



**Doctoral School of
International Relations
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THESIS BOOKLET

Melinda Pál

The weight and role of soft power in the smart foreign policy
strategies of great powers after the disruption of the bipolar world
system

(1989 – 2018)

Examination of hard and soft power tools

for her Ph.D. dissertation

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Nelu Bradean-Ebinger

professor

Budapest, 2021

Institute of International, Political and Regional Studies
Department of International Studies

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I. Research Background and Justification of the Topic

From the second half of the first decade of the 2000s, the concepts of soft, hard, and smart power have been of great interest. Soft and hard power arise in a variety of connotations, in both political speeches and in the press, without a precise clarification of the concepts. That is, despite becoming a constant point of reference, soft, hard, and smart foreign policy activities of power remain, scientifically speaking, quite unprocessed concepts.

A number of analyses related to the part of the soft power analytical concept that further its role and tools in foreign relations have been carried out and many efforts have been made to redefine the notion itself, but to the best of my knowledge, only two studies have become frequent references for professional works, which have undertaken comprehensive, „encyclopedic” analyses and have mapped the practical meaning of the concept. Edited in 2010 by Michael Cox and Inderjeet Parmar, *“Soft Power and US Foreign Policy. Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives ”*(Cox-Parmar 2010) was published by Routledge, New York, and by the same publisher, as a part of the *„Routledge International Handbooks series“* was published the omnibus edition entitled *„The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power ”* in 2016 (Chitty 2016).

The approach of the former volume is closer to the perspective of the present dissertation, with a historical and interstate perspective, while among its subjects are several topics of the later study collection (from public diplomacy via national branding to the role of social media and e-diplomacy in the activities of embassies).

The *“Soft Power 30”* index, published annually since 2015, provides highly informative analysis in addition to reporting index data.

The first index comparing the external relations activities and international situation of each country (with the European Union as the only multi-national player) in a multidisciplinary way is the Elcano Global Presence Index, which has been published since 2010 with data since 2005.

I rely on the data of both measurement indices in my analyses and conclusions. I was personally acquainted with Michael Cox, the retired professor emeritus of international relations at the London School of Economics as well as with his more basic documents on the subject, and his ‘bibliographic selection’ oriented me toward my final topic. (In the 2013-14 parliamentary year, soft power was a strategic priority in the British Parliament. The House of Lords had set up the Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK’s Influence, to analyze the influence of soft power. Their professional advisor was Michael Cox in the drafting of their White Paper, entitled *“Persuasion and Power in the Modern World”*, published by the committee, with recommendations for decision-makers. I contacted him in London because of this role in 2017 as an Erasmus Plus Individual Research Fellow of the Multidisciplinary Doctoral School of International Relations of Corvinus University of Budapest.)

For the present dissertation, the foreign policy actors who played the most dynamic role in international relations after the disruption of the bipolar world system seemed to be the most obvious actors of the investigation. The practical examination of these countries’ foreign policies is the most manifest for the analysis of a smart foreign policy strategy combining soft and hard power tools at the state level, and for relating to the conceptual contours formulated by Joseph Nye (the father of soft power notion who introduced the term to the dictionary of international relations). The two dominant examined powers are the United States and China. The dissertation examines these foreign policy priorities from 1989, the end of the Cold War, and the disruption of the bipolar world system, to 2018.

The aim of the dissertation is to examine in what domestic and foreign policy atmosphere, with what weight, which soft power tools, programs, and strategies have been used by the dominant powers in their foreign relations for

and against hard power tools after the end of the Cold War, when usually “[the] battlefield is no longer a field, it is in the minds of the people” (Michael Mullen, quoted: Shanker 2010).

These analyses also provide an opportunity to color and expand conceptual meanings.

The United States has existed for two and a half centuries and is a modern state (alliance) organized on an ideological basis, whose basic values (human freedom, democracy, individualism) originate directly from the European Enlightenment and are included in its founding constitution. With the disruption of the bipolar world system, the U.S. power became unilateral (along with a sense of euphoria on the part of the West and the assumption of the role of the global policeman by the US).

However, more recently it has become a less stable superpower beginning with the global economic crisis and even the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and their consequences.

China is a country with thousands of years of civilization and cultural history. In an ideological vacuum that has been developing for decades, political leadership has increasingly invoked/quoted the doctrines of a holistic, religious - ethical - social – and political ideology, Confucianism, the official state ideology for two thousand years until 1911.

China has also referred to, by the same token, the political and economic philosophy of its (with historical self-determination of the Central Empire) foreign relations and trade network, of the tributary system, which had operated for two thousand years.

Since the disruption of the bipolar world system, China has been a central regional power. It is currently the world's most populous and at the same time one of the most authoritarian states, which has become the world's second-largest economy and a moderately developed country in the period examined, thanks to its decades-long rapid development that produced double-digit annual economic growth.

Measured in purchasing power parity, it surpassed the United States in 2014, but in 2018 was only the 73rd most developed economy behind Gabon and ahead of Azerbaijan in terms of per capita consumption at purchasing power parity.

The European Union arises as a third “power”, as the dominant international player focused on projecting soft power. The EU has the most federal structure and characteristics of international organizations, where, however, the intergovernmental decision-making of the Member States is decisive. Through its external policies (the EU's de facto foreign policy), it concludes agreements at the EU level and attracts alliances yet along with European core values as a „force for good” as defined in the EU’s 2003 Security Strategy.

The core values of the U.S. are rooted in European culture, and the two powers are close allies - not only in the field of security through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

After the disruption of the bipolar world system, relations between China and the US (from the early 1970s as strategic allies) transformed into a rival power - partnership. During the period under review, the EU-China relations were by no means free from economic or political tensions (human rights, Taiwan, Tibet, arms embargo). However, with the exception of the arms embargo following the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989, these tensions were mainly present at the level of rhetoric until 2012 within the examined period.

This was due to the increasingly close economic interests and the simultaneous lack of international influence on the part of the EU and its growing desire for the role of great power.

The size limitations of a doctoral dissertation, unfortunately, do not allow for an in-depth analysis of the EU as a third international power - my own attempt is a testament to this - similar to that of the US and China, which are in many respects more significant international powers.

The closest to the focus of the dissertation are the theories of Joseph Nye, an international political expert, Harvard professor, and an influential member of several U.S. administrations during the period. The introduction of the term soft power to the dictionary of international relations can be linked to his name, as well as the formulation of a soft power analytical concept and a smart foreign policy strategy. According to Joseph Nye's analytical concept, soft resources are ideas that work with a desire to identify (culture, values, and foreign policies) as opposed to coercive or financial resources, which are the means of military or economic impact.

According to this dissertation, among the two dialectical forces shaping foreign policy and its priorities, soft resources include all resources of cooperation influenced by attraction, so they can be not only 'theoretical' or 'intangible' - they can be cooperative economic and even military activities -, while the tools of hard power are coercive, such as military force or economic sanctions. In summary, soft power is a cooperative force based on attraction, while hard power is a means of coercion.

Together with all this, soft power has one non-negligible feature: it is a more difficult tool for governments to manage than hard power. Sometimes it takes years or even decades to achieve the desired results.

This is an extremely important feature of soft power. The effect of hard force is fast, and that of soft force is slow. Nevertheless, the use of soft power is an essential part of the foreign policies of almost all actors in the 21st century (they have diplomatic ties on their own and high-tech innovations for non-military purposes).

Then the soft power-dominated or oriented foreign policy typically becomes a strategic priority or dominant communications tool (surely for countries that dominate international relations) when it comes to improving the image of the country/power – potentially with a view to regaining its former prestige, as in the case of loss of (moral) power (the unilateral power of the US) or as re-emerging power (the central regional power China).

The case of the EU, in which a soft power-oriented foreign policy is a defining/cohesive feature is a different situation and which is possible only for an association or an international organization, where physical security is partly guaranteed from the outside).

The alternating administrations of the two major political parties of the U.S., which superpower has suffered a moral and international political loss, each had (up to) four years - also in the period under review - to prioritize a soft power strategy.

In the case of China, a key international player seeks to regain its former prestige and at the same time emphasize its peaceful development. Its doctrines, concepts, and guidelines have been developed for these purposes and have been forming over several decades according to an ever-evolving curve of development. It is more difficult to regain a position after a loss of moral prestige in the relatively recent past, and soft power is hampered when the policies, culture, or values that are intended to be promoted do not attract -- or even repel -- others.

The dissertation tries to show the economic processes and growth factors of the two dominant powers, which determine the real driving forces and growth indicators of the new millennium, together with the ambiguity and anomalies of the processes. It does so in the spirit of the principle that soft power influence can only be spoken of if it is triggered by a resource that provides real attraction (Nye 2004) or is legitimate (Cox 2014).

II. Methods and aspects of analysis

The dissertation uses qualitative and quantitative research methods together with the dominance of qualitative methods, and the historical approach is not insignificant. The approach is typically deductive. The examination of the hypotheses and the answers to the research questions contain numerical data due to the existence of synthetic indices measuring only soft power and that monitor the entire foreign policy activities and international position of countries and the EU as a single international organization/integration.

On the other hand, they can be quantified in terms of external projection only, and not on the efficiency of power influence. They are not in themselves suitable for measuring power relations and their changes, but they help to monitor international processes and to perform comparative analyses.

In addition to the indices, the qualitative explanation schemes are supplemented by official statistics (trade, economic, demographic data) suitable for characterizing foreign economic relations and characteristics.

Among the qualitative methods, I use the methods of text analysis and, to a lesser extent, discourse analysis. I rely primarily on non-interventional analysis based on primary and secondary sources (document analysis, literature analysis, and narrative analysis).

I carry out the analysis mainly with the help of English, Hungarian, and to a very small extent French and German sources, which include official statements, reports, speeches by political leaders, various press products, economic and political analyses, and published personal announcements and recollections.

In this research, in addition to the positivist approach in line with the Weberian conception of science, according to which the main goal is to understand and explain the phenomena (in this dissertation foreign policy steps, projects, plans, strategies), I also evaluate the examined phenomena according to values (normativeness) with primarily constructivist, role theory analysis and with the help of political leaders' speeches, statements, foreign policy strategies, published white papers.

One of the basic hypotheses of the dissertation namely is that the examined powers - like all entities with international influence - have a cultural or value system that serves / can serve as a model, which is an independent great power ability in the 21st century.

I describe the normative forces and naturally analyze the value systems with civilizational and cultural roots but do not evaluate them.

My research method is basically the analysis of foreign policy processes and priorities by examining the role of an existing analytical concept (soft power theory) and strategy (smart power) in given foreign policy decisions, steps, programs, and plans.

The smart power foreign policy strategy defines the elements and characteristics of soft and hard power tools, i.e. the entire foreign policy toolbox of an entity involved in international relations, applied in a given foreign policy situation.

The analyses - which in the case of the present dissertation means the analyses of foreign policy decisions, steps, document analysis, literature analysis, and narrative analysis - also provide a space for me to interpret an already developed analytical concept more broadly than the original concept, to broaden its toolbox. In this respect, the method used in the dissertation represents a shift toward the case study.

The most appropriate methods for examining the statements which are raised in the hypotheses and for answering research questions are explaining-outcome and comparative process tracing.

Process tracing, which is typically used in case studies, is a qualitative method. It is basically used to examine the effects of the actors' interaction and "works as a historical explanation in tracing and discussing a complex consequence of events in a »narrative« form" (Samaan 2019, p. 14), this thus is a very suitable methodological tool for evaluating the changes that have taken place in the situation of power.

The main purpose of comparative process tracing is the scientifically demanded exploration and analysis of causal relationships that I implement in periodic and area-by-area comparisons.

In such cases, the final development is already known, and in the case of the present dissertation, the research question arises from how the final development was reached: under what internal and external conditions, in what foreign policy environment, with what set of foreign policy tools and with what strategy.

The approaches of role theory, which examines primarily political leaders' speeches, can be used in the course of process sheets and analyses. Role theory is used primarily to indicate a change in the international position in the field of international relations. It is also important for this dissertation because in several cases, through political leaders' speeches and statements, role theory creates a connection between the foreign policy priorities and the basic values and order of values "mobilized" by the given foreign policy actor in its statements. Kalevi J. Holsti contends (Holsti 1970, pp. 245-6) that „a national role conception includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or insubordinate regional systems. It is their »image« of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment" (hence prescriptive). /It in turn also separates the role conception from the purely descriptive role performance, the real foreign policy behavior, with which the role conception is not always the same. / These conceptions often are mentioned together with constructivism; there is much in common in their methods of analysis (also in terms of the methodology of this dissertation), yet they are two separate schools.

III. Results of the dissertation

1. The most important hypotheses and their evaluations: justifications, conclusions

***Key Hypothesis 1:** In the changing security environment of the 21st century, the scope of soft power is broader than that defined by Joseph Nye's analytical concept in 2004.*

In the interpretation of this dissertation, soft power is a cooperative force, based on the ability of actors in international relations to shape the preferences of other actors in their foreign policy activities through attraction or cooperation thus, it includes all attractive and cooperative resources, as well as foreign policy activities. Hard power (a means of coercion in the interpretation of this dissertation) is the coercive policy of a country to force another country to act or change its decisions (with military force, economic sanctions, or diplomatic threats).

Validation of Key Hypothesis 1 and Conclusions: In contrast to traditional military and economic international power sources, interpreted by many (experts) (including Joseph Nye) as a clear hard resource, diplomatic and cultural sources are commonly interpreted as soft resources. Among the great power capabilities that significantly influence foreign policy activities, demography, military, and economic capabilities are associated as hard forces in parallel with great power resources. Diplomacy, on the other hand, according to public opinion is a foreign policy ability that summarizes purely soft foreign policy activities as a *legitimate* "ability to define an international

agenda or the opportunity to participate in decision-making” (Tálas 2015) or as the art of finding common ground, the connection between different interests, avoiding conflict (Ruffini 2015, pp. 15-6) The fundamental distinction that follows from the definition of the extended soft power concept in this dissertation lies between the exercise of influence by coercion and the effect of attraction (coercion: hard power; attraction: soft power). According to this extended interpretation, Nye's oppositional metaphors for describing hard and soft power are also valid: pushing and pulling forces; „stick and carrots” policy vs magnet’s attraction; the opposite of coercion and voluntary. (Nye 2021, pp. 201, 202) The power of example and attraction can tempt, pull and attract not only to follow the example of international political and cultural values but also to follow the example of economics and even the military. (In addition to cooperative classical and professional diplomatic activities that can be described as instinctively soft power, cooperation based on the attraction of the economic model, mutually beneficial foreign economic relations /investment, favorable loans, foreign trade/, development aid and assistance, and inter-military cooperation, training programs, humanitarian aid are also soft foreign policy activities.) Thus, the toolbox of soft power is strengthened by the attractiveness of the economic model / the ethos of prosperity (in the West), the promise of prosperity (in China)/, and all the non-military results of the technology, since technological achievements and their development companies are indispensable parts of the positive image of a country for foreigners (eke). In a globalizing, increasingly interdependent world, the functioning of the dominant economy as a whole in international relations is a “sticky”, adhesive force that, like „the carnivorous sundew plant, which attracts its prey with a kind of soft power [...] then it can not get away” (Mead 2004, p. 50) – as for this Walter Russell Mead drew attention, based on Joseph Nye’s theory, making sticky power an intermediate element between hard and soft power. Military power can also play a soft power role through cooperation (training, exchanges) with the military of weak states or through humanitarian action in the event of disasters, for example. This broader definition is reconfirmed by the international expert analyses of/affecting the topic of this dissertation, by all measurement indices referenced in this dissertation, whether these examine the soft power toolkit in particular (IfG-Monocle, Soft Power 30) or as part of foreign policy activities (Elcano Global Presence Index).

Key Hypothesis 2: *Besides the traditional (demographic, military, economic) and diplomatic skills, technology and the ability aggregated with the word „model values” are unavoidable great power capabilities in contemporary analysis of the 21st century.*

The system of state, institutional, and foreign relations are also based on the „model values” or value system, which can be the object of attraction, the means of seduction on the part of the host country, and the cultural export product on the part of the sending country. While international actors, including great and central regional powers, display both conflict and cooperation on the international stage, their civilizational resources (their broadest culture) play an important role in their influence and functioning. The basic values of America are freedom, democracy, and individualism enshrined in the Constitution. (According to the Constitution, the United States is *the Union of Free Persons*, which aims to establish justice, common defense, and general Welfare, and secure the Blessing of Liberty.) Highlighting Chinese core values through document analysis is less possible, respect for the community (family collectivism), order, hierarchy, or authority are part of everyday life.

Besides the core values, the most obvious and effective examples of these model values are of an economic nature: the Chinese tributary system and the institutional system of Bretton Woods. China’s regional primacy was secured by its tributary system, an international network of connections and trade that has been part of Pax Sinic, for 2,000

years - until the century of humiliation that began with the opium war. This network provided such a binding force that the empire with cultural supremacy provided independence, mutually beneficial economic relations, and protection for the conquered ("barbarians") in their own territory. At the same time, however, it asserted the security, economic and cultural dominance of the Central Empire in the region. During the period under review, it became an increasingly prominent historical pattern to be followed, a bond in China's economic development relations (including in political leaders' speeches). Through institutions of the Bretton Woods system (since 1946) and part of Pax Americana, the US has enjoyed international economic and monetary primacy for more than half a century. During the Cold War, in the 1980s, the US opened its markets, even on a non-reciprocal basis, to imports. This policy, which was part of a comprehensive strategy to impede communism, helped consolidate support for the American system around the world. Today, America's debt has also become a sticky, adhesive force. This is the essence, operation, and revenge of the American / Western sticky power embedded in the international monetary system. (Mead 2004, pp. 50-3). These two institutionalized civilizational cultures are the bases and roots of the two attractive economic models. This dissertation illustrates in a table those Western (European and American) and Chinese historical constitutional structures and basic institutions that, according to the dissertation, also support and influence foreign economic relations. In order to strengthen the soft power character and effect of technology, this dissertation cites as examples two company histories that also show civilizational differences in their nature and development. One is the success story of Tesla and of its chief executive, the innovator Elon Musk, who in the eyes of many is an American icon while in the eyes of others is a counter-icon. The other is the story of the development of China's Internet ecosystem, particularly that of WeChat, which company has long been considered a Chinese soft power trademark.

Key Hypothesis 3: *The individual great power capabilities can not only be classified according to their soft or hard power nature, their 21st century scope and mechanism of action can be clarified, colored, and specified by their soft (influence through attraction, cooperation) or hard (influence by force) power nature.*

A practical examination of the great powers has shown that demography can be regarded as the only clear, exclusive hard power ability, all the others are intermediate elements of a spectrum.

The justifications of the 3rd key hypothesis and the conclusions of the dissertation are:

1. Military capability has traditionally been a symbol of hard power, but it can also be the subject of attraction due to the development of its capabilities: it can be a means of strengthening partnerships through missions, and exchanges similar to those in the fields of education and science (military cooperation, training programs) or by humanitarian assistance in disasters.

In the US, Robert Gates and his national security administration have also tried to win hearts and minds in close cooperation with the State Department during the presidential terms of two presidents representing differing ideologies, instead of demonstrating and using military force.

2. The Janus-faced economic ability:

- The attractiveness of the economy (as a model) can be a soft power resource for both the US (market economy as a symbol of prosperity, sense of belonging to the winners) and China (rapid pace of development, hope for prosperity).

- The initially attractive then sticky, captivating nature of the hegemonic economy in international relations shows the economic impact as an intermediate element,
- economic sanctions and external economic restrictions of customs and non-tariff nature should be included in the hard power toolbox,
- development aid and assistance are classified as soft resources by all indicators, the vast majority of analyzes (including Joseph Nye), and this dissertation.

(Verification of the examined measurement indices: One of the five sub-indices of the IfG (Institute for Government) – Monocle index, which measures soft power, in particular, is *business innovation*, but since 2016, in addition to innovation, it also examines *business branding* among 50 factors. Thus, the “*enterprise*” that can be defined as the *attraction of the economic model* is one of the five soft objective data examined by the “Soft Power 30” index.)

3. According to this dissertation, all the achievements of technological development that are not intended for military use, do not contain any element restricting individual rights in their application, are part of a country's positive image and brand and thus part of the country's soft power tools.

(China's large national reference system considers technology as part of hard power factors when examining national power. In contrast, all Western - and non-governmental measurement indices - count technological results and products as indicators of soft power.)

4. Diplomacy, whether bilateral or multilateral, has traditionally been a soft power as a tool for cooperation and exchange. However, since the mid-1990s, the term sharp power has been used in the dictionary of international relations to use and manipulate the diplomatic tools and policies of a country to influence and undermine the political system of a target country.

The Western press and elite have mentioned the use of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy tools since 2020, from the pandemic period, but the beginning of the practice is dated a few years earlier, to 2018. Wolf Warrior Diplomacy broke with Deng Xiao Ping's approach of cooperative rhetoric that avoids controversy. 'The new wave' is confrontational and militant, and its supporters loudly condemn criticism of China on social media and in interviews. (Jiang-Westcott 2020). Donald Trump also exemplified a higher level of confrontational rhetoric.

5. The model values or value system representing the source of cultural power in the field of capabilities, on which the system of state, institutional, and foreign relations are based, is a basic source of soft power. This incorporates the complete (civilizational) culture of a country / of an actor in foreign relations, from the institutional system to be projected through its political-economic-social culture to its system of values and ideas (dominant ideologies, religion, philosophies). The dissemination and transmission of the American model values considered to be universal in a foreign policy strategy can become a soft power resource, the basic values of which (freedom, democracy, individualism) are also included in the Constitution. (US is a Union of free Persons, for the realization of Justice, domestic Tranquility, common defense, and general Welfare.) Just as the radiance of Chinese peace and harmony (the doctrine of a Harmonious World, the doctrine of Peaceful Ascent) and the philosophy of China's two-thousand-year-old foreign and economic network (tributary system) can become a soft power resource: a

doctrine defining foreign relations and foreign policy. At the same time, tough actions of power are possible in the name of such values.

The role of the cultural resources and value system (as a great power ability) of an international actor is more important as the basic character traits that define the given civilization, and at times determine it, than the role of a foreign policy exporter in the 21st century. However, this feature is only an indirect subject of this dissertation.

Key Hypothesis 4: *The role of the examined dominant powers in the international system and their political operation greatly influence the nature and manner of their soft and hard foreign policy activities.*

Reasons:

A; If we compare the soft power tools used/activated in the areas of power, there are no big differences in most of the areas, but there is also a shift in emphasis due to the differences in their positions.

The soft power toolbox of the US, a national security state the unilateral role of which is constantly eroding while it continues to communicate and operate in a unilateral role, is similar to that of a central regional power that is also thinking in a global context. In addition to bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations and partnerships, in the case of great power, the role of political leaders is decisive.

The US policy generally uses a traditional soft power foreign policy toolkit, only the importance of public diplomacy has increased significantly (relative to that of previous administrations) if soft power activities and perspective become dominant, determining elements of the foreign policy strategy of an administration. Besides, the role of alternating presidents and secretaries of state in international peace-keeping and policy-making is quite dominant.

The internal development of China needs to continue to grow economically, and this requires a peaceful international environment. Within the framework of its bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations and partnerships, China sought (also) strategic partnerships during the period under review, to participate more actively in the work of international organizations, but also to build alternative alliances and more multilateral diplomacy. Generally, China insisted on bilateral negotiations only in the Territorial Disputes of the South China Sea. Nevertheless, a duality of soft power communication targeting developing countries or the West by China has emerged. While China's charm offensive aims to strengthen its overall influence and power with the (globally) traditional soft power foreign policy toolkit exclusively in developing countries: through development model, aid, investment, traditional culture, foreign policy, and broadcasting, while in Western countries it uses (also) a defensive narrative. The image of China's head of state in least-developed and developing countries has improved through the so-called win-win, mainly economic-focused, according to this dissertation, clearly soft foreign policy cooperation (investment, development). At the heart of the policy of non-interference in internal affairs, China's international political role and influence grew, while it also gained economic benefits.

In contrast to the developed world (not just the US but also its main ally, the EU), which has a duty to export democracy largely due to its uniqueness, there are significant differences in political ideas and values in China over the authoritarian nature of the system, the lack of democracy and human rights shortcomings. The US also sees China's economic power as a hard power expansion.

It is no coincidence that in the developed world, from the 2000s to the end of 2010, China tried to position itself more attractively through its culture and, through the means of cultural diplomacy. In addition, the real target

audience of the Chinese policy of win-win economic development and investment cooperation (foreign economic policy strategy) is the developing world. Some analysts also emphasize the defensive character of Chinese soft power, citing the alternative defensive approach of Chinese soft power mostly implemented through the acquisition of media agencies and the Chinese corporate-owned entertainment and gaming industry (Yıldırım-Mesut 2020).

There is another not-insignificant difference between the soft foreign policy activities of the two major international players. In the case of both powers, the construction of connectivity is a soft power priority, but they differ in nature. US initiatives are typically characterized by digital connectivity, while China is characterized by non-digital connectivity.

B; There is a fundamental difference between the functioning of the political systems of the two powers under study, which also determines their soft foreign policy activities.

The U.S. presidential cycles span four years. After the Cold War, neither the Secretary of State's person nor the two parties in the legislature had the same majority during two consecutive terms of administration, even if the same president ruled for two terms (neither under Clinton nor under G. W. Bush nor Obama). The characteristic of China's government contrasts with the US administrations, which have changed every four years after the break-up of the bipolar world system, is that the Chinese head of state remained in position with an almost unchanged apparatus for two five-year terms until the change of the constitutional regulation introduced in 1982 (2018, abolition of the term limit). Furthermore, five years before a Chinese leader's election, he became a member of the slowly changing top decision-making body directly intertwined with a single party.

The fundamental difference arising from the rationale of Hypothesis 4 is that, despite the autocratic or democratic nature of the system, the period that became (and is) provided for the development and implementation of a strategy, priority, directive, and doctrine is not the same for the two countries.

The guidelines for Harmonious World Order (peaceful international environment) promulgated by General Secretary and President Hu Jintao in 2005 for lasting peace and common prosperity still define China's international relations and the external communication of the incumbent President–Secretary–General.

A peaceful international environment is an essential necessity for its continued development (and for the party's legitimacy likewise). Furthermore, the Made in China Strategic Plan and Industrial Policy combine two five-year plans to envisage China becoming a world leader in technology, especially in the field of artificial intelligence, in three stages representing three steps by 2030.

After the Cold War, the crisis management administrations of the US (Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates under the second G. W. Bush administration; Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates under the first Obama administration) used a primary soft power strategy and as part of it, public diplomacy in a dominant role. Furthermore, these administrations' military policies, which also use soft resources (inter-military cooperation), have become a strategic foreign policy priority.

The only administration to make soft power a government and foreign policy priority in the vocabulary of political leaders' communications was the first Obama administration between 2009 and 2011. It was then that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced a (first -- and last) four-year plan for diplomacy and development (*Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*). According to the text of the four-year plan, the Foreign Ministry wanted to strengthen leadership through the power of civil society, "leading through civilian power". A new public diplomacy priority associated with Hillary Clinton's name is to prioritize person-to-person communication, whose

role was to change the image of the US (national brand-, image-building, creating a less intrusive hegemonic image after the policy, the directive of the nation-building). However, the process ceased as a result of the radicalization of the Islamic State. During the period of asymmetric war, in light of the radical events that took place, the aspirations of the two administrations were not achieved in such a short time/period.

2. Justification of periodic analysis of foreign policy activities

This dissertation examines the foreign policy activities of the two leading international actors, the unilateral US and the central regional power, China, in parallel in two periodic structural units.

(The other three structural units of this dissertation are comparative. Two of them analyze the relevant characteristics of the technology and economy that are considered to be soft power by this dissertation, embedded in a historical, civilizational context. The third comparative structural unit is the summary.)

The period between 1989 and 2012 is a period of soft power activity gain for both powers. Since the beginning of 2012, the analyses of the phenomena and guidelines that determine the external relations of the two powers, which are mainly characterized by the hard or soft nature of power, are the focus of the dissertation.

2.1. 1989-2012

When the bipolar world system disintegrated, the position in international relations between the two states differed significantly. The US no longer represented half of the bipolar world but it became the “sheriff” of the whole world, in a unilateral position.

China, on the other hand, which country had maintained its independence as a regional central power during the Cold War, despite its strategic agreement with the US concluded in the early 1970s, was simultaneously a defender of the Third World, an advocate in international forums, then isolated globally due to the bloodshed in Tiananmen Square. After this event, for a central regional power to position itself as attractive was both a primary priority and a challenge.

2.1.1. The United States of America

Changes in global post-Cold War power relations have not led to many exemplary foreign policy moves in the unipolar US, but have resulted in foreign policies that were indicators of a 2004 conceptual analysis that did not require military or economic coercion or strength, but is built on cooperation based on attraction and values. (As already indicated, this dissertation interprets soft power resources more extensively than Joseph Nye's analytical concept: including economic tools and effects – and does this together with several experts and all initiatives undertaken to measure the soft power effect.)

The decision-making president at the time of the ending of the bipolar world system was George H. W. Bush. At the time, the US was marked by the euphoric sentiment of Fukuyama's end of history as a psychological environment and by international experts proposing to maintain the status quo (preservation of the European Eastern bloc) in international relations, and a ring of leading Western European politicians who strongly agreed with this approach for a completely different motive. George H. W. Bush is associated with two historically significant activities, both of which are the quintessence of soft power foreign policy action in itself, and both were manifestations of the communication of political leaders. One of the historical weights was to emphasize and outline the significance of the new world order (an initiative that could be an indicator of a soft power strategy, but which was immediately voted down by the American Congress, thus cutting into any policy-making path).

The other was the 'collection' of his advocacy for the demolition of the Iron Curtain and thereby the unification of western and eastern Europe with their common values and historical roots as well as in favor of the introduction of self-determination in the Eastern Bloc.

Based on his speeches, the US administration may have seemed to be a central player in international processes without hard power tools. In fact, the president was in a unilateral position at a given historical moment - *annus mirabilis* - played a significant role in the processes already operating with a soft power tool and communication, thus postponing possible military conflicts.

At the same time, the 1991 Gulf War did not confirm the expectations for a "peace dividend" from reduced military expenditures and increased economic growth after the breakup of the bipolar world system, the defense spending had to be increased. The war showed America's friends and foes both its overwhelming traditional military superiority (and at the same time generated a wide-ranging cooperation with the Iraqi regime that has never been seen before or after).

The foreign and security policy visions of the two Clinton governments were built around a purely Wilsonian principle: the spread of democracy, not always by Wilsonian means alone, but occasionally by clear hard actions of power. In addition, the geoeconomic approach linked to the strategic visions of the two governments, but especially the first one, has emerged in the spirit of global soft power ability (precisely those foreign economic cooperations the implementation and instrument system of which did not include *the imposition, coercion* of requirements and norms). According to their intentions, they created an opportunity to follow the desired economic and social pattern through bilateral and multipolar economic diplomacy tools: foreign economic relations, alliances, and institutionalization. In the spirit of the geoeconomic approach, the goal was to build a liberal economic system that covered the whole world. Even the 1999 NATO expansion, which basically aimed to expand the "zone of security", met Clinton's goals of expanding the market economy and democracy.

However, in the second term of the Clinton administration, there was an increase (also present in the first) in defensive hard action of extended security, human rights, and the extension of democracy. The crises in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans have led to another deployment of US military force. In fact, between 1989 and 1999, the United States carried out 48 open military interventions, compared with only 16 during the Cold War.

The first government of George W. Bush represented the foreign policy strategic counterpoint of the first Obama administration in the period under review, the dominance and priority of hard power policy in foreign relations.

George W. Bush ruled for two terms, and the two administrations implemented opposing foreign policy priorities in the two terms of his presidency (apart from the restrained politicking of the first few months of his presidency, as distinct from his predecessor's „excessive militarism” and „illusory international norms” (Rice 2000)). The reason was defense policy: on September 11, 2001, the twin towers of the World Trade Center, one of the best-known symbols of American (and global) economic life and the symbol of US military power, the Department of Defense, suffered devastating attacks that shocked the world on the 11th anniversary of George H. W. Bush's "Towards the New World Order" congressional speech. With this, the continental territory of the US was attacked for the first time since 1814.

After 9/11, foreign relations were clearly characterized/dominated by the politics of hard power according to the neoconservative ideology, which was also referred to as a new crusade. The interventionist lightning wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and their aftermath plunged the country into a serious international political and moral crisis.

The image and rhetoric created about the uniqueness, moral superiority and value-based foreign policy of the unilateral power of the USA had already lost a lot of its luster by the time of the beginning of the second Bush administration, which was built on the record-breaking international unpopularity of the United States and an overwhelming majority of Democrats in Congress. The State Department led by Condoleezza Rice, working with the National Security Agency of the former CIA chief Robert Gates, wanted to expand the number of responsible and democratic governments in the world and especially in the Middle East during the implementation of the nation-building (actually state-building) program. The focus of the new foreign affairs strategy was not hard power, but Transformational Diplomacy. In the spirit of soft activities, Bush's program wanted to dramatically increase America's engagement with the world by strengthening the people-to-people relations of diplomatic missions, communication, and especially digital communication, as well as by expanding the State Department's budgetary resources (not only with the agreement of Robert Gates but also according to his congressional mandate). As this became possible, they wanted to avoid, where they could, the military action launched in the framework of the COIN state which transformed after 2006 into cooperation between armies.

The new smart strategy was intended to be transformed into soft power activity in all actions other than those against radicalized insurgents.

The first Obama administration's State Department had incorporated some of the second Bush administration's initiatives into its foreign policy activities after the election (people-to-people communication, strengthening digital communication, Public Diplomacy 2.0). It did so apparently, along with the experience that much of the target audience trying to reach the nation-building transformational diplomacy strategy and the program saw the approach as America embarking on a one-way, message-driven information attack against the Arab and Islamic worlds. (Well-founded prejudices are deep-rooted, and prejudices deepen extremely quickly when cultures are distant.)

Soft power became a demonstrable government and foreign policy priority in the communication (and word choice) of the political elite only during the first Obama administration - after the all-time low popularity of the previous administration, according to public opinion research.

This was the first and last American administration for which the use of soft power tools and foreign policy became a top presidential priority. Barack Obama tried to appear as a candidate for change, part of his appeal already during the campaign was his emphasis on the importance of soft power and the desire to restore America's credibility.

Obama believed in an America that doesn't think it knows what's best for everyone. The president, who took office in January 2009, rejected the occasionally crusading style of his predecessors, but not their sense of exceptionalism. According to his inaugural address, America was once again ready to lead. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sought to introduce a new national brand, and wanted to see America in a credible and responsible role of a less intrusive hegemon, by introducing new public diplomacy based on the opportunities provided by the digital revolution, the keystone of which was connectivity. Through partnerships, the State Department included the world's most advanced information technology corporate grouping, GAFAM, in its program to build relationships between people in order to increase the social and leadership role of women worldwide. Following the radicalization of ISIS, the program became irrelevant and almost ceased to exist when Hillary Clinton was replaced.

2.1.2. People's Republic of China

As indicated above, China's continuous, uninterrupted elaboration and implementation of the guidelines, programs, and doctrines formulated in its foreign policy strategy characterized its soft power priorities, which were invariably maintained through successive 10-year terms of political leaders.

On the other hand, due to the international embargo following the events in Tiananmen in 1989, diplomatic relations, which were the basis of international relations and not so easy to build because of the Taiwan issue were also called into question. After this event, for a central regional power to position itself as attractive was a primary policy and a challenge. The export-oriented, rapid economic growth that began in 1978, socialism - indeed economic capitalism - with Chinese characteristics not only increased the recognition of Chinese economic development throughout the world, but also the possibilities of applying economic power-oriented foreign policy instruments (economic diplomacy, development aid, ensuring favorable foreign trade conditions).

(At the same time, of course, it involved the fear of China, which was a fixed and Pavlovian reflex of the "West.") China had to develop and grow, which, in addition to national unity, needed a stable, peaceful external environment. According to several experts, the ideological vacuum after the emptying of communism was filled by Han nationalism for some time (e.g. Nye 2017), but in the turmoil of conscientious concerns, moral issues gained importance in security policy, favoring the political rebirth of the traditional (Chinese) organizing principle of community formation and "harmony".

In this environment, decades after the disruption of the bipolar world system, China's diplomatic principle and strategy became focused on soft power, according to which China attempts to position itself as building a harmonious society that strives for the well-being of its people, a reliable, responsible economic partner that, despite its rapid growth, is not intimidating and has an ancient, rich, but vibrant culture.

In the spirit of this principle and strategy, the ideal and doctrine of the "harmonious world" were formulated in 2005. The White Paper on China's Path to Peaceful Development published that December dedicated a special chapter to the subject, with the addition that it also mentions China as a responsible international player, apparently in response to then U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick's call for China to behave as a responsible participant of the system (Zoellick stated that this meant deeper and more responsible integration into the existing international system).

Increasing and emphasizing the role of culture in the speeches of Chinese political leaders has appeared as a fundamental resource of its soft power since 2001.

In 2007, President Hu Jintao, president-secretary-general at the party congress clearly emphasized the importance of increasing cultural soft power.

The goal of the country becoming a "cultural superpower" - as a global player - was formulated in 2011 as a national goal by Xi Jinping, who was preparing to take power from Hu Jintao. And during the entire period examined in this dissertation, he adhered to this goal in his speeches and activities, which can be classified as soft power.

China sought a stable, peaceful external environment not only because of its great power ambitions but also to maintain the pace of economic development and to maintain/create its internal unity. However, the two-and-a-

half-decade-long export orientation of the Chinese economy, which began in 1978, has resulted in structural problems, and unbalanced, unstable growth. (Social inequality has increased radically with enormous environmental damage: in particular, the social divide and income gap between urban and rural residents have widened the most in the world (Jang 2010) and as many as 100 million Chinese have been excluded from social security.)

In preparation for a multipolar world system, China has sought to build strategic partnerships. Building and developing regional soft economic and cultural relations with the developing world (ASEAN, Central Asia, Africa, and, Latin America) also played a key role in strengthening its international position.

2.2. 2012-2018

Since the initiation of China's rearmament in 2012, the foreign relations of the two powers were dominated by the phenomena, policies, and programs that also determine global international relations, which were basically characterized by their mainly hard or soft nature of power per program. During the period, the relationship between the two great powers was determined on the one hand by the phenomena involving hard power activities affecting global international relations and their possible soft power attempts at dissolving and resolving them: the crisis in the South China Sea and the trade war between the US and China. Both "phenomena" had very big global international influence.

The 2018 trade war has also become a model of the strength, dependence, and „sticky” characteristics of international economic relations in the globalized world. A protracted crisis - an escalation of the trade war - would have caused the greatest damage not only by the trade-reducing effect of tariff increase but also by its destructive effect on global value chains.

On the other hand, in 2013, with decades of soft power strategic demand, China announced its new Silk Road program as a framework for networking through non-digital connectivity. According to the communication of the program for infrastructure investment and cultural cooperation aimed at revitalizing the Eurasian relations system, it calls for action in „changyi”, id est for the common good.

The One Belt, One Road project is primarily a foreign economic (infrastructure investment) soft power directive, the implementation of which has the adhesive, „sticky” characteristics of dominant economies. According to several critical analysts, the One Belt, One Road may be a new colonization policy, and other analysts suggest a domino-like development process in the region. The initiative is also the framework for international financial institutionalization, and in this capacity, it has the potential to develop a rule-making role in the international environment.

Direct Background: The soft characteristic focus of foreign policy on the peace and stabilizing settlement of the Middle East in the US was marginalized during the second Obama administration, almost at the same time as Hillary Clinton announced the Pivot to Asia Directive in the fall of 2011. Later, the term re-balancing spread to the strategic process, according to which Washington gradually shifted its strategic focus to the Asian region. The new global military strategy was announced by President Obama in January 2012 as the US turned to new focuses after the expansive war in Afghanistan and Iraq. As far as Asia is concerned, the soft economic diplomacy aspect of the balancing policy would have been the establishment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (which has been very difficult to pass through both Congress and the participating Asian states). It has also (would) led to the

establishment of a multilateral intergovernmental institution that can put China in response, accept the rules created by the community, that is the US, or condemn itself to isolation. One of the first steps after Donald Trump was elected president was to withdraw from the free trade agreement in order to protect American jobs.

As part of its tough power activities, the US military arsenal directed a (qualitatively) significant portion of its high-performance assets to the region from 2012 onwards, demonstrating its continued strength, with soft power receding to the margin of foreign policy during the second Obama administration. Following the election of Donald Trump as President, opposition to building soft power external relationships began. During the term of its presidency, the Trump administration attempted to further diplomatic settlement of US-China economic relations in a much less militant atmosphere than that of the December 2018 agreement, followed by further negotiations and a trade agreement, to develop cooperation and maintain peace. In addition, the “From Peace to Prosperity,” plan was announced in January 2020 as „a plan of the century”, and diplomatic relations were reestablished the same year between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain with the mediation of the US, but a new peace plan for the wider Middle East had already failed in the face of radical immediate resistance from (this time only) the Palestinians.

In China, a president-secretary-general took office in 2012 after ten years of his predecessor, as enshrined in the constitution. China, constantly moving away from its policy of hiding capabilities, has increasingly communicated itself as a peacefully evolving responsible power since 2005.

China first appeared as a global player in Xi Jinping’s speeches and communications. In 2011, he named it a national goal to make the country a cultural superpower. The importance of globalization and maintaining international trade in a market economy, which Joseph Nye considered to be the quintessence of soft power thinking, has always been mentioned in the speeches of Xi Jinping, who took office as secretary-general - president in 2012. (Thanks to China's trade, the country has seen unparalleled development on a historic scale over the past three decades and has become a factory to the world thanks to its US-driven membership in the WTO and globalization.)

These principles were voiced until the end of the period under discussion. In December 2018, in Xi's speech commemorating the 40th anniversary of reform and opening up, then with the addition that on the anniversary he highlighted China's foreign trade philosophy dating back thousands of years: the mutual benefits of economic cooperation create a win-win situation. In the case of China, this economic philosophy - pract economic diplomacy and a development policy directive -, was a reality in its cooperation relations with developing countries, where China was – and remains -- the dominant economic partner. In addition, the Secretary-General of the State Party on the anniversary emphasized China’s own internal path of development of increasing domestic consumption.

The turning point in China’s self-positioning was the party congress of October 2017 in several respects. It was then that the head of state, the party secretary-general, announced the full concentration of power enshrined in the constitution, the exclusion of ‘checks and balances’ from decision-making processes, and China’s self-image has changed also since then. In his wide-ranging congressional program address, President Xi emphasized that China has entered a new era in which it must play a central role in the world, representing not only an economic and cultural challenge for the West, but also an alternative ideology, worldview, and social organization. With this, he announced the need to become a rival global superpower.

However, as a realist, he noted that China is not a superpower in 2017, its military can only become first-class around 2040. China calls its own path a “peaceful uprising,” and in the name of reforming its army, the development of its navy and air force has become a priority in parallel with staff reductions.

In the spirit of his vision of the international order, the concept of a “harmonious world”, Xi Jinping emphasized the fundamental importance of globalization and international trade in a market economy in international relations at international forums and party congresses.

The president–secretary–general and his party apparatus believed that China's becoming a global central player, its "peaceful rise" at the domestic political level, through a constitutional amendment and the restoration of one-person leadership, was feasible at the end of the period under review.

In the name of the elimination of corruption in the military and the party (which is otherwise truly astonishing in scale and depth), Xi did away with most of his rivals and political opponents. The infamous methods of torture used in prisons have been published. The concentration of power has been communicated as the only way to put an end to corruption in China, accustomed to a culture of gifts, and rewards, and to carry out reforms, to sustain development/growth. (The same processes have ensured the party's legitimacy for decades.)

As the practical analysis examples above show, soft power is a more difficult tool for governments to manage than hard power. The effect of hard force is fast, and that of soft force is slow. At the same time, as a summary, the conclusion of this dissertation is that the significance and more serious consideration of the possibilities of soft power influence - especially in the period of new armaments - is extremely important and even essential, even if, due to its specificity, it is stronger albeit indirect effect usually occurs during a longer time interval. A soft power-dominated foreign policy strategy is not intended to be applied, nor can be applied effectively in the short term to achieve rapid and radical changes in public opinion, for example for the quick test of an election, but rather develops gradually as absorbed over long periods of time.

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