weihong in terms of the relationship between language and China's cultural soft power. First and foremost, it must be understood that in today's competition for overall national strength, and amid the process of integration of the economy and informatization of society, "resources" (*ziyuan* 资源) have already become decisive factors in the socio-economic development and modernization; as well, the strategic value of cultural resources has already been upgraded to the level of a national strategy and it is from this strategic height that language must be interpreted as a cultural resource which has a strategic position and value (Zhongguo Zhengfu Wang 2013). Adequately understanding that language in itself and the related products are not just a tool of communication and a vehicle of information in modern society but even more a strategic cultural resource and an underlying source in every domain of modernization, and energetically making use of and exploiting language resources, can serve well the cause of national development, the construction of a socialist cultural great power, and the promotion of China's cultural soft power (Ibid.). This is the establishment of the "resource" concept ("*ziyuan*" *gainian* "资源" 概念), which must be accompanied by that of "cultural strength" (*wenhua li*) (Ibid.). This second aspect is conceived by Li Weihong as the merger of cultural

productivity, cultural influence, and cultural soft power, recognizing that language is both a basic factor of cultural strength and one of its components, with its own unique capability and force; it is thus necessary to increase the awareness that the country has a great culture and language, strengthen the nation's language sovereignty and security, promote the development and prosperity of language and script work through reform and innovation, and enhance the country's cultural soft power (Ibid.).

In other words, for China, language, as an essential element of culture, can be considered to be a resource complementary to all the other components of its “*zonghe guoli*” (CNP). A harmonious language situation, characterized by a uniform and cohesive language use, corroborates socialist core values and generates cultural strength, as well as playing an important role in socio-economic development. As was discussed in the previous chapters, the Chinese leadership has been reevaluating the function of culture as a pillar industry of the economy, and the same can be said for the production of cultural products related to the language sector. An article drawn from the *Jingji Ribao* 经济日报 (*Economic Daily News*) and published on the website Renmin Wang makes this clear: language and culture represent a country's soft power but the capabilities of China's language industry (*yuyan chanye* 语言产业) do not match its national power yet, leaving much room for improvement (He Hongzhi 贺宏志 and Chen Peng 陈鹏 2013).

In light of the many issues brought to the surface in this brief examination, how, then, can China's language policy be evaluated? And how well established is its relation with China's growing cultural soft power? Well over a decade has gone by since the promulgation of the “2001 Language Law” and some evaluations have been proposed. For instance, on the occasion of the law's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, an article drawn from *Fazhi Zhoumo* 法治周末 (*Legal Weekly*) and published on the website Renmin Wang states that it is impossible to directly solve all the language-related problems:

回顾十年来，这部法律是否解决了一些问题？又留下了什么问题？  
在我国，如何保护方言和推广普通话？如何包容外来语同时捍卫汉语的纯洁性？如何对待广告语和网络流行语？这都是我们所关心的。

(Fazhi Zhoumo 2010)

Looking back ten years, this law has solved any problems? And what issues are left?  
In China, how [is it possible] to protect dialects and promote *putonghua*? How [is it possible] to show tolerance towards loanwords and at the same time safeguard the purity of the Chinese language? How [should we] treat the popular jargon of advertising and the Internet? This is what concerns us.

(Translated by the present author.)

On the same occasion, which coincided with the opening of the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the Publicity Week for the Nationwide Diffusion of *Putonghua* (*Quanguo Tuiguang Putonghua Xuanchuan Zhou* 全国推广普通话宣传周), Li Weihong released a communiqué entitled “Spread the national commonly used language and script, promote the development of a harmonious society” (*Puji guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi, cujin shehui hexie fazhan* 普及国家通用语言文字，促进社会和谐发展), in which he explained that, since 1998 and with the approval of the State Council, the third week of September had been dedicated to the

celebration of the promotion of *putonghua* (Li Weihong 2010). The theme for that year's celebrations, which also coincided with the promulgation of the "Outline for the National Medium-to-long-term Plan for the Reform and Development of Education 2010-2020 (*Guojia Zhong Changqi Jiaoyu Gaige he Fazhan Guihua Gangyao 2010-2020 Nian* 国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 2010—2020 年), thus assuming greater relevance, was "standardizing the use of the national commonly used spoken and written language, carrying forward the excellent tradition of Chinese culture" (*guifan shiyong guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi, hongyang Zhonghua youxiu wenhua chuantong* 规范使用国家通用语言文字, 弘扬中华优秀传统文化传统) (Ibid.). Listing all the important steps of language reform in the history of China after 1949, Li Weihong stressed that China is "a great country with a multiethnic, multi-language, and multi-dialect population" (*yi ge duo minzu, duo yuyan, duo fangyan de renkou daguo* 一个多民族、多语言、多方言的人口大国), where the principle "*shu tong wen, yu tong yin* 书同文、语同音"<sup>110</sup>, which can be translated as "writing the same script, speaking the same sound", has always been an important content of culture-building; in order to follow the directives of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC and build a harmonious society, the State Language Commission was committed to establish a harmonious language life embracing the subjectivity and variety of the language, insofar as Chinese and minority languages represent valuable language resources for the country, in the same way as dialects do when they interact with and are complementary to *putonghua* (Ibid.).

Similar insights were also proposed in September 2014, on the occasion of the 17<sup>th</sup> Publicity Week for the Nationwide Diffusion of *Putonghua*. Commenting on the estimates that there are still four hundred million people in China that cannot communicate in *putonghua*, also discussed above, Li Weihong evaluated the progress made by China's language situation in the previous 17 years as positive, with results showing, for instance, that over 95% of the educated population can use standard characters (Xinhua Wang 2014c). According to the experts' opinion, "spreading *putonghua* does not mean artificially annihilate dialects, but eliminating the estrangement of different dialects, in order to facilitate social communication" (*tuiguang putonghua bushi yao renwei de xiaomie fangyan, ershi weile xiaochu bu tong fangyan de gehe, yi liyu shehui jiaoji* 推广普通话不是要人为地消灭方言, 而是为了消除不同方言的隔阂, 以利于社会交际) (Ibid.).

As well, in 2015, the year that marked the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "2001 Language Law", and on the occasion of the organization of the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the Publicity Week for the Nationwide Diffusion of *Putonghua*, an article appeared on the *Zhongguo Jiaoyu Bao* 中国教育报 (*China Education Daily*) reporting that for that year's celebrations the theme was "*yifa tuiguang putonghua, tisheng guojia ruan shili* 依法推广普通话, 提升国家软实力" (spread *putonghua* according to the law, upgrade national soft power) (*Zhongguo Jiaoyu Bao* 2015). The successful organization of the event would entail the participation of all sectors of society and all the related Party and State departments, the work of the propaganda machine, with the diffusion of posters covering squares, streets, and parks in every part of the country with

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<sup>110</sup> According to Ma Qingzhu 马庆株 (2006), this expression, which can be applied to the first unification of the Chinese script by Emperor Qin Shi Huang, sums up the outcomes of China's language reform as a whole and, in particular, two relevant events in the history of the PRC's language planning and language policy, which occurred in 1956, that is the decision by the State Council to begin the process of character simplification and the promulgation of resolutions on the promotion of *putonghua*.

slogans such as “The state promotes the nationwide use of *putonghua*” (as in the PRC Constitution) and “mastering the language of *one* country means seizing the key leading to the culture of *one* country” (*zhangwo yi guo yuyan, jiu zhangwo le tongwang yi guo wenhua de yaoshi* 掌握一国语言，就掌握了通往一国文化的钥匙), and the contribution of the news media (Ibid.).

In the slogans translated above, emphasis is voluntarily placed on the word “one” by the present author, in order to stress once again that a close bond between language and unity, in this case cultural unity, can be identified within the structure of language planning in China. With language being at the core of culture and culture being, in turn, at the core of the Chinese discourse on soft power, the relationship between the management of China’s harmonious language life and the promotion of *putonghua* nationwide and the enhancement of China’s cultural soft power cannot be anything but strong.

Nonetheless, in the discussion on China’s language life, in addition to the management of the relationship between *putonghua* and minority languages and scripts, which is regulated by the Constitution and Article 8 in the “2001 Language Law”, as previously described, and that between *putonghua* and Chinese dialects, expounded upon in great detail here, there also emerge issues that are related to the contacts between the Chinese language and foreign languages, as well as the popularization of *putonghua* abroad.

#### 8.4 Maintaining the purity and unity of the Chinese language

As is known, the language of the PRC, that is *putonghua*, is increasingly becoming a strong competitor for English in the global race for prestige. The pervasiveness of the Chinese language, of course, is due to the astonishing number of native speakers it can boast, both intended as a “macrolanguage”, including first-language speakers of different dialects, and as the main variety, that is first-language speakers of *putonghua*, or Mandarin (López 2015; Lewis, Simons, and Fennig 2016). Chinese is also one of the languages most learned in the world, with numbers of students gravitating between 30 or 50 million, depending on the source (China Daily 2009; Moore 2011; López 2015). But English and other foreign languages are also widely studied in China. Xinhua News Agency (2006) reports that English, in particular, is studied by a quarter of China’s population, or more than three hundred million people. Contacts between different languages generate new phenomena that the PRC government structures in charge of language supervision have the duty to regulate through *ad hoc* language policies, as also shown by some of the topics contained in the 2013 *Baogao* previously described. Thus, it is interesting to briefly discuss the concept of language “purity” (*chunjiexing* 纯洁性) as intended within the scope of China’s language policy and, in particular, in regard to a case that emerged in 2010. In December 2010, Chinese and international media alike (BBC 2010; Li Mu 2010; Wang Jingqiong 2010) extensively reported on the decision of the PRC General Administration of Press and Publication (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Xinwen Chubanshu* 中华人民共和国新闻出版总署, GAPP) to ban publishers and website-owners from the use of foreign words that are thought of as a potential harm to the purity of the Chinese language and the development of a harmonious and healthy cultural environment. The press, to which the warning was extended after having first targeted radio and television broadcasting, should then use standardized Chinese and avoid using acronyms and the mix of English and Chinese known



as “Chinglish” (BBC 2010). Under the new GAPP regulation, mixing foreign languages with Chinese in publications would only be allowed if necessary and accompanied by a translation of the foreign word or providing an explanation in Chinese (Wang Jingqiong 2010). This would also apply to abbreviations such as GDP (gross domestic product), CEO (chief executive officer), and CPI (consumer price index), as well as English place names, people, and companies (Ibid.). The regulation sparked a lively debate about how to preserve the purity of Chinese against the increasing use of English, with commentators expressing mixed-feelings about a potential crisis of Chinese (Wang Jingqiong 2010; Xinhua She 2010b). The results of a survey conducted on a sample of 3,269 Chinese people were also released showing that 80% of the respondents believed that there was a “*hanyu weiji* 汉语危机” (Chinese language crisis) under way, with 52% pointing the finger to the “fever for foreign languages” (*waiyu re* 外语热), and especially English, as the main reason for “the crisis in the ability to use Chinese” (*hanyu yingyong nengli weiji* 汉语应用能力危机) (Xinhua She 2010b). As well, a research project conducted in 2009 had shown that, among the 319 students that had been tested on their knowledge of Chinese at four universities in Beijing, only 2% had obtained a score of more than 70 out of 100, while 30% had failed the test (Wang Jingqiong 2010).

The campaign for the purity of the Chinese language has also had more recent developments. In 2014, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (*Guojia Xinwen Chuban Guangbo Dianying Dianshi Zongju* 国家新闻出版广播电影电视总局, SAPPRT)<sup>111</sup> called for advertisements and broadcasts to stop using puns and wordplays, putting an end to the possibility of making use of homophones to have fun with the Chinese language (Chen Te-Ping 2014). More specifically, the notice issued by the regulatory administrative agency targeted the case of the idiom “*jin shan jin mei* 尽善尽美” which, in an ad, was transformed into “*jin shan jin mei* 晋善晋美”, a play-on-words based on the characters “*jin* 尽” (to the greatest extent) and “*jin* 晋” (the short name for Shanxi 山西 province), thus changing the meaning of “the acme of perfection” of the former into “Shanxi is good and beautiful” of the latter (Chen Te-Ping 2014; Guojia Xinwen Chuban Guangdian Zongju 2014). Below is an excerpt drawn from the regulation:

[...] 这些做法不符合《国家通用语言文字法》《广播电视管理条例》等法律法规的基本要求，与传承和弘扬中华优秀传统文化的精神相违背，对社会公众尤其是未成年人会产生误导，必须坚决予以纠正。现就有关工作通知如下：

一、充分认识规范使用国家通用语言文字的重大意义。广播电视推广普及、规范使用国家通用语言文字，是传承中华优秀传统文化、增强国家文化软实力的战略需要；是树立文化自觉、文化自信、文化自强，确保文化安全的具体举措；也是广大听众观众收听收看好广播电视节目的基本要求。广播电视作为大众传媒，担负着引领和示范的职责，必须带头规范使用通用语言文字，做全社会的表率。

(Guojia Xinwen Chuban Guangdian Zongju 2014)

[...] These methods [non-standard language and writing] do not conform to the basic demands of the “Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Language”, the “Radio and Television Management

<sup>111</sup> The body, which goes by the name *Guojia Xinwen Chuban Guangdian Zongju* 国家新闻出版广电总局, is formerly known as State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (*Guojia Guangbo Dianying Dianshi Zongju* 国家广播电影电视总局, SARFT) and includes the GAPP.

Regulations” and other laws and regulations, are contrary to the spirit of passing on and promoting the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, they can mislead the social public and especially the youth, and they must be firmly corrected. Hereby, the relevant work is notified as follows:

1) Fully understand the major significance of the standardized use of the national common language and script. The spreading, popularization, and standardized use of the national common spoken and written language is a strategic need for inheriting the excellent traditional Chinese culture and strengthening the country’s cultural soft power; it is a concrete measure to establish cultural self-awareness, cultural self-confidence, and cultural self-improvement, and to guarantee cultural security; and it is also a basic requirement for the large-scale listeners and viewers [to be able] to properly listen to and watch radio and television programs. Radio and television are mass media, they bear responsibilities to show the way and be model examples, they must take the lead in the standardized use of the common spoken and written language, and be models for the entire society.

(Translated by the present author.)

The language habits targeted by regulations of the kind described above are thus seen as a potential detriment to the awareness of and confidence in Chinese culture of the Chinese people, and ultimately to the projection of the country’s cultural soft power abroad. They indeed constitute a controversial aspect of the current trend of language use in China. In 2014, whereas the *Renmin Ribao* published online an article entitled “Misuse of loanwords: disturb communication and harm the purity of the Chinese language” (*Wailaiyu lanyong: yingxiang goutong shanghai hanyu chunjiexing* 外来语滥用：影响沟通伤害汉语纯洁性) in which the common occurrence in Chinese publications of English acronyms such as Wi-Fi, CEO, MBA, CBD, VIP, and PM2.5, and names such as iPhone and iPad, was strongly criticized as an element that disrupts the order and harmony of the Chinese script, affecting the capability of Chinese to express meanings, making the context scattered and incoherent, and, what is worse, annihilating the profound and rich connotations of Chinese culture (Dong Hongliang 董洪亮, Cao Lingjuan 曹玲娟, and Gong Yuhua 巩育华 2014), the *South China Morning Post* documented the sarcasm and mockery with which the official concerns were met among Internet users, reporting that some observers ascribed the campaign for language purity to the government’s efforts to limit the influence of foreign culture on Chinese media and popular culture (Luo 2014). The article in the Hong Kong newspaper also recalls that, in 2012, a committee was created by the Chinese government and given the task of standardizing the use of foreign words, an endeavor that resulted in the publication of 10 standardized Chinese translations for popular English terms such as WTO, Aids, and GDP (Ibid.). Similarly, in 2010, the CCTV asked its broadcasters to replace the English acronym NBA with the Chinese equivalent of “US professional basketball association”, a fact that the audience perceived as being a mere and strange formalism (Ibid.).

Nonetheless, all sectors of the media are called to actively participate in the standardization and promotion of *putonghua*, acting as models for China’s modern society and, consequently, assuming a leading role in the national culture-building process. As discussed in the previous chapters and highlighted above, the enhancement of China’s cultural soft power is envisioned by the Chinese leadership as a collective effort that involves all members of society and every Chinese person. Even people of Chinese origins living abroad are involved in this process. In this view, an article which appeared in the *Renmin Ribao Haiwaiban* as early as 2007, with the title “*Putonghua he fangyan: yi ge dou bu neng shao* 普通话和方言：一个都不能少” (*Putonghua* and dialects: not one less), is worth mentioning as it explores an interesting

phenomenon: “dialectal barriers” (*fangyan* 方言隔阂) in Chinese communities overseas. The need to promote *putonghua* both in China and overseas is affirmed, as well as the importance of the interaction between the unity of Chinese language and culture and the intrinsic value of dialects, which are envisioned as carriers of local cultures and traditions and vehicles representing the richness of China’s heritage:

在海外华人社会中，普通话与其他中国方言各有天地，并存发展，持续漫长岁月。

作为中国的官方语言和主要语言，普通话的普及是大势所趋。我们想象一下，如果在集会时人们各自用方言发言，各电视台都用方言播出，南腔北调，其他人群如何会意？在全球兴起汉语普通话热的今天，华人社区的不同方言群体，迫切需要推广共通的语言。

毋庸讳言，方言隔阂的现象也延伸到了海外华埠。由于抵埠时间不同，来源地不同，相互间存地域差别。

[...] 其实，推广普通话的目的并不是为了消灭方言。方言是很多华人的母语，拥有丰富的地域文化，它们都是经过几百年甚至几千年发展形成的，生命力很强 [...].

[...] 中国人都是一家人，有着同一条根，拥有同样的母语和文字。南方方言区的先民，绝大多数来自北方。海外华人无论讲什么方言，先来与后到，都应该团结在一起。

[...] 中华文化博大精深，汉语本身包容着多元化。所以，普通话与方言，在华埠理应继续和谐相处，并共同在海外弘扬中华文化。[...] 都是中国人嘛，当然不应“鸡同鸭讲”。

(Lian Tian 连天 2007)

In the overseas Chinese communities, *putonghua* and each of the other Chinese dialects all have their own field of activity, they coexist and develop, and it will continue to be so for a long time. As China’s official and primary language, the popularization of *putonghua* is the general trend. If we imagine for a minute that in the case of a meeting every person can use a dialect to speak, or that every TV station uses a dialect to broadcast, with a regional accent, how would the other people be able to understand? In today’s world, where the fever for Chinese, for *putonghua*, is rising, the common language must urgently be spread in the communities of ethnic Chinese people who speak different dialects.

It goes without saying that the phenomenon of dialectal barriers has also expanded into overseas Chinatowns. Due to the fact that they arrived at different places in different times and their origins are different, among them [overseas Chinese] there exist regional differences.

[...] Actually, the purpose of promoting *putonghua* is not the annihilation of dialects. Dialects are the mother tongue of many ethnic Chinese, they carry a rich local culture, and were all formed through hundreds, thousands of years of development; their vitality is strong [...].

[...] Chinese people are one family; they have the same origins and possess the same mother tongue and script. The inhabitants of the areas where southern dialects are spoken came from the north for the most part. No matter what dialects they speak, the overseas Chinese that arrived first and those that arrived later all have to be united.

[...] Chinese culture is broad and deep, and the Chinese language contains diversifications in itself. Thus, *putonghua* and dialects should continue to get along in harmony in the Chinatowns, and together promote Chinese culture abroad. [...] It is all Chinese people, and of course [we] cannot “talk without communicating”.

(Translated by the present author.)

“*Dou shi Zhongguo ren ma, dangran bu ying ‘ji tong ya jiang’* 都是中国人嘛，当然不应‘鸡同鸭讲’”：“*ji tong ya jiang*” is an expression that, when translated into English, literally means “chicken speaking with duck”, perfectly conveying the meaning of

miscommunication and misunderstanding. In this context, it is a significant statement that encapsulate the meaning and scope of a one of the most prominent components of the PRC's language planning: mutually unintelligible language varieties are considered dialects insofar as they belong to the same people, or better, one people: the Chinese nation. In this light, the promotion of *putonghua* will act as a booster of national identity and unity, and all Chinese are called to collaborate. And it will be the people's collaboration that will not make it necessary to eliminate dialects by law enforcement and coercive measures.

Based on the considerations made so far, it comes as no surprise that even in the field of Chinese language promotion abroad, or among foreigners in China, reflections of the value placed on harmony and unity can be found. It is indeed interesting to recall that following the principles "*shu tong wen*" (writing the same script) and "*yu tong yin*" (speaking the same sound) means, for the Chinese people, being devoted to *putonghua*, standardized characters, and *hanyu pinyin*, and, by constructing a harmonious language and social life, be ready for welcoming the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people; this will in turn increase the confidence of foreigners in studying the Chinese language and characters, thus enhancing the international competitiveness of Chinese, and making it move faster towards the world (Ma Qingzhu 2006). The large-scale promotion of Chinese shall become an essential factor in the enhancement of China's soft power and CNP, contributing to spreading the Chinese civilization internationally, advancing the unity between Chinese citizens and every other people in the world, and creating a multipolar and peaceful world (Ibid.).

## 8.5 International reflections

Judging from the ever-increasing amount of foreign students that the Chinese language is attracting, discussed in the previous section, and the great results achieved by language and culture exchange programs between China and the rest of the world, it can be argued that, in 2016, Chinese has successfully "gone towards the world". Chapter 1 highlighted how the value of culture as a source of power has reached the same level of importance as traditional hard power resources. The same can be said about the role of language in international relations, as is shown by the fact that in the course of a joint conference with Chinese President Xi Jinping in September 2015, American President Barack Obama announced the launch of the "1 Million Strong" initiative, a program that, recognizing the increasing importance of the relationship between the United States and China, aims to bring the total number of learners of *putonghua* in America to one million by the end of the year 2020, in order to prepare a new cohort of American leaders able to understand China effectively (Allen-Ebrahimian 2015).

In terms of guidelines for the management of this international branch of language policy, which primarily responds to the growing interest for "everything Chinese" which has been simmering in the foreign public following the takeoff of China's rise, they are to be found in Article 20 of the "2001 Language Law", which states: "*Duiwai hanyu jiaoxue yingdang jiaoshou putonghua he guifan hanzi* 对外汉语教学应当教授普通话和规范汉字" (Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be taught in classes for foreigners who are learning Chinese) (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu 2000; PRC Ministry of Education 2000). In the same framework fall the Constitution and By-Laws of the institution that is currently the most renowned in the domain of Chinese language promotion internationally: the

Confucius Institute (hereafter, CI). According to the website of Hanban<sup>112</sup>, the Office of the Chinese Language Council International (*Zhongguo Guojia Hanyu Guoji Tuiguang Lingdao Xiaozu Bangongshi* 中国国家汉语国际推广领导小组办公室) by which the CI program is overseen, Article 10, in fact, states the following: “*Kongzi xueyuan de hanyu jiaoxue caiyong putonghua he guifan hanzi* 孔子学院的汉语教学采用普通话和规范汉字” (The Confucius Institutes conduct Chinese language instructions in Mandarin, using Standard Chinese Characters) (Kongzi Xueyuan Zongbu 孔子学院总部/Guojia Hanban 国家汉办 n.d.1; Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban n.d.1).

In recent years, the establishment of an increasingly large number of CIs around the world and the role they play as part of the effort for the enhancement of China’s cultural soft power have become oft-debated topics of scholars and researchers in and out of China (among others, Ding and Saunders 2006; Chey 2008; Gil 2009; Paradise 2009; Starr 2009; Liu Wei 刘伟 2010; Barr 2011; Hong Xiaonan et. al 2013; Sahlins 2015). In the present research, attention has been paid to the culture-building endeavor that soft power development entails, according to the view of the Chinese leadership, thus focusing on the construction of cultural soft power resources within China. The projection of cultural soft power abroad has thus appeared to be intended as a natural reflection of a process of self-improvement that is unfolding nationwide, under the guidance of the government and through the implementation of cultural policies, including the language policies discussed above. In this sense, Starr (2009, p. 68) observes that the PRC’s language policy, which has essentially shown that standardization is a “vital part in maintaining the integrity of the Chinese State”, is decided by the government in China, but also extended internationally. Due to the approach chosen by the present work, which has primarily stressed the importance of internal dynamics in the enhancement of China’s cultural soft power, and the extent that a multi-layered discussion, which embraces a variety of research angles, points of views, debates, and even controversies, as is the one around the CIs, would entail, only a limited sample of data, literature, and salient aspects will be presented in the following pages, in order to provide a selection of insights that are useful to firmly place the topic of Chinese language and culture promotion within the discourse on Chinese cultural soft power and, conceivably, inspire future analyses.

Besides the Constitution and By-Laws of the CIs, the Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban website, in both its Chinese and English editions, provides a variety of information, data, announcements, and news describing, in a more or less updated way, the activities promoted. In terms of numbers, by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, the worldwide presence of five hundred CIs was registered, covering over a hundred countries and distributed as follows: 110 in Asia; 46 in Africa; 169 in Europe; 157 in America; and 18 in Oceania (Kongzi Xueyuan Zongbu/Guojia Hanban n.d.2). As well, this capillary distribution is corroborated by one thousand Confucius Classrooms (*Kongzi Ketang* 孔子课堂) (Ibid.). The Confucius Classrooms (CCs) represent what Starr (2009, p. 71) calls a “junior version” of the institutes, as they focus on secondary rather than university education. The system put in place by Hanban as early as 2004, when the first CI was established in Seoul, functions according to three modes of operation: full management of the operations by the headquarters (similar to the British

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<sup>112</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, information regarding the CI project was drawn from various pages of the Chinese and English websites (<http://www.hanban.org/> and <http://english.hanban.org/>) and referenced with progressive numbers.

Institutes); joint ventures with local partners (similar to the Instituto Cervantes); and locally run offices licensed by the headquarters (similar to the Alliance Française) (Ibid., pp. 65-70). The second category includes most European CIs as they function as a partnership among a foreign university, the headquarters, and one or more Chinese universities (Ibid., p. 71). As for their nature and mission, the CIs are defined in the Constitution and By-Laws as “non-profit educational institutions” which aim to “devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese language”, thus enhancing these people’s understanding of the Chinese language and culture, strengthening educational and cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries, deepening friendly relationships, and promoting the development of multiculturalism and the construction of a harmonious world (Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban n.d.1). Similarly, Hanban is described as a “public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education” whose functions are: making policies and development plans for promoting Chinese language internationally; supporting Chinese language programs at foreign educational institutions of various types and levels; drafting international Chinese teaching standards; and developing and promoting Chinese language teaching materials (Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban n.d.2). As for the CI Headquarters, the body in charge of controlling their operations is the Council of Confucius Institute Headquarters comprising of a Chair, Vice-Chairs, Executive Council Members, and Council Members (Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban n.d.3).

The structure of Hanban and the CI Headquarters is perhaps one of the most controversial aspects debated by scholars. Among the studies that analyze the operations of the CIs worldwide, Marshall Sahlins’s 2015 work emerges as possibly one of the harshest. The author defines Hanban, and the CIs, as a “Chinese government agency” whose actual purpose is very distant from the picture portrayed by the description as a “non-profit organization” that is “affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education” (Sahlins 2015, pp. 1-13). The target of the author’s criticism is, in particular, the aforementioned Council, a “bureaucratic body” comprising a number of high-ranking Party-State officials connected with the State Council and various ministries (Ibid.). Sahlins detects a strong link between the activities carried out within the CI project and the PRC’s political agenda, an element that would definitely set the project apart from the organizations often considered its Western counterpart, such as the British Institute or the Goethe Institut, insofar as the individual CI offices are located within the host universities and function as elements of a foreign government (Ibid., p. 13). And, although his approach is remarkable, insofar as his book provides a detailed collection of a great number of academic contradictions that, over the years, have taken the spotlight of the debates in faculties and among professors and scholars, igniting a lively controversy over the genuineness of CI’s operations<sup>113</sup>, he is not the only one making this judgment: according to Barr (2011, Chapter 4), while supporters of the CI program compare it to the activities of the European British Institute, Goethe Institut, Alliance Française, and Instituto Cervantes and believe that it is a useful

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<sup>113</sup> Minter (2014), for instance, reports on some cases that saw foreign universities, including the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University, cut ties with Hanban and argues that CIs are causing more disadvantage than advantage to China’s international image. The widespread worry is that behind CI’s operations there hides an “insidious vehicle of soft-power indoctrination” through which what is being taught is not just language and culture but ideology and values (Ibid.). In order to explain the certain amount of suspicion generated by CIs abroad, commentators often refer to Politburo member Li Changchun 李长春 and his open reference to the importance of CI’s initiatives as part of China’s foreign propaganda efforts (Redden 2012; Minter 2014).

structure to teach Chinese language and culture, especially in places that otherwise could not afford such activities, detractors fear the infiltration of a foreign government into local affairs, and even the gathering of intelligence on the PRC's part. As Barr's puts it, "the notion of a Chinese government-backed institution on Western university campuses has not gone down well with many", making the CIs the "possibly most controversial example of Chinese soft power", but nonetheless the best (Ibid.). Chey (2008, p. 40) argues that what differentiates the operations run by the PRC and those, for example, carried out by the Alliance Française is the "degree of control exercised by the government over administration and operations". The author analyzes the CI project against the background of cultural diplomacy and calls for universities to "vigilantly guard their autonomy and academic freedom" (Ibid., pp. 33-38). As an expression of how China uses cultural diplomacy and soft power, exploiting propaganda tools at home and abroad to shape public opinion, the CI project can be placed within the boundaries of China's international strategy, which is primarily aimed at maintaining a stable global environment for the well-being of its development (Ibid.).

Overall, there is agreement in the literature analyzed regarding the definition of a corollary for the present discussion: by promoting language and culture abroad and cooperating with foreign institutions, the CIs are a potential source of soft power which can help create a positive image for China and refute the "China threat theory", within the frame of the theories of China's peaceful rise and peaceful development (among others, Chey 2008; Paradise 2009; Starr 2009). However, at least one observer (Gil 2009) notices that the benefits that China is obtaining from the Confucius Institute project are related to the ability to channel the foreign learners' language preferences and attitudes towards China more than they are to actual foreign policy outcomes. The scholar argues that the students involved in CI activities around the world are more likely to perceive a change in their attitudes towards China and perhaps become more sympathetic through the study of the language that has been chosen by the PRC as the base of foreign language teaching, namely *putonghua*, simplified characters, and the *hanyu pinyin* system (Ibid., p.67). The author's worry that the pool of China-connoisseurs that Hanban aims to create, for example through the provisions of materials that support the PRC's views to the CIs, may be cut out of perspectives expressed in other parts of the Chinese-speaking world, such as Taiwan, is corroborated by the analyses offered by a number of other scholars; Chey (2008, p. 40), for instance, asks the question as to whether or not the support of the Chinese government in backing the program and sponsoring Chinese teachers may leave out people who support the independence of Taiwan, full democracy for Hong Kong, religious freedom, and other controversial matters.

The considerations made above lead the present discussion to examine in greater detail two other aspects that emerge in the analysis of the PRC's management of language promotion abroad: the mandatory language rule for instruction in CI classes and the question as to whether or not, and to what extent, the institution can be considered an actual indication of cultural soft power in action. In regard to the first issue, as previously, mentioned, it is important to recall that it is indeed the Constitution and By-Laws of the CIs to state that the institutions shall "conduct Chinese language instructions in Mandarin, using Standard Chinese Characters" (Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban n.d.1). Sahlins (2015, pp. 25-39) detects in this practice a direct political influence exercised by the PRC, providing the description of a number

of cases<sup>114</sup> which have seen conflicts between Hanban and foreign universities arise and which can be considered to have been caused by a threatening level of intervention on the Chinese part. Churchman (2011) challenges the common idea that CIs are part of the effort to increase China's cultural soft power, even though the logic behind their operations is that promoting interest in the Chinese language and culture abroad will lead more people to understand and appreciate China itself. In his words: "It is naïve to believe that Confucius Institutes are politically disinterested teachers imparting Chinese culture and language. They exist for the express purpose of letting foreigners understand China on terms acceptable to official China" (Ibid.). This provocative statement is explained in light of the view that the proliferation of CIs around the world hides a "political move" by the Chinese government aimed at guiding the interests of the global public towards a sort of selected knowledge that is in sync with what the Party-State wants to popularize (Ibid.). Moreover, scholars (Paradise 2009; Churchman 2011; Sahlins 2015) agree in detecting the most explicit evidence of control on the part of the PRC government in the Constitution and By-Laws of the CIs, in particular in the restrictions contained in Article 10, discussed above, and Article 6. The latter states the following: "The Confucius Institutes shall abide by the laws and regulations of the countries in which they are located, respect local cultural and educational traditions and social customs, and they shall not contravene concerning the laws and regulations of China" (Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban n.d.1). But if this statement offers the possibility to ban a variety of topics which are knowingly out of line with the approval of the Chinese leadership, it is in particular the mandatory requirement to teach *putonghua* and simplified characters, and promoting what Churchman (2011) calls "semi-literacy in Chinese", that should raise suspicion. This kind of partial knowledge that is particularly encouraged for foreigners and foreign-born ethnic Chinese does not facilitate the acquisition of skills in reading and writing traditional characters, which are still used in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, communities of overseas Chinese, and in the field of Classical studies, and guides learners towards a "'correct' ideological path" which denies access to texts and materials produced outside of China's central control (Ibid.). In Churchman's words: "The control through Confucius Institutes of what can and cannot be taught as Chinese is as equally rooted in the politics of the People's Republic of China as the control of what can and cannot be discussed about China" (Ibid.).

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<sup>114</sup> Having witnessed the incident first-hand, the present author would like to mention one of the cases described by Sahlins (2015): the "Braga Incident". In late July 2014, the European Association of Chinese Studies (EACS) conference took place in Braga and Coimbra, Portugal. Among the many highlights of the event, one unfortunate episode occurred, drawing the attention of the participating scholars and, afterwards, the media. The smooth unfolding of the conference was in fact disrupted by the decision made by Hanban Director General and Chief Executive of the CI Headquarters Xu Lin 许琳 to order certain pages be removed from the conference program and book of abstracts. When conference attendees received the materials, after an unexplained delay, four pages were missing: the frontispiece of the book of abstracts mentioning the sponsorship of the Confucius China Studies Program, one of Hanban's academic projects, and three pages from the conference program containing information about the book exhibition and library donation organized by the Taiwan National Central Library and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange. Describing the incident in great detail, Sahlins (2015, p. 36) argues that the CIs had never manifested their political component so openly as Xu Lin's "meltdown" in Braga. Comments were harsh also in the media, which strongly criticized Xu Lin's decision to obstruct activities that are considered "contrary to Chinese regulations" (Minter 2014). As well, Professor Roger Greatrex of Lund University, the President of the Association, is reported to have publicly called this kind of interference in the academic activities "totally unacceptable" (Sahlins 2015, p. 35).



For all these reasons, it can be argued that, as is the case for domestic language policies, linguistics, sociolinguistics, and the sociology of language assume a deeper, often political, meaning. According to the views described above, by setting parameters for the promotion of Chinese, or better, for what kind of Chinese should be taught abroad, the PRC government projects the intention to channel the foreigners' desire to learn more about China towards the appreciation of a specific, polished image of China that excludes controversial topics often discussed within, and about, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other controversial realities. It is equally interesting to note, as Churchman (2011) does, that the language restrictions imposed by the Constitution and By-Laws of the CIs appear to be a reflection of the language policy established domestically, insofar as the "2001 Language Law" exhorts the Chinese citizens to increasingly use *putonghua* and simplified Chinese characters, somewhat to the detriment of Chinese dialects and other languages used in the PRC. Although Hong Kong and Cantonese culture may be regarded as falling outside of the mainstream Chinese culture upheld and promoted by the PRC authorities, the protests in favor of the protection of Cantonese, discussed above, are an example of the difficulty the Chinese government may encounter in attempting to weaken the bond between the people and their local traditions (Ibid.). In an email conversation with the present author in spring 2014, Hong Kong-based Cantonese expert Professor Robert S. Bauer, expressed an interesting thought which testifies to the delicate nature of linguistic phenomena in the PRC: "As for the impact of the promotion of Putonghua on the Chinese dialects and non-Han minority languages, I have come to see Putonghua as a destructive steamroller that is responsible for decimating China's linguistic diversity" (Bauer 2014a). As well, he referred to the idea put forward in some of his previous writings on Cantonese that "the agenda of teaching Putonghua should include the promotion of 'harmonious bilingualism' among schoolchildren, that is, that they be encouraged to continue speaking their local varieties and not to think that learning Putonghua requires replacing them with Putonghua and so forgetting them". Commenting on the proposal of this concept, which referred in particular to the language situation in Hong Kong, Professor Bauer further suggested: "At the same time, however, given that the Putonghua agenda in Hong Kong is highly politicized, I realize this concept is naive and unrealistic. Not surprisingly, some local Cantonese speakers see the writing on the wall and so have started up a [*fan pu jiao zhong*] 反普教中 movement (i.e., 'oppose using Putonghua to teach Chinese-language subjects')" (Ibid.). Referring to an article in the *South China Morning Post* describing the case of a luxury hotel in Hong Kong that had changed its elevator instructions from complex to simplified Chinese characters, Professor Bauer also commented that this switch had generated so much anger in one person that it led her to complain about it in an article in a Chinese-language newspaper; showing how such an incident represents "one small but incremental erosion of Hong Kong's unique cultural identity" (Bauer 2014b). According to Professor Bauer, who at the time of writing further confirmed these thoughts by affirming that "the Cantonese language and the switch to using Putonghua as medium of instruction have become even more politicized" (Bauer 2016), there even exists a Cantonese expression for these phenomena: [*Xianggang daluhua*] 香港大陸化 'mainlandization of Hong Kong'" (Bauer 2014b).

Another phenomenon difficult to eradicate is that of "language contamination", analyzed above, which Barr (2014, Chapter 4) discusses within the framework of the importance played by language policy and standardization in maintaining the integrity of the PRC. According to the author, it is the complex interconnection among language learning, political identity, and

boundary drawing<sup>115</sup> that constitutes the saliency of China's language policy, making language and national identity "mutually constitutive" (Ibid.).

In regard to the second point made above, doubts have been raised about the soft power nature of CI operations as they also involve a conspicuous monetary component. Churchman (2011), for instance, argues that educational institutions worldwide receive the "carrot" that comes with the establishment of a CI on their premises. The "carrot" to which the author refers includes the funding and support provided by Hanban and received by foreign universities, as documented by a number of sources (Chey 2008; Starr 2009; Barr 2011; Sahlins 2015): as a partnership between a foreign organization and one or more Chinese partners, in most cases universities, the basic agreement is usually for five years and based on equally shared funding, with Hanban providing start-up and annual funding as well as teaching materials and instructors. Moreover, CCs, as "local hubs" established within primary and secondary schools, are supported by CIs in the provision of activities and receive funds from them (Barr 2011, Chapter 4). While Sahlins (2015, p. 3) defines the CI's practices as "subcontracting teaching to a foreign government", Paradise (2009, pp. 659-662) and Barr (2011, Chapter 4) argue that the CI project is "impression management", as it aims to create a positive image for China, which is well in line with the notion of peaceful development. On the one hand, the former believes that, although fitting well in the grand strategy of increasing the country's attractiveness as a leading power, the CI project is not entirely a soft power strategy, as it relies on payments (Paradise 2009, pp. 659-662). Thus, the fear is that, by accepting money, foreign institutions may also accept a sort of "string-attached" policy, that is one aimed at expanding China's influence abroad, jeopardizing academic freedom and essentially representing a "Trojan Horse" strategy for China (Ibid.). To avoid the political issue arising from the Chinese government's funding of language learning operations, the "1 Million Strong" initiative mentioned above is reported to be financed privately (Allen-Ebrahimian 2015).

These considerations, together with the concerns related to the location of many CIs, that is on campus and within pre-established educational institutions (Chey 2008; Churchman 2011; Sahlins 2015), raise suspicion about the real intentions hiding behind this PRC government's strategy. On the other hand, Barr (2011, Chapter 4) argues that the suspicion some people feel in regard to CIs does not only derive from the fear of a foreign culture or the peculiarity of the Chinese language, but even more from the realization that the "development of CIs is China's most widely coordinated long-term collective effort to articulate a Chinese identity and brand it on the world stage". Taking into consideration both the gains that host universities obtain, in terms of the possibility they have to broaden their academic horizon and the opportunity for more students to learn Chinese, and those obtained by Chinese universities, which become more international, the author evaluates the CIs as the concrete manifestation of China's determination to promote its culture, and thus "China's most comprehensive exercise of soft power to date" (Ibid.).

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<sup>115</sup> By "boundary drawing" Barr (2011, Chapter 4) refers, in particular, to the characteristics of the linguistic situation existing between the PRC and Taiwan. While the former calls the national language *putonghua*, the latter refers to it with the term *guoyu* 国语 and maintains the use of non-simplified characters (Ibid.).

## 8.6 What is in a “trademark”?

On balance, belonging to the same language policy structure, the management of language promotion internationally can be seen as displaying similar characteristics to that of language standardization and promotion domestically; and the former raises as many doubts and concerns as the latter. According to Barr (2011, Chapter 4), placing language teaching and culture promotion within the boundaries of public diplomacy could be seen as restrictive, as language represents much more: it is the “means by which people define themselves and others” which means that “when one learns a language one is also inevitably drawn into a new community”, acquiring skills useful to identify with and participate in that community. It is the relationship between language and identity, then, that constitutes the primary cause of the controversies over the CI project (Ibid.). In this view, one can argue that the same reasons that make language standardization and promotion so important, and sometimes controversial, for the Chinese government domestically, that is creating a sense of national identity and political consensus through the shaping of common and standardized language habits, is also the source of much controversy internationally because of the channels and ways through which language promotion is managed.

Before moving on to more positive opinions regarding the projection of cultural soft power through the activities of the CIs, mainly expressed by Chinese authors, a few reflections must be made in regard to the name chosen to represent China’s international language export: Confucius. Scholars (Chey 2008; Starr 2009; Barr 2011) argue that the choice of Confucius as the symbol of China’s initiative to export Chinese language and culture is rather singular: Barr (2011, Chapter 4), for instance, notes that if Confucius were still alive he would be speaking the dialect of the northern state of Lu and not at all the language taught in CI classes. Moreover, CIs do not do much to spread Confucianism. Chey (2008, p. 39) corroborates this view highlighting the fact that CIs do not generally embark on the task of promoting Confucianism. Why, then, was the sage’s name chosen as a global brand for Chinese language promotion? All three authors considered seem to agree that one of the primary reasons is that a rehabilitation of Confucius and his doctrine is underway in China: Chey (2008, pp. 38-39) states that, as a symbol of China’s cultural diplomacy goals, which include uniting all ethnic Chinese around the world and create a friendly global environment, Confucius has been freed, in the last decades, of the ban previously imposed by the CPC, when he was thought of as representing the unchanging status quo. According to Barr (2011, Chapter 4), the official rehabilitation of Confucius started not long after the installment of Deng Xiaoping’s policy of reform and opening-up, when Confucian principles of loyalty, social responsibility, respect for authority, self-discipline, and others were restored. Nevertheless, this rehabilitation is continuing still today, as shown by stories such as the great success achieved by a TV program broadcast in 2006 and featuring Beijing Normal University Professor Yu Dan 于丹 offering the audience her modern interpretation of *The Analects*; Confucian tenets emphasizing equality for rich and poor through education, social order, hierarchy, and stability are thought of as a means to fill the spiritual vacuum Chinese society is experiencing in facing materialism and, politically, are very appealing to the Chinese leadership (Starr 2009, p. 69; Barr 2011, Chapter 4). As well, the authors note that the persona of Confucius is usually associated with teaching and culture, his name has global brand recognition, and his image, standardized in 2006 in a portrait that depicts him as an old man with a long beard, oozes feelings such as kindness, friendliness, and sagaciousness (Ibid.). In addition, Barr (2011, Chapter 4) raises an interesting point, that is the

“consumption” of Confucius: as many other aspects of China’s soft power discourse, the value placed on Confucius in modern days applies both to China’s internal and external dynamics. As explained before, internally, Confucian principles are useful to maintain social order and stability, while externally the “brand Confucius” helps the CPC enhance its legitimacy, projecting a positive image for China (Ibid.). In this sense, it can be argued that the legitimacy the CPC is pursuing through the enhancement of the national cultural soft power is both within and outside the country. It is rather surprising, then, that the logo of the CIs is not the official image of Confucius but instead a drawing representing a mutual embrace between a dove and the world. Barr (2011, Chapter 4) elaborates on this aspect stating that: “The symbolism is clear. Beijing’s choice of imagery is meant to express its desire to develop peacefully and to persuade the world to welcome China’s growing presence and influence in it”.

As stated before, more positive opinions regarding the projection of cultural soft power through the activities of the CIs have also been expressed, mainly by Chinese authors. The paper entitled “Talking Up China: An Analysis of China’s Rising Cultural Power and Global Promotion of the Chinese Language” by Ding Sheng and Robert A. Saunders, for instance, examines both the features of coercive cultural power in international relations and the theory of soft power put forward by Joseph S. Nye, as power can also emanate from a country’s cultural attractiveness, image, and reputation, in a way that changes others’ preferences (Ding and Saunders 2006, p. 9). In this view, China is a country that has seen its colossal cultural power diminish, to then return in force in recent years (Ibid., p. 11). Language, religion, myths, literature, and so forth are the basis of national identity which is, in turn, the core of a country’s cultural tradition, but in the case of China what actually constitutes Chinese culture is hard to define; among the most evident criteria to determine a sense of cultural belonging, there emerge the ability to speak Mandarin or any of the Chinese dialects, as it allows access into the Chinese linguistic and cultural space, and familiarity with Confucian values and folklore (Ibid., p. 12). Chinese culture, moreover, has always had the ability to assimilate different peoples and exercise “localization” on foreign ideas (Ibid., p. 13). In regard to the relationship between language and culture, the authors state that the two are closely connected and that while the former is a central element in cultural globalization, the latter is increasingly important in international relations, with global cultural exchanges being a visible indicator of how globalization presently works (Ibid., pp. 4-5). In the current globalization era, English is still the global *lingua franca*, but it has competitors, among which there is Chinese, whose global demand has been growing since the 1980s; unsurprisingly, the Chinese government has been seeking to take advantage of this international popularity, in order to reach its goals of expanding the country’s economic, cultural, and diplomatic power (Ibid., p. 4 and p. 19). This task has been primarily carried out by the CIs, the “soft architecture” necessary to become a global player, which nonetheless have come after decades of success of other initiatives promoting the Chinese language abroad, such as the establishment of the *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* 汉语水平考试 (HSK, the Chinese proficiency test) (Ibid., pp. 19-22). In regard to China’s soft power, the authors state that language promotion activities, such as those carried out by CI centers, can help grow the country’s cultural power resources, but this is not necessarily equivalent to achieving desired policy outcomes (Ibid., pp. 22). Among the elements that can curtail China’s soft power, the authors include the lack of political credibility, the potential future disappearance of the country’s uniqueness, due to globalization and informatization, the infiltration of foreign cultures and languages, also previously discussed, and the competition of the country’s cultural power with Americanization or Westernization (Ibid.,

pp. 22-25). As for *putonghua*, finally, although the campaign for its promotion has created unity among Chinese speakers around the world, it is still an aspect characterized by “power-plays” at the local, national, and international levels; and certainly not free of crises: dialectal disputes in the overall Chinese speaking community, for instance, may pose a challenge to the global promotion of the Chinese language in the future (Ibid., pp. 25-26).

Judging from the number of foreign students in China, reported to have surpassed 377 thousand in 2014 (with over 36 thousand receiving a scholarship from the Chinese government) (Statista 2016), and pondering difficulties and benefits of living in China for foreign students, including, on the one hand, language experience with potential for career advancement and cultural immersion and, on the other hand, difficulties to learn the language and adapt to the local lifestyle (Urban 2015), the situation of international Chinese education appears to be both positive and debatable at the same time, leaving much room for future developments. The 2013 *Baogao* reports that although the global spread of Chinese had to face “resistance coming from every side” (*laizi ge fangmian de zuli* 来自各方面的阻力) it still obtained satisfying results, receiving widespread attention and approval (Sun Chunying 孙春颖 and Guo Xi 郭熙 2013, p. 175). Apart from the achievements of the CI project, the report records an expansion of Chinese language teaching within the international education system, an escalation of the number of test-takers in various Chinese examinations, and the fact that the US Department of State has classified Chinese as a “key language” (*guanjian yuyan* 关键语言) (Ibid., pp. 175-181). Worth mentioning is also the fact that the 2013 *Baogao* contains the text of the “Confucius Institute Development Plan” (*Kongzi Xueyuan Fazhan Guihua* 孔子学院发展规划) for the period 2012-2020, which aims to further strengthen the activities of the CIs and Sino-foreign educational exchanges and cooperation, ensuring that Chinese culture can go towards the world (Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzhi Xinxin Guanlisi, pp. 367-372).

Among Chinese sources, other positive evaluations of the CI project are offered by Liu Wei (2010), Wang Yue and Lü Meijia (2011), and Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013). Liu Wei (2010) analyzes the role of the CI project within the framework of cultural soft power; the author argues that this function finds expression mainly through two aspects: the inheritance and dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, on the rise domestically, and the promotion of a global understanding of Chinese culture, for which CIs create an international platform. As the representative individual of traditional Chinese culture, Confucius gives his name to the institutes dedicated to the popularization of Chinese language and culture, thus becoming the spokesperson for their promotion and dissemination and showing that traditional Chinese culture has evidently received the approval of the Chinese government (Ibid., p. 40). Moreover, CIs play an important role in accelerating the development of China’s cultural industry through the internationalization of China’s higher education, while being an important channel through which China’s cultural diplomacy can help establish a good international image for the country (Ibid., pp. 42-44). Similarly, Wang Yue and Lü Meijia (2011, p. 95) define the CI project as the “shiniest trademark incarnating China’s soft power” (*tixian Zhongguo “ruan shili” de zui liang pinpai* 中国“软实力”的最亮品牌), recognizing that, to some extent, the rapid expansion in the number of CI centers abroad is a manifestation of China’s determination to strive to expand its international influence. Language has the ability to penetrate slowly into the hearts and minds of learners, and while being a vector to export culture, it is also a vehicle to export a country’s system of values (Ibid.). Hong Xiaonan et al. (2013, p. 367), defines the CI project as “China’s successful case in the enhancement of the country’s cultural soft power” (*Zhongguo*

*tisheng guojia wenhua ruan shili de chenggong anli* 中国提升国家文化软实力的成功案例) and argues that language exchanges bear the weight of cultural blending; if China wants to promote a good image for its culture and communicate the scientific concept of peaceful development, then it must let the world know Chinese and allow it to speak it. The CI project precisely responds to these needs as it was established with the aim of increasing the understanding of every people in the world towards the Chinese language and culture and providing students in every country with a convenient learning environment; CI centers have made it possible for the people of every country to come into contact with authentic Chinese culture “at zero distance” (*lingjuli* 零距离) (Ibid.). Having drawn on the international experience in language promotion, the CI project has developed Chinese characteristics and, having become the brand of Chinese national culture (*guoxue* 国学) in the world, it benefits the enhancement of China’s cultural soft power, the promotion of Chinese culture, and cultural exchanges and fusion among China and every other country in the world (Ibid.).

An article drawn from the *Guangming Ribao* (*Guangming Daily*) and published on the website Renmin Wang in 2012 stresses the interconnection of “language soft power” (*yuyan ruan shili*), the “propagating force” (*chuanbo li* 传播力) of the language, and cultural soft power: language soft power is the core of cultural soft power, while the language’s propagating force is the emblem of language soft power (Liu Xiaotian 刘晓天 2012). Moreover, the dissemination of a country’s language in the world is the embodiment of that country’s international image, global status, and economic strength, while culture and values go along with language promotion (Ibid.). There is also mutual influence between the propagating force of a language and the enhancement of a country’s language soft power as the former pushes the latter, while the latter boosts the former; ultimately, establishing CIs worldwide and strengthening the propagating force of language constitute effective ways to enhance language soft power (Ibid.). And, consequently, cultural soft power.

Similar thoughts were also expressed by Hanban Director General Xu Lin, when she stated the following:

海外通过汉语学习中国文化、了解当代中国的需求十分迫切。“孔子学院”已成为体现中国“软实力”的最亮品牌。[...] 国家强则文化盛，国家强则语言强。

(cited in Xinhua Wang 2007)

Studying Chinese culture and understanding contemporary China through the Chinese language are urgent demands overseas. The “Confucius Institute” has already become the brightest trademark embodying China’s “soft power”. [...] When a country is strong then the culture is flourishing, when the culture is strong then the language is strong.

(Translated by the present author.)

### Closing remarks

多少年我們苦練英文發音和文法  
這幾年換他們卷著舌頭學平上去入的變化  
平平仄仄平平仄 (仄仄平平仄仄平)  
好聰明的中國人 好優美的中國話

全世界都在學中國話  
孔夫子的話 越來越國際化  
全世界都在講中國話  
我們說的話 讓世界都認真聽話

How many years did we painstakingly practice  
English pronunciation and learn their  
grammar?

For a change, now it's their turn to get their  
tongues all in a knot

[no translation available]

How smart the Chinese are! – and how  
beautiful our language!

The whole world is learning Chinese  
Confucius' words are becoming world culture  
The whole world is speaking Chinese  
Our language makes the people of the world  
listen up

(S.H.E 2007)<sup>116</sup>

These are passages drawn from the lyrics of a Taiwanese hit released in 2007 by the girl band S.H.E, entitled 中國話 *Zhongguohua* (Chinese Language)<sup>117</sup>. Praising Chinese as Confucius' language that the whole world wants to learn, the song also constitutes a hymn to the fever for “everything Chinese” that is taking over the world. But as is the case with every matter concerning the domestic and international management of Chinese language promotion, the feelings the song arouses are profound and not necessarily entirely positive. Foreigners are challenged to learn a language that is so hard as to “get their tongues all in a knot”, a dare that sounds as the “nationalistic comeback” of Chinese after years of “submission” to the English language. The matter would stop here if it was not for the fact the singers are part of a Taiwanese band which made the whole operation the target of harsh criticism: flattering the mainland by referring to the language of Confucius, and indirectly the CI project, and promoting a variety of Chinese that is now entirely different from Confucius' dialect, and partly from Taiwan's own national language, under the label “Confucius' words” were some of the critiques received by the band (Starr 2009, p. 67).

It is nonetheless interesting to note that a remake of “*Zhongguohua*” has also been proposed in a music video produced in 2011 by Martin Papp and Benji Schwartz, American performing artists based in Beijing, as reported on YouTube (Papp 2011). The video, which is provided with Chinese subtitles in simplified characters, was a way for the artist to fulfill his wish of having “fun making a Chinese song” and received 350 thousand views in Chinese video sites (Ibid.). Thus, regardless of the controversies over the song's Taiwanese origins, one can assume that this praise for the Chinese language, shared on this occasion by Chinese and foreign people alike, is an evident symbol of an increasingly strong confidence in the potentiality of the appeal the Chinese language and culture can exercise on the entire globe, drawing an ever-growing audience towards China. As well, this renewed assertiveness is an emblem, as well as an outcome, of the hundreds of years of struggle spent to modernize the country, reform the

<sup>116</sup> The lyrics are reported in traditional characters as in the original text of the Taiwanese song.

<sup>117</sup> According to Norman (1988, p. 137), “*Zhongguohua* 中国话” (literally, “the language of China”) is an old, colloquial term which refers to spoken forms of Chinese; it is used both for dialects and the standard language.

language, and reshape a strong cultural identity. Over the course of history, value has been increasingly placed on the unity of the Chinese people, not only politically but also linguistically and culturally. It is the “ownership of the national language” (Starr 2009, p. 67), or a popular manifestation of how the choice of language can be “of paramount importance to one’s identity construction” (Barr 2011, Chapter 4).

To conclude, this chapter has shown that, from the Chinese point of view, the management of language standardization and promotion at home and abroad can be considered as falling into the field of cultural soft power. This becomes a resource for China insofar as all branches of the PRC’s language policy require an effort of self-improvement, in terms of cohesion, union, identity, and even language purity, in order to be able to export a product, the Chinese language, that is well-defined and unique; and capable of attracting the entire world towards the appreciation of China. Given the long history of language reform and modernization and the value placed on the interconnection of concepts such as “one language”, “one country”, and “one nation”, it comes as no surprise that *putonghua* has been chosen as the language energetically promoted domestically and disseminated internationally in order to strengthen the cultural inner identity and external image of the Chinese people, regardless of the many issues that are still left unresolved. The gains that this endeavor, in terms of soft power outcomes on the global stage, may generate still remain difficult to evaluate; China’s efforts to enhance its cultural soft power are, however, very clear.



## Conclusions

Almost four years ago, when this research project started to take shape in the mind of the present writer, the primary aim was to explore the oft-debated idea of China-related scholars and pundits that a rising PRC can make use of the Chinese language and its worldwide promotion as a tool to enhance the effectiveness of its charm and as a resource of soft power. Given the knowledge acquired over a number of years of study of the Chinese language and culture, there was no question about the attractive force the Chinese language can exercise on foreign learners and, as well, an analysis of the PRC's linguistic panorama, which would provide the background for such a study, did not seem to present an insurmountable challenge for the present researcher. The statement that constituted the basis of the research problem upon which to build the study – Chinese language as a resource of soft power – did not seem overly complicated, yet extremely interesting. Contrariwise, the concept of soft power was rather new to the present writer, thereby triggering a genuine desire to investigate this increasingly popular area of international relations and global politics. As a matter of fact, the labels “China's soft power” and “Chinese soft power” had become part of the mainstream discussion on China's rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in such a way that required a more in-depth examination of the subject. Thus, an attempt to reinterpret the current make-up of the global balance of power from the point of view of China's rise and through the lenses of soft power came to constitute the onset of this research work, partially replacing the original goal. With the meaning of the theory proposed, at the beginning of the 1990s, by American scholar Joseph S. Nye becoming increasingly clear, thanks to the analysis of his pioneering works and the related literature, the first research step appeared to have been completed; the matter, however, was made more complicated by the realization that there exists a substantial difference between the Western and the Chinese interpretation of the concept of soft power. The research problem that had constituted the original basis of the present thesis took on an unexpected meaning, giving rise to a possibly more challenging goal: shedding light on the Chinese conception of soft power. Three main assumptions became the pillars sustaining the structure of this thesis; corroborated by secondary observations, these hypotheses can all be linked back to the difference detected between Western and Chinese soft power. By comparing Joseph S. Nye's soft power discourse with that presented in Chinese sources, including academic works, scholarly writings, political speeches, official documents, and media reports (for the most part, state media), the research process revealed the fundamental traits that separate the rhetoric of Chinese intellectuals, Party and government leaders, policy-makers, and policy-implementers from their Western counterparts.

First and foremost, the Chinese vision of soft power places emphasis on culture as the core in general, and on traditional Chinese culture in particular, striking a difference with Nye's conceptualization, which, developed in the context of the United States, mainly takes into consideration American pop culture among other soft power resources. Autochthonous Chinese characteristics inherited from the past and elements endemic to China's enduring culture and civilization have indeed allowed for the discourse on soft power in contemporary China to develop original features and break away from its Western origins. The emphasis historically placed on culture and civilization, in all their functions and connotations, enriches the Chinese discourse on soft power with unique Chinese practice so much so as to give shape to a “made-to-measure” interpretation, that of “*wenhua ruan shili*” (cultural soft power); this formulation peppers the Chinese soft power-related literature, both in the official and public arenas, and represents the outcome of the efforts made by Chinese scholars and political thinkers to link

China's past and present realities, converge them into this rather new conception of soft power, and generate a specific Chinese interpretation of "*ruan shili*" (soft power). This is rather removed from the idea of "soft power" as conceived by the American scholar, whose theory nonetheless remains the underlying basis upon which scientific analyses are usually built at the phase of inception. China no longer talks about soft power in a general way, but places the two characters for "*wenhua*" (culture) in front of the term "*ruan shili*", making clear that culture occupies the highest level in the soft power discourse, as institutions, systems of values, international discourse power, and foreign strategies are all dependent on its influence.

On balance, in evaluating the differentiating factors between the Chinese and Western discourse on soft power, it is evident that the interpretation given by the former is broader than that of the latter. It has become clear that in the Chinese context, soft power breaks the boundaries between areas of foreign and domestic policies and goes beyond the field of international relations. This realization can be thought of as being directly related to the emphasis placed on culture as the core of soft power, both "in" and "for" China; in the Chinese theory and practice of soft power, culture is widely recognized as a means to enhance the country's appeal and influence on the global stage, but also, and more importantly, as a means to meet China's domestic demands. In China, the originality of the theoretical framework sustaining the concept of soft power, which has undergone a process of re-elaboration, expansion, and localization after having become part of autochthonous scientific analyses, is such that it has given shape to a new vision and specific purposes that display a binary nature. The expectations raised by the assumptions posed were, thus, even exceeded; the hypothesis that one of the most salient differences between the American and Chinese discourses pertains to the field in which soft power is applied, with the former considering it a face of power that complements hard power in the field of international relations and world politics and the latter making it an important part of China's domestic cultural construction as well, was not only confirmed but the definitions that usually emerge in the literature on the nature of Chinese soft power analyzed – "holistic", "inward-looking and outward-looking", "dualistic", and "culture-based" – resulted to be also corroborated by even more relevance in relation to domestic priorities and the construction of resources that can benefit, first and foremost, the present-day Chinese society, while simultaneously boosting China's "*zonghe guoli*" (CNP).

The peculiarity that characterizes the vision of cultural soft power in China is the relevance it bears in strengthening the construction of the national culture and identity; in this sense, its basic orientation is in line with the concept of cultural strength, which is built at a national but also at an individual level. The scope of the Chinese concept of cultural soft power exceeds that of the West's soft power so much as to embrace multiple levels and, influenced by China's ancient philosophical thinking, even touch the life of every citizen. The construction of Chinese cultural soft power exists at the level of every individual because the whole nation is called to participate in its enhancement, through self-improvement and under the guidance of the Chinese leadership. Supported by a "system of socialist core values" (*shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi*) that represent the essence of socialist ideology, embracing Marxism adapted to the Chinese conditions, principles of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and traditional ethics inherited from the past, building cultural soft power strengthens inner qualities, ideals, and beliefs, enhances patriotism and consensus for the CPC, becomes a useful tool to unify ideology, and coalesces the people around the common goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The cultural revival the construction of soft power triggers in China is an aggregating

force that closely resembles the ability to bond and keep the Chinese people united historically displayed by culture and civilization.

Moreover, besides pursuing national purposes, domestic identity and culture-building is, for China, a way to also wield soft power internationally, in an intricate nexus that makes cultural soft power the basis of China's soft power. The Chinese "made-to-measure" interpretation of soft power is thus one that embraces both the domestic cultivation and building-up of resources, mainly cultural, which can be wielded within the country, but the effect of which can, nonetheless, also produce a soft power outcome on China's relations with the outside world. For this reason, the interpretation of Chinese soft power examined in this work embraces both cultural soft power as an innovative vision and as a new approach to China's domestic development within the country and the deployment of strategies aimed at enhancing the outcome that resources built at home can obtain abroad. Shared within Chinese academic and official circles, this multilayered interpretation is the symbol of both the idea of "what cultural soft power is" and "what cultural soft power does" in terms of its binary deployment. Domestically, the binary approach to soft power promotes China's traditional culture and the healthy development of a strong cultural life to accompany the society's material growth, while internationally it serves the purpose of making China's voice heard, establishing a positive international image as part of a favorable international environment and accelerating the construction of a harmonious world.

The peculiar features and connotations of the Chinese discourse on soft power reflect on the way the theory is turned into practice, as shown by the dynamics of the Chinese government's involvement in developing and promoting an action plan aimed at enhancing the role of culture as part of the country's soft power. Indeed, one of the key characteristics of Chinese soft power that the assumptions posed intended to prove is that, differently from the idea put forward by Joseph S. Nye, soft power strategies in the Chinese context take on the shape of a government project. The call to "enhance the country's cultural soft power" (*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*), officially put forward by Hu Jintao in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC in 2007, and reiterated by the current leadership, bears witness to the role of the government in setting the direction of this national strategy, not only in regard to the guidance given to orient the related intellectual and public debate, but also in terms of actions to take to actualize an increase in the country's cultural strength. Thus, the "made-to-measure" interpretation of soft power in the Chinese context appears to reclaim propriety on a foreign concept progressively "made Chinese" and this process is sustained by the presence of elements related to the relevance of culture-building not only in China's ancient doctrines but also in the official discourse of successive generations of CPC leaders, who appear to have accepted the mainstream vision that culture is the key to Chinese soft power. The Party and the State have actively engaged in the definition of a theoretical framework to support their determination to "enhance the country's cultural soft power", committing to the development of a system of actions aimed at reaching the desired goals, as shown by the evolution of the Chinese soft power theory and practice prior to 2007, then even more so in the years that followed until 2012, and with remarkable results still evident today. Chinese society has been involved in its entirety, with the state media and the general public collectively contributing to the dissemination and implementation of important cultural policies. Included in China's political jargon, the formulation "*tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili*" shows that the theory of soft power has evolved into that of "*wenhua ruan shili*", the enhancement of which has become a national project that is promoted by the Chinese leadership, popularized nationwide, and implemented through cultural

policies. In their function as formalized vocabulary, these expressions crystalize the Chinese vision of soft power, highlighting the belief that Chinese culture is an inborn advantage for China, the resourcefulness of which can be exploited for both an internal and an external betterment of China's status. But while an improvement of China's image and influence abroad is merely seen as a reflection of domestic dynamics, the priority is placed on enhancing or increasing (*tigao*) cultural soft power at home.

The active role of Party-State directives has helped create the foundations upon which to build and promote cultural soft power, through an acceleration in the development of the cultural industry and the stimulation of creativity. Building cultural soft power has thus a positive effect not only on the spiritual and intellectual lives of the people, but also on their material lives, as it boosts economic development through the gains obtained from cultural undertakings. Therefore, popularity of the concept of cultural soft power appears to have a monetary component as well; it is an investment the Chinese leadership is willing to make to respond to the need of enhancing the cultural resources of a country that, although supported by a strong economy, rises from a less advantageous position, in comparison to the West, in the international soft power competition. The placement of the word "culture" in front of "soft power" has detached the Chinese discourse from its Western origins, showing that the theory of cultural soft power can rightly be considered the inheritance of the relevance always placed on culture-building in China's social and political tradition; this has opened up new spaces for an effective use of soft power through its culture-building focus, making the achievement of an all-around betterment of China's domestic and international conditions in the age of China's rise the ultimate aim of China's cultural soft power.

Nevertheless, the Chinese vision of cultural soft power is not yet completely independent from the Western soft power concept; academic and political circles are still negotiating a clear-cut definition of its connotations and evaluating soft power resources suitable for the context of contemporary China. However, an increasingly higher degree of innovation in the Chinese discourse on soft power can be detected in the views expressed by intellectual and policy elites in recent years, and especially in the Xi Jinping era, accompanied by ever-growing cultural awareness and confidence, and the emerging strength in China's international "discourse power" (*huayu quan*). Culture is being envisioned as a symbol of China's renewed "wealth and power" (*fuqiang*) which indicates that the country is well on the path to becoming a "socialist cultural great power" (*shehuizhuyi wenhua qianguo*).

All together, these concluding remarks represent the results that have emerged from the different components of the present work, which in turn constitutes an attempt to examine the nature of Chinese soft power and progress from the idea of "China's soft power" to that of "Chinese soft power". It must be pointed out that, nevertheless, the researcher's interest for the Chinese language and the original objective of the present work were not lost; they have indeed become part of this complex, multilayered, and interdisciplinary analysis in two specific ways: first, through the examination of a variety of Chinese sources and, even more importantly, of the terminology used therein; and, second, through the topic that has become the focus of the case study, that is language standardization and promotion of *putonghua*, the official language of the PRC, as a potential resource of cultural soft power at home and abroad. In regard to the first point, in order to complete the task of shedding light on the nature of the Chinese discourse on soft power, and on the premise that the jargon used to discuss it is representative of the thoughts that constitute its basis, the examination of Chinese scholarly writings, media commentaries, and terminological elaborations has served to tackle, with positive results, the question as to

weather or not it is possible to talk about “soft power with Chinese characteristics”, as at times the literature suggests. Focusing on the term that constitutes, for the most part, the Chinese equivalent for the English expression “soft power”, that is “*ruan shili*”, and other related expressions, the investigation touched upon the very interpretation of the concept of “power” in the Chinese context, in general, and in this area of study, in particular, showing that, by opting for “*shili*” (strength) to translate the word “power” in the aforementioned formulation, the Chinese soft power discourse is connoted with emphasis on the idea of possessing inner qualities and natural strengths. In the Chinese view, the Western concept of soft power is transformed into one that is devoid of political connotations, to give shape to a new set of objectives that China intends to attain through soft power; above all, they include cultural construction aimed at reaching a variety of domestic and international purposes that are not strictly related to the pursue of hegemony. In a terminological perspective, this is made clear by the choice of vocabulary made among a variety of possibilities existing to translate “soft power”, while the derivative terms formed on the basis of “*ruan shili*”, although being in some cases rather obscure in their meaning, display the wider breadth of the Chinese discourse on soft power. Being one of these derivatives, the formulation “*wenhua ruan shili*” shows that emphasis is placed on “power” intended as an objective strength that China possesses, and that, not surprisingly, culture is chosen as the main resource of soft power, representing the inborn strength of China’s long-lasting civilization. The scholar or translator who approaches the Chinese soft power discourse, which is complex and variegated, at times even contradictory, must be aware of the conceptual and ideological orientations embedded in its terminology, namely the Chinese characteristics of soft power symbolized by every component of the formulations employed. This, in turn, would constitute a first step towards an improvement of the scientific soft power-related dialogue between the West and China, overcoming the misperceptions that arise, at times, in the related literature.

One of the biggest challenges the present author had to face in carrying out the tasks set for this research was the organization of an abundance of materials dealing with the topic of China’s soft power from different angles and in a variety of fields of research. The most appropriate method to handle such a complex task was the identification of two possible complementary perspectives: an international perspective, represented by the discourse on Chinese soft power, and a local perspective, represented by the Chinese discourse on soft power. This method proved useful to progressively move from the “big picture” of China’s soft power to a more and more detailed analysis of the very nature of the Chinese discourse on soft power. This macro-to-micro approach, in fact, detected a subtle difference between what can be considered the general discourse around “China’s soft power” and a more specific analysis of “Chinese soft power”. Although used interchangeably in the mainstream literature, further consideration should be given to the need to differentiate between these two related concepts. In this view, the present work, far from claiming to be the definitive authority in the research on soft power in the Chinese context, constitutes an attempt to this end, detecting that, when talking about China’s soft power, reference is made, by and large, to the country’s resources and their outcomes in the field of international relations, while, when discussing Chinese soft power, the focus should expand also to an analysis of the elements that constitute the conception of soft power in China. The latter can certainly embrace the meaning of the former and for this reason it was extensively used in this work. Similarly, the Chinese discourse on soft power is, for the most part, comprehensive and detailed, encompassing both aspects. On balance, the risk is significant when, for instance, confusion between the concepts of “*ruan shili*” and “*wenhua*

*ruan shili*” can lead to a misreading of the *Chinese discourse on soft power*, and consequently to a misuse of the relevant distinction between this and the *discourse on Chinese soft power* at an international level.

Therefore, the study of Chinese soft power requires further refinement and this work is presented with the hope that it will inspire interest in the reader to pursue more in-depth analyses. The case study proposed, besides responding, as mentioned above, to the interest of the present researcher in China’s language situation, elaborates on an area that requires as much attention. Maintaining the same two-pronged approach that characterized the entire work, that is investigating domestic and international dynamics in the binary definition, development, and deployment of cultural soft power, the case study constituted an attempt to examine the PRC’s language policy in relation to the subject explored here. This was done on the premise that the management of the domestic and international promotion of *putonghua*, provides a specific example of China’s cultural soft power at work, against the background of the strategic goals pursued by the Chinese leadership through the enhancement of the country’s cultural strength. Through an overview of the history of language reform in China, which happened in parallel with the process of modernization the country experienced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the vicissitudes that led to the proposal of *putonghua* and the use of simplified characters as the country’s spoken and written standards, it was shown how relevant language uniformity was for the making of the Chinese nation. Today, maintaining language unity remains, for PRC authorities, equally important, since the promotion of the national language is envisioned as an essential component in the establishment of a harmonious society. The current PRC language policy can thus be thought of as a strategy to continue to promote *putonghua* across the country and regulate the healthy development of China’s “language life”, tapping into the value that the Chinese language, especially in its written form, has always had as a cohering force for the Chinese people. Belonging to the overall field of cultural policy, that of the language policy is a discourse that appears to be linked to the enhancement of the country’s strength, national unity, and sovereignty, making the links between the theory and practice of cultural soft power and language standardization and promotion emerge with clarity; an increase in the strength of the national language and the harmonious development of society’s language life are resources that can improve the citizens’ cultural life and participate in the enhancement of cultural soft power, as the identification with a single, unified language can become a tool to increase national cohesion and infuse into the people a sense of identity and belonging. But as is the case for cultural soft power in general, there is a dual approach also in the design of language policy: Chinese can constitute a key instrument through which Chinese culture is expressed to the outside world as is shown by the presence, among the derivative terms generated based on the expanded interpretation of soft power presented above, of the collocation “language soft power” (*yuyan ruan shili*) which emerges in relation to the idea that language is a vehicle and important constituent of culture as well as one of the major indicators of a country’s soft power. Based on the prerequisite that China can present to the world a harmonious and cohesive cultural and linguistic environment, the international promotion of the Chinese language can draw foreign people towards the appreciation of China, a goal which is achieved through language standardization and promotion at home first and foremost. In practical terms, this means that China’s language policy, which ultimately aims to enhance linguistic uniformity as a key component of the country’s self-improvement, cultural construction, and cultural soft power enhancement, has a reflection on the management of the global spread of Chinese, embodied today in the worldwide promotion of *putonghua* and, more specifically, in the activities of the

Confucius Institute project. In this process, there nonetheless remain a variety of aspects related to the people's language habits that may weaken the cohesiveness of the Chinese nation, pose a threat to social harmony, and even harm the beauty of the Chinese language. In this sense, besides having to efficiently manage the relationships between *putonghua* and the languages of China's various ethnic groups, their mutual interactions, the delicate coexistence of the standard language and Chinese dialects, and the contacts between Chinese and foreign languages, the relationship between the domestic popularization of *putonghua* and its international diffusion is another aspect that requires monitoring by language authorities.

These are all aspects that ignite deep passions within China's populous, multiethnic, multilingual, and multidialectal society; belonging to the same language policy structure, the management of language promotion internationally appears to display similar characteristics to that of language standardization and promotion domestically, in some cases raising as many concerns. Overall, the activities carried out by the Confucius Institutes are seen as a positive symbolic outcome of China's effort to enhance the efficiency of its cultural attractiveness overseas, with supporters labeling it a "trademark" of China's soft power; but detractors highlight utilitarian purposes in the way these language and cultural centers work, pointing the finger to the presence of a political agenda behind their establishment. Similarly, the overall discussion around China's soft power is peppered with controversies regarding, for instance, the financial component of some of China's soft power endeavors or their propagandistic purpose of molding a positive national image, rebutting the "China threat theory", and ultimately creating alliances in the international arena.

These considerations indicate that the study of soft power in the Chinese context still presents a variety of aspects that are left unresolved, remaining open to further investigations. What the present author hopes to have shown is the relevance of this field both in China and for the study of contemporary China. As a country that is well on the path to rise to a renewed position of great power, China is making considerable efforts to define and put in practice a theory of soft power suitable for its characteristics. Laden with all the features described, that of "*wenhua ruan shili*" is the concept that most appropriately describes the PRC's approach to soft power and its multiple objectives. It is the present writer's opinion that to best describe the focus on the country's inner qualities displayed by the Chinese theory and practice of cultural soft power, without neglecting, however, its international reflections, is a Chinese idiom that emerged in the study of materials carried out in this thesis: "the cleverest wife cannot cook without rice".





## Glossary

Selected terms of Chinese soft power

城市软实力	<i>chengshi ruan shili</i>	urban soft power
传统文化	<i>chuantong wenhua</i>	traditional culture
创造力	<i>chuangzaoli</i>	creativity
道德	<i>daode</i>	ethics; morals
感召力	<i>ganzhaoli</i>	appeal; power to inspire
国际竞争力	<i>guoji jingzhengli</i>	international competitiveness
国家软实力	<i>guojia ruan shili</i>	national soft power
国家文化软实力	<i>guojia wenhua ruan shili</i>	national cultural soft power
国力	<i>guoli</i>	national power
号召力	<i>haozhaoli</i>	power to rally supporters
和谐	<i>hexie</i>	harmony
价值观念	<i>jiazhi guannian</i>	values
经济	<i>jingji</i>	economy; economics
经济软实力	<i>jingji ruan shili</i>	economic soft power
精神文化生活	<i>jingshen wenhua shenghuo</i>	spiritual and cultural life
军事	<i>junshi</i>	military
军事软实力	<i>junshi ruan shili</i>	military soft power
力量	<i>liliang</i>	physical strength; power; force; strength
魅力	<i>meili</i>	charm
民族凝聚力	<i>minzu ningjuli</i>	national cohesion
凝聚力	<i>ningjuli</i>	cohesion; cohesiveness; cohesive force
企业软实力	<i>qiye ruan shili</i>	enterprise soft power
亲和力	<i>qinheli</i>	affinity
区域软实力	<i>quyu ruan shili</i>	regional soft power
权力	<i>quanli</i>	power; authority
软实力	<i>ruan shili</i>	soft power
社会主义核心价值观体系	<i>shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi tixi</i>	system of socialist core values
社会主义核心价值观	<i>shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhiguan</i>	socialist core value system; socialist core values
社会主义文化	<i>shehuizhuyi wenhua</i>	socialist culture
社会主义文化强国	<i>shehuizhuyi wenhua qiangguo</i>	socialist cultural great power
社会主义先进文化	<i>shehuizhuyi xianjin wenhua</i>	advanced socialist culture
生命力	<i>shengmingli</i>	vitality
实力	<i>shili</i>	actual strength; strength (power)
思维软实力	<i>siwei ruan shili</i>	thought soft power
提高国家文化软实力	<i>tigao guojia wenhua ruan shili</i>	enhance the country's cultural soft power
同化	<i>tonghua</i>	assimilation

文化	<i>wenhua</i>	culture
文化安全	<i>wenhua anquan</i>	cultural security
文化力	<i>wenhua li</i>	cultural strength
文化软实力	<i>wenhua ruan shili</i>	cultural soft power
文化自觉	<i>wenhua zijue</i>	cultural awareness
文化自信	<i>wenhua zixin</i>	cultural confidence
吸引力	<i>xiyinli</i>	attractiveness; attractive force
向心力	<i>xiangxinli</i>	centripetal force
影响力	<i>yingxiangli</i>	influence
语言软实力	<i>yuyan ruan shili</i>	language soft power
政治	<i>zhengzhi</i>	politics
政治软实力	<i>zhengzhi ruan shili</i>	political soft power
中国特色社会主义	<i>Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi</i>	socialism with Chinese characteristics
中华民族伟大复兴	<i>Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing</i>	great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation
自我提升	<i>ziwo tisheng</i>	self-improvement
综合国力	<i>zonghe guoli</i>	comprehensive national power (CNP); overall national strength
综合国力竞争	<i>zonghe guoli jingzheng</i>	competition in overall national strength

## **Appendices**



## 胡锦涛在党的十七大上的报告

2007年10月24日 20:58 来源：新华社

【字号大中小】 【打印】 【关闭】 【Email推荐:  提交】

### 七、推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣

当今时代，文化越来越成为民族凝聚力和创造力的重要源泉、越来越成为综合国力竞争的重要因素，丰富精神文化生活越来越成为我国人民的热切愿望。要坚持社会主义先进文化前进方向，兴起社会主义文化建设新高潮，激发全民族文化创造活力，提高国家文化软实力，使人民基本文化权益得到更好保障，使社会文化生活更加丰富多彩，使人民精神风貌更加昂扬向上。

(一) 建设社会主义核心价值体系，增强社会主义意识形态的吸引力和凝聚力。社会主义核心价值体系是社会主义意识形态的本质体现。要巩固马克思主义指导地位，坚持不懈地用马克思主义中国化最新成果武装全党、教育人民，用中国特色社会主义共同理想凝聚力量，用以爱国主义为核心的民族精神和以改革创新为核心的时代精神鼓舞斗志，用社会主义荣辱观引领风尚，巩固全党全国各族人民团结奋斗的共同思想基础。大力推进理论创新，不断赋予当代中国马克思主义鲜明的实践特色、民族特色、时代特色。开展中国特色社会主义理论体系宣传普及活动，推动当代中国马克思主义大众化。推进马克思主义理论研究和建设工程，深入回答重大理论和实际问题，培养造就一批马克思主义理论家特别是中青年理论家。切实把社会主义核心价值体系融入国民教育和精神文明建设全过程，转化为人民的自觉追求。积极探索用社会主义核心价值体系引领社会思潮的有效途径，主动做好意识形态工作，既尊重差异、包容多样，又有力抵制各种错误和腐朽思想的影响。繁荣发展哲学社会科学，推进学科体系、学术观点、科研方法创新，鼓励哲学社会科学界为党和人民事业发挥思想库作用，推动我国哲学社会科学优秀成果和优秀人才走向世界。

(二) 建设和谐文化，培育文明风尚。和谐文化是全体人民团结进步的重要精神支撑。要积极发展新闻出版、广播影视、文学艺术事业，坚持正确导向，弘扬社会正气。重视城乡、区域文化协调发展，着力丰富农村、偏远地区、进城务工人员的精神文化生活。加强网络文化建设和管理，营造良好网络环境。大力弘扬爱国主义、集体主义、社会主义思想，以增强诚信意识为重点，加强社会公德、职业道德、家庭美德、个人品德建设，发挥道德模范榜样作用，引导人们自觉履行法定义务、社会责任、家庭责任。加强和改进思想政治工作，注重人文关怀和心理疏导，用正确方式处理人际关系。动员社会各方面共同做好青少年思想道德教育工作，为青少年健康成长创造良好社会环境。深入开展群众性精神文明创建活动，完善社会志愿服务体系，形成男女平等、尊老爱幼、互爱互助、见义勇为的社会风尚。弘扬科学精神，普及科学知识。广泛开展全民健身运动。办好二〇〇八年奥运会、残奥会和二〇一〇年世博会。

(三) 弘扬中华文化，建设中华民族共有精神家园。中华文化是中华民族生生不息、团结奋进的不竭动力。要全面认识祖国传统文化，取其精华，去其糟粕，使之与当代社会相适应、与现代文明相协调，保持民族性，体现时代性。加强优秀传统文化传统教育，运用现代科技手段开发利用民族文化丰厚资源。加强对各民族文化的挖掘和保护，重视文物和非物质文化遗产保护，做好文化典籍整理工作。加强对外文化交流，吸收各国优秀文明成果，增强中华文化国际影响力。

(四) 推进文化创新，增强文化发展活力。在时代的高起点上推动文化内容形式、体制机制、传播手段创新，解放和发展文化生产力，是繁荣文化的必由之路。要坚持为人民服务、为社会主义服务的方向和百花齐放、百家争鸣的方针，贴近实际、贴近生活、贴近群众，始终把社会效益放在首位，做到经济效益与社会效益相统一。创作更多反映人民主体地位和现实生活、群众喜闻乐见的优秀精神文化产品。深化文化体制改革，完善扶持公益性文化事业、发展文化产业、鼓励文化创新的政策，营造有利于出精品、出人才、出效益的环境。坚持把发展公益性文化事业作为保障人民基本文化权益的主要途径，加大投入力度，加强社区和乡村文化设施建设。大力发展文化产业，实施重大文化产业项目带动战略，加快文化产业基地和区域性特色文化产业群建设，培育文化产业骨干企业和战略投资者，繁荣文化市场，增强国际竞争力。运用高新技术创新文化生产方式，培育新的文化业态，加快构建传输快捷、覆盖广泛的文化传播体系。设立国家荣誉制度，表彰有杰出贡献的文化工作者。

中华民族伟大复兴必然伴随着中华文化繁荣兴盛。要充分发挥人民在文化建设中的主体作用，调动广大文化工作者的积极性，更加自觉、更加主动地推动文化大发展大繁荣，在中国特色社会主义的伟大实践中进行文化创造，让人民共享文化发展成果。

## Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 17th Party Congress

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### VII. Promoting Vigorous Development and Prosperity of Socialist Culture

In the present era, culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength, and the Chinese people have an increasingly ardent desire for a richer cultural life. We must keep to the orientation of advanced socialist culture, bring about a new upsurge in socialist cultural development, stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation, and enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests, enrich the cultural life in Chinese society and inspire the enthusiasm of the people for progress.

1. Build up the system of socialist core values and make socialist ideology more attractive and cohesive. The system of socialist core values represents the essence of socialist ideology. We must consolidate the guiding position of Marxism, persistently arm the whole Party with and educate the people in the latest achievements in adapting Marxism to Chinese conditions, rally the people with our common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics, inspire the people with patriotism-centered national spirit and with the spirit of the times centering on reform and innovation, guide social ethos with the socialist maxims of honor and disgrace, and solidify the common ideological basis of the joint endeavor of the whole Party and the people of all ethnic groups. We will make every effort to carry out theoretical innovation and give Marxism of contemporary China distinct characters of practice, of the Chinese nation and of the times. We will publicize the theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and take Marxism of contemporary China to the general public. We will carry on the Project to Study and Develop Marxist Theory to provide in-depth answers to major theoretical and practical questions and to bring up a group of Marxist theoreticians, especially young and middle-aged ones. We will incorporate the socialist core values into all stages of national education and the entire process of cultural and ethical progress to make them the targets pursued by the people of their own accord. We will explore effective ways of letting the system of socialist core values guide trends of thought and take the initiative in ideological work, respecting divergence and allowing diversity while effectively resisting the influence of erroneous and decadent ideas. We will develop philosophy and social sciences, promoting innovation in academic disciplines, academic viewpoints and research methods. We encourage people working in these fields to serve as a think tank for the cause of the Party and the people, and we will introduce related outstanding achievements and distinguished scholars to the world arena.

2. Foster a culture of harmony and cultivate civilized practices. A culture of harmony provides important intellectual support for the unity and progress of all our people. We must step up the development of the press, publishing, radio, film, television, literature and art, give correct guidance to the public and foster healthy social trends. We must balance cultural development between urban and rural areas and among different regions, focusing on enriching the cultural life in rural and remote areas and of rural migrant workers in cities. We will strengthen efforts to develop and manage Internet culture and foster a good cyber environment. We will promote patriotism, collectivism and socialist ideology. With the emphasis on enhancing people's awareness of integrity, we will promote social ethics, professional codes of conduct, family virtues and individual morality, let paragons of virtue serve as role models for society, and guide people in conscientiously carrying out legal obligations and social and family responsibilities. We will strengthen and improve our ideological and political work, paying attention to compassionate care and psychological counseling and correctly handling interpersonal relations. We will mobilize all sectors of society in doing a good job of ideological and moral education among young people and create a favorable environment for their healthy development. We will carry out intensive activities to promote cultural and ethical progress among the public, improve the system of voluntary public services, and encourage practices such as upholding gender equality, respecting the elderly, caring for the young, showing concern for and helping each other and coming to the rescue of others even at risk to oneself. We will promote the scientific spirit and spread scientific knowledge. We will launch extensive public fitness programs and ensure the success of the 2008 Olympic Games and the Paralympics in Beijing and the 2010 World Exposition in Shanghai.

3. Promote Chinese culture and build the common spiritual home for the Chinese nation. Chinese culture has been an unending driving force for the Chinese nation to keep its unity and make progress from generation to generation. We must have a comprehensive understanding of traditional Chinese culture, keep its essence and discard its dross to enable it to fit in with present-day society, stay in harmony with modern civilization, keep its national character and reflect changes of the times. We will further publicize the fine traditions of Chinese culture and use modern means of science and technology to exploit the rich resources of our national culture. We will explore and better protect the cultures of all ethnic groups, attach great importance to the protection of cultural relics and intangible cultural heritage and do a good job collating ancient books and records. We will also strengthen international cultural exchanges to draw on the fine achievements of foreign cultures and enhance the influence of Chinese culture worldwide.

4. Stimulate cultural innovation and enhance the vitality of cultural development. The only way to invigorate culture is to promote innovation in its content and form, its structure and mechanism, and its means of dissemination from the high starting point of our times and release and develop its productive forces. We must keep to the orientation of serving the people and socialism, uphold the principle of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend, and maintain close contact with reality, life and the public. We must always give top priority to social benefits and try to ensure both good economic returns and social benefits. We must create more excellent, popular works that reflect the people's principal position in the country and their real life. We must deepen cultural restructuring and improve the policies for supporting nonprofit cultural programs, developing the cultural industry and encouraging cultural innovation, so as to create favorable conditions for producing fine works, outstanding personnel and good results. We must continue to develop nonprofit cultural programs as the main approach to ensuring the basic cultural rights and interests of the people, increase spending on such programs, and build more cultural facilities in urban communities and rural areas. We must vigorously develop the cultural industry, launch major projects to lead the industry as a whole, speed up development of cultural industry bases and clusters of cultural industries with regional features, nurture key enterprises and strategic investors, create a thriving cultural market and enhance the industry's international competitiveness. We will use new and high technology to create new ways of producing cultural works, foster new forms of operation in the cultural industry and accelerate the establishment of a dissemination system featuring fast communication and wide coverage. We will establish a national system of honors for outstanding cultural workers.

The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will definitely be accompanied by the thriving of Chinese culture. We will give full scope to the principal position of the people in cultural development, arouse the enthusiasm of cultural workers, promote vigorous development and prosperity of culture more conscientiously and actively, and create cultural works in the great practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics, so that the people will share in the benefits of cultural development.

Xinhua News Agency (2007)

## 胡锦涛在中国共产党第十八次全国代表大会上的报告

2012年11月17日 20:12:16

来源：新华社



【字号：大 中 小】 【打印】 【纠错】

### 六、扎实推进社会主义文化强国建设

文化是民族的血脉，是人民的精神家园。全面建成小康社会，实现中华民族伟大复兴，必须推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣，兴起社会主义文化建设新高潮，提高国家文化软实力，发挥文化引领风尚、教育人民、服务社会、推动发展的作用。

建设社会主义文化强国，必须走中国特色社会主义文化发展道路，坚持为人民服务、为社会主义服务的方向，坚持百花齐放、百家争鸣的方针，坚持贴近实际、贴近生活、贴近群众的原则，推动社会主义精神文明和物质文明全面发展，建设面向现代化、面向世界、面向未来的，民族的、科学的、大众的社会主义文化。

建设社会主义文化强国，关键是增强全民族文化创造活力。要深化文化体制改革，解放和发展文化生产力，发扬学术民主、艺术民主，为人民提供广阔文化舞台，让一切文化创造源泉充分涌流，开创全民族文化创造活力持续迸发、社会文化生活更加丰富多彩、人民基本文化权益得到更好保障、人民思想道德素质和科学文化素质全面提高、中华文化国际影响力不断增强的新局面。

(一) 加强社会主义核心价值体系建设。社会主义核心价值体系是兴国之魂，决定着中国特色社会主义发展方向。要深入开展社会主义核心价值体系学习教育，用社会主义核心价值体系引领社会思潮、凝聚社会共识。推进马克思主义中国化时代化大众化，坚持不懈用中国特色社会主义理论体系武装全党、教育人民，深入实施马克思主义理论研究和建设工程，建设哲学社会科学创新体系，推动中国特色社会主义理论体系进教材进课堂进头脑。广泛开展理想信念教育，把广大人民团结凝聚在中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜之下。大力弘扬民族精神和时代精神，深入开展爱国主义、集体主义、社会主义教育，丰富人民精神世界，增强人民精神力量。倡导富强、民主、文明、和谐，倡导自由、平等、公正、法治，倡导爱国、敬业、诚信、友善，积极培育和践行社会主义核心价值观。牢牢掌握意识形态工作领导权和主导权，坚持正确导向，提高引导能力，壮大主流思想舆论。

(二) 全面提高公民道德素质。这是社会主义道德建设的基本任务。要坚持依法治国和以德治国相结合，加强社会公德、职业道德、家庭美德、个人品德教育，弘扬中华传统美德，弘扬时代新风。推进公民道德建设工程，弘扬真善美、贬斥假恶丑，引导人们自觉履行法定义务、社会责任、家庭责任，营造劳动光荣、创造伟大的社会氛围，培育知荣辱、讲正气、作奉献、促和谐的良好风尚。深入开展道德领域突出问题专项教育和治理，加强政务诚信、商务诚信、社会诚信和司法公信建设。加强和改进思想政治工作，注重人文关怀和心理疏导，培育自尊自信、理性平和、积极向上的社会心态。深化群众性精神文明创建活动，广泛开展志愿服务，推动学雷锋活动、学习宣传道德模范常态化。

(三) 丰富人民精神文化生活。让人民享有健康丰富的精神文化生活，是全面建成小康社会的重要内容。要坚持以人民为中心的创作导向，提高文化产品质量，为人民提供更好更多精神食粮。坚持面向基层、服务群众，加快推进重点文化惠民工程，加大对农村和欠发达地区文化建设的帮扶力度，继续推动公共文化服务设施向社会免费开放。建设优秀传统文化传承体系，弘扬中华优秀传统文化。推广和规范使用国家通用语言文字。繁荣发展少数民族文化事业。开展群众性文化活动，引导群众在文化建设中自我表现、自我教育、自我服务。开展全民阅读活动。加强和改进网络内容建设，唱响网上主旋律。加强网络社会管理，推进网络依法规范有序运行。开展“扫黄打非”，抵制低俗现象。普及科学知识，弘扬科学精神，提高全民科学素养。广泛开展全民健身运动，促进群众体育和竞技体育全面发展。

(四) 增强文化整体实力和竞争力。文化实力和竞争力是国家富强、民族振兴的重要标志。要坚持把社会效益放在首位、社会效益和经济效益相统一，推动文化事业全面繁荣、文化产业快速发展。发展哲学社会科学、新闻出版、广播影视、文学艺术事业。加强重大公共文化工程和文化项目建设，完善公共文化服务体系，提高服务效能。促进文化和科技融合，发展新型文化业态，提高文化产业规模化、集约化、专业化水平。构建和发展现代传播体系，提高传播能力。增强国有公益性文化单位活力，完善经营性文化单位法人治理结构，繁荣文化市场。扩大文化领域对外开放，积极吸收借鉴国外优秀文化成果。营造有利于高素质文化人才大量涌现、健康成长的良好环境，造就一批名家大师和民族文化代表人物，表彰有杰出贡献的文化工作者。

我们一定要坚持社会主义先进文化前进方向，树立高度的文化自觉和文化自信，向着建设社会主义文化强国宏伟目标阔步前进。

## Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 18th Party Congress

English.news.cn 2012-11-17 23:45:56



### VI. Developing a Strong Socialist Culture in China

Culture is the lifeblood of a nation, and it gives the people a sense of belonging. To complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and achieve the great renewal of the Chinese nation, we must create a new surge in promoting socialist culture and bring about its great development and enrichment, increase China's cultural soft power, and enable culture to guide social trends, educate the people, serve society, and boost development.

To develop a strong socialist culture in China, we must take the socialist path of promoting cultural advance with Chinese characteristics. We should adhere to the goal of serving the people and socialism, the policy of having a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend, and the principle of maintaining close contact with reality, life and the people. We should fully promote socialist cultural and ethical progress and material progress, and develop a national, scientific, and people-oriented socialist culture that embraces modernization, the world, and the future.

To develop a strong socialist culture in China, it is critical to inspire the cultural creativity of the whole nation. We should deepen reform of the cultural sector, release and develop cultural productive forces, foster a democratic atmosphere in both academic research and artistic pursuit, create a vast cultural arena for the people and encourage the free flow of cultural inspiration from all sources. By doing so, we will open up a new horizon in promoting China's cultural advance: The Chinese nation's cultural creativity will continuously burst forth; China's cultural life will flourish as never before; people's basic cultural rights and interests will be better protected; the ethical and moral standards as well as the scientific and cultural standards of the people will be fully raised, and the international influence of Chinese culture will steadily increase.

#### 1. Strengthen core socialist values

Core socialist values are the soul of the Chinese nation and serve as the guide for building socialism with Chinese characteristics. We should carry out thorough study of and education in these values and use them to guide social trends of thought and forge public consensus. We should continue to adapt Marxism to China's conditions in keeping up with the times and increase its appeal to the people, work hard to equip the whole Party with the system of theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics and educate the people in these theories. We should further implement the national project to study and develop Marxist theory, build an innovation system in philosophy and the social sciences, incorporate the system of theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics into the curriculum and make it a way of thinking. We should carry out extensive education about our ideal and conviction, and rally the people under the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics. We should vigorously foster China's national character and promote the underlying trend of the times, intensify education in patriotism, collectivism and socialism, and enrich people's cultural life and enhance their moral strength. We should promote prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony, uphold freedom, equality, justice and the rule of law and advocate patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship, so as to cultivate and observe core socialist values. We should maintain leadership and initiative in theoretical work, provide correct guidance, enhance our ability to guide public opinion, and strengthen the influence of the underlying trend of thought in our country.

#### 2. Improve civic morality in an all-around way

This is the basic task for strengthening socialist morals. We should integrate the rule of law with the rule of virtue, intensify education in public morality, professional ethics, family virtues, and individual integrity, and advocate traditional Chinese virtues and new trends of the times. We should press ahead with the program for improving civic morality, exalt the true, the good, and the beautiful and reject the false, the evil, and the ugly. We should encourage people to willingly meet their statutory duties and obligations to society and family. We should create a social atmosphere in which work is honored and creation is lauded, and cultivate social trends of recognizing honor and disgrace, practicing integrity, encouraging dedication, and promoting harmony. We should carry out thorough education to address serious ethical problems, and step up efforts to enhance government integrity, business and social ethics and judicial integrity. We should strengthen and improve education in values, provide compassionate care and psychological counseling, and cultivate self-respect, self-confidence, a sense of being rational, composure, and a desire to excel oneself among the people. We should conduct more public activities to promote cultural and ethical progress, encourage volunteer service, and carry out regular activities to learn from paragons of virtue such as Lei Feng and publicize their exemplary deeds.

#### 3. Enrich people's intellectual and cultural lives

Enabling the people to lead healthy and rich intellectual and cultural lives is an important part of our efforts to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. We should pursue people-centered cultural creation, and create better cultural products to provide the people with more and better nourishments for the mind. We should be community- and people-focused in our cultural work, carry out at a faster pace key cultural projects that benefit the people, increase support for promoting cultural progress in rural areas and underdeveloped areas and open more public cultural service facilities to the public free of charge. We should develop a system for carrying forward fine traditional culture and promote outstanding traditional Chinese culture. We should extend and standardize the use of the standard Chinese language. We should promote the development and flourishing of cultural activities of ethnic minorities. We should carry out public cultural activities and guide the people to express, educate, and serve themselves in the course of developing culture. We should launch reading programs for the general public. We should improve the contents of online services and advocate healthy themes on the Internet. We should strengthen social management of the Internet and promote orderly network operation in accordance with laws and regulations. We should crack down on pornography and illegal publications and resist vulgar trends. We should extend scientific knowledge, foster respect for science, and make the whole nation better educated in science. We should carry out fitness activities across the country and fully promote both recreational and competitive sports.

#### 4. Enhance the overall strength and international competitiveness of Chinese culture

The strength and international competitiveness of Chinese culture are an important indicator of China's power and prosperity and the renewal of the Chinese nation. We should promote rapid development and all-around flourishing of the cultural industry and cultural services and ensure both social effect and economic benefits, with priority on the former. We should develop philosophy and the social sciences, the press and publishing, radio, television and films, and literature and art. We should launch more major public cultural projects and programs, improve the public cultural service system, and make such services more efficient. We should promote integration of culture with science and technology, develop new forms of cultural operations, and make cultural operations larger in size and more specialized. We should develop a modern communications network to improve our capacity for communications. We should invigorate state-owned non-profit cultural institutions, improve corporate governance of profit-oriented cultural entities, and create a thriving cultural market. We should open the cultural sector wider to the outside world and draw on cultural achievements of other countries. We should foster a fine environment that enables a large number of talented cultural figures, particularly eminent cultural figures and representatives of Chinese culture, to distinguish themselves in artistic pursuit. We should honor cultural personalities with outstanding contribution.

We must adhere to the goal of advancing socialist culture, deepen our awareness of and confidence in Chinese culture, and strive to meet the grand goal of developing a strong socialist culture in China.

Xinhua News Agency (2012d)



Zhang Guozuo: Zhongguo ruan shili juyou “yi wenhua tianxia” de tese 张国祚：中国软实力具有“以文化天下”的特色’ [Zhang Guozuo: Chinese soft power has the characteristic of “ruling the world with culture”]  
(Renmin Wang 2015a)

## 张国祚：中国软实力具有“以文化天下”的特色

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原标题：中国软实力的特色与力量（学苑论衡）

软实力概念由美国哈佛大学教授约瑟夫·奈于上世纪90年代提出，传播到我国已有20多年。“橘生淮南则为橘，生于淮北则为枳”，软实力吸收了中华文化的水土和阳光雨露后，不仅充满生机，而且呈现出鲜明的中国特色，形成了自己的独特力量。

### 中国软实力具有“以文化天下”的特色

强调中国特色，绝非人为地划定一条狭隘的民族主义界限。人类文明总是在各民族文化相互碰撞、相互交织、相互借鉴、相互吸收中向前发展的。但软实力作为上层建筑，不可能不受特定国家的经济基础、政治制度、国家利益所制约，不可能不具有意识形态属性，不可能不形成有别于其他民族和国家的特色。由此，中国软实力建设必然会也应该“以我为主，为我所用”。党的十七大提出文化软实力概念，是中国软实力打造自己特色的一个重要标志，彰显了中国软实力“以文化天下”的情怀。十八大以来，习近平同志关于“夯实国家文化软实力根基”“传播当代中国价值观念”“展示中华文化的独特魅力”“树立当代中国国家形象”“提升中国国际话语权”等一系列重要论述，则是中国文化软实力建设“以我为主，为我所用”的集中体现。综合来看，中国文化软实力是对西方软实力的实质性改造和创新。

改变了软实力的宗旨。美国把软实力作为推行霸权主义和强权政治的一个重要手段。中国则把提高文化软实力作为增强综合国力和国际影响力的重要途径：对内，是为了加强社会主义核心价值观建设，弘扬中华优秀传统文化，培育高尚思想道德，增强全党、全军、全国人民的凝聚力；对外，是为了传播中国的立场和声音，树立良好的国际形象，营造良好的国际环境，推动构建和平、和谐、合作的世界。

拓展了软实力的内涵。中国不再把软实力限定为文化的吸引力、制度和价值观的吸引力、掌握国际话语权的能力，而是使之涵盖除物质硬实力以外的精神、智慧、情感的力量，主

要包括文化的吸引力、语言的说服力、理想的感召力、精神的鼓舞力、智慧的创造力、道德的感染力、理论的指导力、舆论的引导力、艺术的征服力等。

建构了新的理论体系。中国不再一般地谈论软实力，而是在软实力前面冠以文化二字，使文化成为软实力的核心词；不再把文化同构成软实力的其他要素并列，而是确立文化在软实力中最高层次的定位，强调文化对软实力其他要素的引领作用。这是因为制度、价值观、掌握国际话语权、外交谋略等软实力要素，无不深受文化的制约和影响。

#### 中国文化软实力的理论和实践力量

中国文化软实力不仅超越了软实力概念提出者最初的思想界域，具有鲜明的中国特色，而且表现出巨大的理论和实践力量。

明晰软实力概念，为软实力的范畴规划、理论深化及系统研究奠定基础。软实力概念虽是约瑟夫·奈最先提出的，但他对软实力并未给出清晰、明确、一以贯之的定义。中国学者相对于硬实力，对软实力作出了清晰、明确、科学的定义。他们把硬实力界定为一切有形的、可以量化的力量，表现为资源、物质、强制性力量的实力；把软实力界定为所有无形的、难以量化的、非强制性力量的实力，体现为吸引、凝聚、感召、动员、说服、诱导、感染、共鸣、同化等影响人心的作用。

拓展软实力战略目标，向外助力国际政治博弈、向内助力思想道德和精神文明建设。在中国人看来，任何国家都需要“两条腿”走路，“一条腿”是物质硬实力，另“一条腿”就是文化软实力。如果物质硬实力不行，有可能一打就垮；但文化软实力不行，就可能不打自垮。中国发展软实力，不但着眼在国际上树立良好形象、掌握国际话语权；更着眼在国内统一思想、凝聚人心、坚定理想信念、树立良好道德、提高民族素质、弘扬光荣传统、倡导爱国主义等，有着更为丰富的战略目标。

发挥文化在软实力中的重要作用，提升软实力的高度、拓展软实力的广度和深度。西方学者往往把软实力表述为文化、价值观、制度、政策、掌握国际话语权的能力等。而中国人认为，文化在软实力中具有不可替代的特殊地位，是软实力的灵魂和经纬，不应和其他要素并列。所谓灵魂，指文化的价值取向决定着软实力的发展方向、宗旨和思路；所谓经纬，指

文化因素渗透到软实力的各个方面、各个环节、各个逻辑链条中。没有文化高度的软实力是短视的，因为它站位低，不会有什么远见；没有文化深度的软实力是肤浅的，因为它浅尝辄止，不会有深刻的见解；没有文化广度的软实力是狭隘的，因为它视野狭窄，难以总揽全局，难免坐井观天，会渐趋僵化甚至消亡。

强调中华优秀传统文化是文化软实力的根基所系、优势所在，彰显中国文化软实力的独特优势。中华文化源远流长，是中华民族之根、脉和魂，是中国文化软实力最深厚的根基。其中许多精华具有跨越时空、超越国度的价值和意义，如讲仁爱、倡忠勇、敬廉洁、誉气节、崇智慧、申正义、重民本、守诚信、尚合和、求大同等价值理念。这些理念一旦被赋予新的时代内涵，就会成为增强文化软实力的巨大正能量。优秀传统文化是中国的特有优势，这一点就连约瑟夫·奈也不得不承认。他说，软实力概念虽然是他提出的，“但并不具有美国特色，中国古人对软实力很早就有深刻的理解和娴熟的运用”。可见，深入发掘、梳理、提炼、升华、弘扬中华优秀传统文化，是提高中国文化软实力不可或缺的重要任务。

坚持以人为本原则，有助于全面提高人的思想文化道德素质。西方学者大都把软实力作为国际战略、外交权谋，却忽视人在软实力中的地位和作用。在中国学者看来，人对软实力的消长发挥着决定性的作用。提高文化软实力，必须坚持以人为本的原则。提升国家文化软实力，关键在于坚持以人为本，全面提高人的思想文化道德素质，包括人的道德、品格、情操、意志、理想信念、价值取向、人文修养、艺术品位、思维方法、智慧能力等。

强调核心价值体系、核心价值观在文化软实力建设中的基石作用，有助于增强国家和民族凝聚力。任何民族、任何国家最长久、最深厚的发展动力，都源自其所尊崇的核心价值体系与核心价值观。国家文化软实力突出体现在民族凝聚力上，而民族凝聚力的强弱则取决于其核心价值体系与核心价值观在国民中的认同度。社会主义核心价值体系与社会主义核心价值观深入人心的过程，也是中国文化软实力形成和发挥作用的过程。因此，提高中国文化软实力的第一要务，就是坚持以马克思主义为指导，加强社会主义核心价值体系建设，培育和践行社会主义核心价值观。约瑟夫·奈在阐释自己的软实力理论时，总是把美国的价值观作为美国软实力强大、“注定领导世界”的理由，并欲向别国推广。显然，这种观点和做法是很多国家所不能接受的。

近年来，研究中国且对中国友好的西方学者越来越多，但中国的事还得多问中国人怎么看、怎么说。我们既要有博大的胸襟和宽广的眼界、从容听取外国人的不同声音，更要有骨气和底气，坚持道路自信、理论自信、制度自信、价值观自信。在软实力上，我们也要有自信，坚信中国文化软实力已初步形成自己的鲜明特色和力量。

（作者为中国文化软实力研究中心主任、教授）

“Table of Contents” in Chinese and English of the volume *Zhongguo Yuyan Shenghuo Zhuangkuang Baogao 2013* 中国语言生活状况报告 2013 (Language Situation in China: 2013) edited by *Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzhi Xinxin Guanlisi* 教育部语言文字信息管理司 [Department of Language and Script Information Management of the (PRC) Ministry of Education] (2013).

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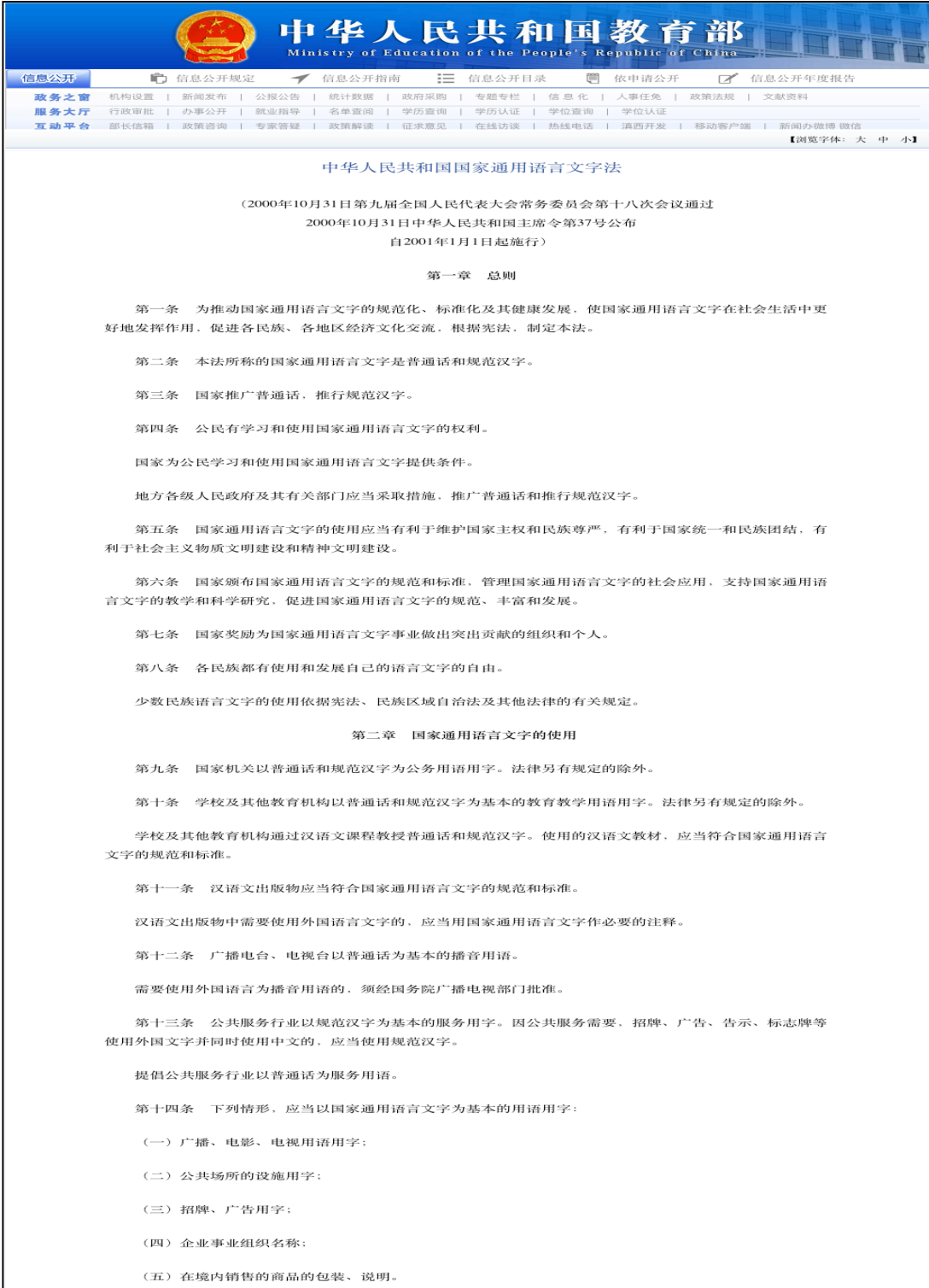


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Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Tongyong Yuyan Wenzhi Fa 中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法  
[Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language of the People's Republic of China]  
Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu 中华人民共和国教育部 [PRC Ministry of Education] (2000)



**中华人民共和国教育部**  
Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China

信息公开规定 | 信息公开指南 | 信息公开目录 | 依申请公开 | 信息公开年度报告

政务之窗 | 机构设置 | 新闻发布 | 公报公告 | 统计数据 | 政府采购 | 专题专栏 | 信息化 | 人事任免 | 政策法规 | 文献资料  
服务大厅 | 行政审批 | 办事公开 | 就业指导 | 名单查阅 | 学历查询 | 学历认证 | 学位查询 | 学位认证  
互动平台 | 部长信箱 | 政策咨询 | 专家答疑 | 政策解读 | 征求意见 | 在线访谈 | 热线电话 | 滇西开发 | 移动客户端 | 新闻办微博 微信

【浏览字体: 大 中 小】

### 中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法

(2000年10月31日第九届全国人民代表大会常务委员会第十八次会议通过  
2000年10月31日中华人民共和国主席令第37号公布  
自2001年1月1日起施行)

#### 第一章 总则

第一条 为推动国家通用语言文字的规范化、标准化及其健康发展,使国家通用语言文字在社会生活中更好地发挥作用,促进各民族、各地区经济文化交流,根据宪法,制定本法。

第二条 本法所称的国家通用语言文字是普通话和规范汉字。

第三条 国家推广普通话,推行规范汉字。

第四条 公民有学习和使用国家通用语言文字的权利。  
国家为公民学习和使用国家通用语言文字提供条件。  
地方各级人民政府及其有关部门应当采取措施,推广普通话和推行规范汉字。

第五条 国家通用语言文字的使用应当有利于维护国家主权和民族尊严,有利于国家统一和民族团结,有利于社会主义物质文明建设和精神文明建设。

第六条 国家颁布国家通用语言文字的规范和标准,管理国家通用语言文字的社会应用,支持国家通用语言文字的教学和科学研究,促进国家通用语言文字的规范、丰富和发展。

第七条 国家奖励为国家通用语言文字事业做出突出贡献的组织和个人。

第八条 各民族都有使用和发展自己的语言文字的自由。  
少数民族语言文字的使用依据宪法、民族区域自治法及其他法律的有关规定。

#### 第二章 国家通用语言文字的使用

第九条 国家机关以普通话和规范汉字为公务用语用字。法律另有规定的除外。

第十条 学校及其他教育机构以普通话和规范汉字为基本的教育教学用语用字。法律另有规定的除外。  
学校及其他教育机构通过汉语文课程教授普通话和规范汉字。使用的汉语文教材,应当符合国家通用语言文字的规范和标准。

第十一条 汉语出版物应当符合国家通用语言文字的规范和标准。  
汉语出版物中需要使用外国语言文字的,应当用国家通用语言文字作必要的注释。

第十二条 广播电台、电视台以普通话为基本的播音用语。  
需要使用外国语言为播音用语的,须经国务院广播电视部门批准。

第十三条 公共服务行业以规范汉字为基本的服务用字。因公共服务需要,招牌、广告、告示、标志牌等使用外国文字并同时使用中文的,应当使用规范汉字。  
提倡公共服务行业以普通话为服务用语。

第十四条 下列情形,应当以国家通用语言文字为基本的用语用字:

- (一) 广播、电影、电视用语用字;
- (二) 公共场所的设施用字;
- (三) 招牌、广告用字;
- (四) 企业事业组织名称;
- (五) 在境内销售的商品的包装、说明。

第十五条 信息处理和信息技术产品中使用的国家通用语言文字应当符合国家的规范和标准。

第十六条 本章有关规定中，有下列情形之一的，可以使用方言：

- (一) 国家机关的工作人员执行公务时确需使用的；
- (二) 经国务院广播电视部门或省级广播电视部门批准的播音用语；
- (三) 戏曲、影视等艺术形式中需要使用的；
- (四) 出版、教学、研究中确需使用的。

第十七条 本章有关规定中，有下列情形之一的，可以保留或使用繁体字、异体字：

- (一) 文物古迹；
- (二) 姓氏中的异体字；
- (三) 书法、篆刻等艺术作品；
- (四) 题词和招牌的手书字；
- (五) 出版、教学、研究中需要使用的；
- (六) 经国务院有关部门批准的特殊情况。

第十八条 国家通用语言文字以《汉语拼音方案》作为拼写和注音工具。

《汉语拼音方案》是中国人名、地名和中文文献罗马字母拼写法的统一规范，并用于汉字不便或不能使用的领域。

初等教育应当进行汉语拼音教学。

第十九条 凡以普通话作为工作语言的岗位，其工作人员应当具备说普通话的能力。

以普通话作为工作语言的播音员、节目主持人和影视话剧演员、教师、国家机关工作人员的普通话水平，应当分别达到国家规定的等级标准；对尚未达到国家规定的普通话等级标准的，分别情况进行培训。

第二十条 对外汉语教学应当教授普通话和规范汉字。

### 第三章 管理和监督

第二十一条 国家通用语言文字工作由国务院语言文字工作部门负责规划指导、管理监督。

国务院有关部门管理本系统的国家通用语言文字的使用。

第二十二条 地方语言文字工作部门和其他有关部门，管理和监督本行政区域内的国家通用语言文字的使用。

第二十三条 县级以上各级人民政府工商行政管理部门依法对企业名称、商品名称以及广告的用语用字进行管理和监督。

第二十四条 国务院语言文字工作部门颁布普通话水平测试等级标准。

第二十五条 外国人名、地名等专有名词和科学技术术语译成国家通用语言文字，由国务院语言文字工作部门或者其他有关部门组织审定。

第二十六条 违反本法第二章有关规定，不按照国家通用语言文字的规范和标准使用语言文字的，公民可以提出批评和建议。

本法第十九条第二款规定的人员用语违反本法第二章有关规定的，有关单位应当对直接责任人员进行批评教育；拒不改正的，由有关单位作出处理。

城市公共场所的设施和招牌、广告用字违反本法第二章有关规定的，由有关行政管理部门责令改正；拒不改正的，予以警告，并督促其限期改正。

第二十七条 违反本法规定，干涉他人学习和使用国家通用语言文字的，由有关行政管理部门责令限期改正，并予以警告。

### 第四章 附则

第二十八条 本法自2001年1月1日起施行。



**Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language of the People's Republic of China**

(Adopted at the 18th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China on October 31, 2000, promulgated by Order No. 37 of the President of the People's Republic of China on October 31, 2000, and effective as of January 1, 2001)

Contents

Chapter I General Provisions

Chapter II Use of the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language

Chapter III Administration and Supervision

Chapter IV Supplementary Provisions

**Chapter I General Provisions**

**Article 1** This Law is enacted in accordance with the Constitution for the purpose of promoting the normalization and standardization of the standard spoken and written Chinese language and its sound development, making it play a better role in public activities, and promoting economic and cultural exchange among all the Chinese ethnic groups and regions.

**Article 2** For purposes of this Law, the standard spoken and written Chinese language means Putonghua (a common speech with pronunciation based on the Beijing dialect) and the standardized Chinese characters.

**Article 3** The State popularises Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters.

**Article 4** All citizens shall have the right to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

The State provides citizens with the conditions for learning and using the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

Local people's governments at various levels and the relevant departments under them shall take measures to popularise Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters.

**Article 5** The standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be used in such a way as to be conducive to the upholding of state sovereignty and national dignity, to unification of the country and unity among all ethnic groups, and to socialist material progress and ethical progress.

**Article 6** The State promulgates standard norms of the spoken and written Chinese language, administers its use in the community, and supports the teaching of and scientific research in the language so as to promote its normalization, enrichment and development.

**Article 7** The State rewards the organizations and individuals that have made outstanding contribution in the field of the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

**Article 8** All the ethnic groups shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages.

The spoken and written languages of the ethnic minorities shall be used in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Law on Regional National Autonomy and other laws.

**Chapter II Use of the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language**

**Article 9** Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be used by State organs as the official language, except where otherwise provided for in laws.

**Article 10** Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be used as the basic language in education and teaching in schools and other institutions of education, except where otherwise provided for in laws.

Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be taught in schools and other institutions of education by means of the Chinese course. The Chinese textbooks used shall be in conformity with the norms of the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

**Article 11** Publications in Chinese shall be in conformity with the norms of the standard spoken and written Chinese Language.

Where foreign languages need to be used in publications in Chinese, necessary explanatory notes in standard Chinese shall be applied.

**Article 12** Putonghua shall be used by the broadcasting and TV stations as the basic broadcasting language.

Where foreign languages need to be used as the broadcasting languages, the matter shall be subject to approval by the broadcasting and television administration under the State Council.

**Article 13** The standardized Chinese characters shall be used as the basic characters in the service trade. Where both a foreign language and the Chinese language are used in signboards, advertisements, bulletins, signs, etc., as is needed by the trade, the standardized Chinese characters shall be used as far as the Chinese Language is concerned.

People working in the service trade are encouraged to use Putonghua when providing services.

**Article 14** The standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be used as the basic spoken and written language in the following circumstances:

- (1) Spoken and written language for broadcasting, films and TV programs;
- (2) Written language for the facilities in public places;
- (3) Written language in signboards and advertisements;
- (4) Names of enterprises and other institutions; and
- (5) Packaging and specifications of commodities marketed in the country.

**Article 15** The standard spoken and written Chinese language used in information processing and information technology products shall be in conformity with the norms of the State.

**Article 16** Where the relevant provisions of this Chapter are concerned, local dialects may be used under the following circumstances:

- (1) When State functionaries really need to use them in the performance of official duties;
- (2) Where they are used in broadcasting with the approval of the broadcasting and television administration under the State Council or of the broadcasting and television department at the provincial level;
- (3) Where they are needed in traditional operas, films and TV programs and other forms of art; and
- (4) Where their use is really required in publishing, teaching and research.

**Article 17** Whereby the relevant provisions of this Chapter are concerned, the original complex or the variant forms of Chinese characters may be retained or used under the following circumstances:

- (1) In cultural relics and historic sites;
- (2) The variant forms used in surnames;
- (3) In works of art such as calligraphy and seal cutting;
- (4) Handwritten inscriptions and signboards;
- (5) Where their use is required in publishing, teaching and research; and
- (6) Other special circumstances where their use is approved by the relevant departments under the State Council.

**Article 18** The "Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet" shall be used as the tool of transliteration and phonetic notation for the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

The "Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet" is the unified norm of the Roman letters for transliterating the names of Chinese people and places as well as Chinese documents and is used in the realms where it is inconvenient to use the Chinese characters or where the Chinese characters cannot be used.

Chinese phonetic alphabets shall be used in primary education.

**Article 19** All staff members who need to use Putonghua as their working language shall have the ability to speak Putonghua.

The Putonghua level of those who use Putonghua as their working language, such as broadcasters, program hosts and hostesses, actors and actresses of films, TV series and plays, teachers and State functionaries shall reach the respective standards set by the State, those who have not yet reached such standards shall receive different training, as the case may be.

**Article 20** Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be taught in classes for foreigners who are learning Chinese.

#### **Chapter III Administration and Supervision**

**Article 21** The department in charge of the work related to spoken and written language under the State Council shall be responsible for planning, guiding, administering and supervising the work related to the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

The departments concerned under the State Council shall administer the use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language in their own departments.

**Article 22** Local departments in charge of the work related to spoken and written language and other departments concerned shall administer and supervise the use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language within their own administrative areas.

**Article 23** The administrative departments for industry and commerce under the local people's governments at or above the county level shall administer and supervise the use of spoken and written language in the names of enterprises and commodities as well as in advertisements.

**Article 24** The department in charge of the work related to spoken and written language under the State Council shall issue standards for the test of Putonghua at different grades.

**Article 25** The department in charge of the work related to spoken and written language under the State Council or other departments concerned shall make arrangements for the examination of the translation of proper nouns like the names of foreigners and foreign places and scientific and technical terms into the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

**Article 26** Any citizen may make criticism and put forward suggestions where the use of spoken and written language is at variance with the norms of the standard spoken and written Chinese language and is in violation of the relevant provisions in Chapter II of this Law.

Where persons mentioned in the second paragraph of Article 19 of this Law use the language in violation of the relevant provisions of Chapter II of this Law, the units concerned shall, by way of education, criticize the persons who are directly responsible; anyone who refuses to put it right shall be handled by the units concerned.

Where the characters used in the facilities and signboards in public places of cities and in advertisements are in violation of the relevant provisions of Chapter II of this Law, the administrative departments concerned shall give orders for them to be corrected; anyone who refuses to correct them shall be given a disciplinary warning and be urged to put them right within a time limit.

**Article 27** Anyone who, in violation of this Law, interferes with other persons' learning and using of the standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be ordered by the relevant administrative departments to put it right within a time limit and be given a disciplinary warning.

#### **Chapter IV Supplementary Provisions**

**Article 28** This Law shall go into effect as of January 1, 2001.

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Excerpt from “Outline of the National Medium-to-long-term Plan for the Reform and Development of the Cause of Chinese Language and Characters” (*Guojia Zhong Changqi Yuyan Wenzhi Shiye Gaige he Fazhan Guihua Gangyao* 国家中长期语言文字事业改革和发展规划纲要) for the period 2012-2020.

(cited in Jiaoyubu Yuyan Wenzhi Xinxu Guanlisi 2013)

Electronic source: <[http://www.china-language.gov.cn/14/2013\\_1\\_5/1\\_14\\_5299\\_0\\_1357369703676.html](http://www.china-language.gov.cn/14/2013_1_5/1_14_5299_0_1357369703676.html)>

## 国家中长期语言文字事业

### 改革和发展规划纲要

(2012—2020 年)

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## 序言

语言文字是人类最重要的交际工具和信息载体，是文化的基础要素和鲜明标志，是促进历史发展和社会进步的重要力量。语言文字事业具有基础性、全局性、社会性和全民性特点，是国家文化建设和社会发展的的重要组成部分，事关历史文化遗产和经济社会发展，事关国家统一和民族团结，事关国民素质提高和人的全面发展，在国家发展战略中具有重要地位和作用。全面建成小康社会，构建中华民族共有精神家园，提高国家文化软实力，加快推进教育现代化，都对语言文字事业提出了新的要求。必须树立和增强高度的文化自觉和文化自信，努力推进语言文字事业全面发展，为全面建成小康社会、实现中华民族伟大复兴贡献力量。

## 第一章 指导思想

高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜，以邓小平理论、“三个代表”重要思想、科学发展观为指导，全面贯彻《国家通用语言文字法》，尊重语言文字发展规律，主动适应国家经济

社会发展新要求，围绕中心、服务大局，拓宽视野、改革创新，大力推广和规范使用国家通用语言文字，科学保护各民族语言文字，加强语言文字基础建设和管理服务，增强国家语言实力，提高国民语言能力，构建和谐语言生活，服务教育现代化，服务社会主义文化强国建设，推进语言文字事业全面发展。

大力推广国家通用语言文字。推广和普及国家通用语言文字是贯彻落实国家法律法规的基本要求，是维护国家主权统一、促进经济社会发展、增强中华民族凝聚力和文化软实力的重要内容。要健全完善语言文字法律制度规范，加强宏观政策指导。要增加法治意识，提高依法行政能力，加大培训测试及评估力度，采取切实有效措施，推进国家通用语言文字在全国范围内基本普及。

规范使用国家通用语言文字。要加强语言文字规范标准建设，强化国家通用语言文字规范意识，提升国民语言文字应用能力，提高全社会语言文字规范化水平，增强国家文化软实力。

科学保护各民族语言文字。尊重各民族使用和发展自己的语言文字的自由。树立各民族语言文字都是国家宝贵文化资源的观念，有针对性地采取符合实际的保护措施，充分发挥语言文字在传承和弘扬中华优秀传统文化中的重要作用，构建中华民族共有精神家园。

构建和谐语言生活。语言文字工作要创新理念和体制机制，要自觉融入国家改革发展大局，服务经济社会发展和人民群众需要，主动结合教育、文化、传媒、信息、商务等领域的建设和发展，坚持监督检查和服务社会并举。科学规划各种语言文字的定位和功能，妥善处理语言生活中的新情况新问题，推进语言文字事业全面、协调、可持续发展，促进和谐社会建设。

## 第二章 目标和任务

### 一、总体目标

到 2020 年，普通话在全国范围内基本普及，汉字社会应用的规范化程度进一步提高，汉语拼音更好地发挥作用。语言文字规范标准基本满足社会需求，信息化水平进一步提高。语言文字社会管理服务能力全面提升，社会管理体系基本建成。各民族语言文字的科学保护得到加强。语言文字传承和弘扬中华优秀传统文化的作用进一步发挥。国家语言实力显著增强，国民语言能力明显提高，社会语言生活和谐发展。

## 二、主要任务

### （一）大力推广和普及国家通用语言文字。

加大《国家通用语言文字法》的宣传教育力度。将《国家通用语言文字法》列入普法教育内容，增强教师、机关工作人员和新闻出版、广播影视、公共服务行业从业人员的国家通用语言文字规范意识和法制意识，树立全体国民的国家通用语言文字意识。

提高国家通用语言文字普及程度。到 2015 年，普通话在城市基本普及，在农村以教师、学生和青壮年劳动力为重点基本普及，汉字社会应用基本规范；到 2020 年，国家通用语言文字在全社会基本普及，全国范围内语言交际障碍基本消除。

加快民族地区国家通用语言文字的推广和普及。加大宣传培训力度，积极稳妥推进双语教育。到 2020 年，少数民族双语教师达到国家通用语言文字教学要求，完成义务教育的少数民族学生能够熟练掌握国家通用语言文字。

加大《汉语拼音方案》的推行力度。加强学校汉语拼音教学。充分利用汉语拼音作为拼写和注音的工具，进一步发挥其在汉字不便或不能使用领域，以及信息处理、国际交往、国际汉语教育和海外华文教育中的作用。

### （二）推进语言文字规范化标准化信息化建设。

加强语言文字规范化工作。树立科学的语言文字规范观，进一步完善语言文字规范标准体系。妥善处理语言文字规范与发展的关系，深入研究语言文字规范标准制定和施行的规律，积极做好语言文字规范标准的宣传、普及和应用的社会服务工作。

推进语言文字标准化建设。加强国家语言文字标准的统筹管理，健全语言文字标准的层级和体系。加快制订、完善国家通用语言文字和少数民族语言文字基础标准、应用能力标准、评测认证标准、通用手语和通用盲文标准、外国语言文字使用规范，重点建设教育、信息处理、广播影视、新闻出版、辞书编纂和公共服务等领域的标准。及时开展标准的复审、修订等工作。

提升语言文字信息化水平。加强面向中文信息处理的语言文字基础工程建设，开展以语言文字处理为核心的关键技术联合攻关，形成一批具有自主知识产权的核心技术，提高中文信息处理水平。建设语言文字数据库、资源库和学习平台。

### （三）加强语言文字社会应用监督检查和服务。

强化语言文字社会应用的监督检查。加强对学校、机关、新闻出版、广播影视、公共服务行业和公共场所语言文字使用情况的监督检查。加强对教材、图书（特别是辞书）、影

视剧等文化产品和信息技术产品语言文字使用的监督检查。加强外国语言文字使用管理，推进外语中文译写规范工作。

加强社会语言生活监测和引导。引导网络、手机等新媒体规范使用语言文字。打造社会语言生活监测平台，跟踪研究语言生活中出现的新现象和新问题，纠正语言文字使用不规范的现象，引导社会语言生活健康发展，形成规范使用语言文字的社会氛围。

做好语言文字社会咨询服务工作。建设语言文字应用咨询服务平台，利用现代信息技术等多种手段，为社会提供语言文字政策法规、规范标准和语言文字使用等的咨询服务。

#### **（四）提高国民语言文字应用能力。**

提高国民语言文字应用能力。建立和完善国家通用语言文字应用能力测评体系，提高全社会对语言文字学习的重视程度，促进国民语言文字应用能力的提升。

受过初等教育的国民普遍具备普通话、规范汉字和汉语拼音的应用能力；具有中等及以上教育程度的国民，其国家通用语言文字水平达到相应要求，具有较好的使用普通话和规范汉字表达、沟通的能力。全社会语言规范意识进一步增强，公民在公共场合自觉使用普通话和规范汉字，语言文字社会应用的规范化水平进一步提高。

#### **（五）科学保护各民族语言文字。**

正确处理各种语言文字关系。依法妥善处理国家通用语言文字与汉语方言、繁体字、少数民族语言文字的关系及学习使用问题，努力营造守法、健康、和谐的社会语言文字环境。

增强全社会的语言资源观念和语言保护意识。积极开展树立语言资源观念和科学保护意识的各项公益性活动。

加强各民族语言文字的科学研究和资源开发利用。加强语言资源数字化建设，推动语言资源共享，充分挖掘、合理利用语言资源的文化价值和经济价值。建立和完善语言资源库，探索方言使用和保护的科学途径，用现代技术手段记录保存少数民族濒危语言。

#### **（六）弘扬传播中华优秀传统文化。**

充分发挥语言文字传承弘扬中华优秀传统文化的载体作用。积极开展中华经典诵写讲等活动，加强中华优秀传统文化传统教育和革命传统教育，提升国民的文化素养和道德素养。

拓展深化与港澳台地区的交流。建立民间语言文字协商机制，促进语言文字学术交流和语言文化交流，为港澳台同胞学习使用普通话提供服务。

推进国际汉语教育。加强国际汉语教育教师培训、教材建设和教学研究，继续推动汉语相关水平测试向海外拓展，增强中华文化国际影响力。继续发挥普通话、规范汉字和《汉语拼音方案》在国际汉语教育和海外华文教育中的主导作用。

提升中文国际地位。促进中文成为有关国际组织的正式工作语言、国际会议的会议语言，提升中文在国际学术界的影响力。扩大、深化与世界各国和地区的语言文化交流与合作。

#### **（七）加强语言文字法制建设。**

研究修订《国家通用语言文字法》，争取在 2020 年前完成《国家通用语言文字法》的修订工作。及时跟踪、研究语言文字领域的新情况、新问题，根据实际需要和研究成果，研究制定配套的法规、规章。加强语言文字执法工作，增强公民依法使用语言文字的意识，使有关法律规定落到实处。



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