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## **SOFT OR SHARP POWER IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

**Introduction.** The People's Republic of China emerged as a powerful player in the international arena. It also affected Chinese foreign policy consisted of dual trends of "welcoming oneself" (qingjinlai) and "going outside" (zouchuqu). The policy relies on the liberal-democratic paradigm of "soft power." In contrast to the "soft power", Western scholars introduced the concept of "sharp power" for describing the state activities in the international arena. Chinese President Xi Jinping said: "The growth of the world economy requires new drivers, development must be more inclusive and balanced, and the gap between rich and the poor must be reduced. Hotspots in some regions are causing instability and terrorism is thriving. The deficit of world development and governance is a serious challenge for humanity "[4].

**Objective of the paper** is to specify the "soft power" and "sharp power" in China's foreign policy.

**Review of recent publications.** The concept of "soft power" is based on the cultural influence that a country exerts. The ability to exert such influence depends on external circumstances, such as cooperation. For example, Western culture blends American and European values and thus often widens a gap with the Muslim culture.

Researchers define three elements of Chinese "soft power":

1. A security policy of prevention of the aggravation of the international situation. China distances itself from any military conflict if it does not directly affect its territorial interests, as in the case of Taiwan or the islands in the South China Sea.

2. International assistance in the economic and social spheres, health care, education, humanitarian sphere. Unlike Europe or the USA, China does not link aid to political and ideological issues.

3. Cultural events to show off the modern achievements of China. For example, Confucius institutions built an international network [5].

"Soft power" is visible in China's domestic and foreign policy. In 2013, China offered other states to participate in the construction of "One Belt-One Road". President Xi Jinping said: "To promote cooperation of the Eurasian states, China can use an innovative model and create a "Silk Road Economic Zone" [3].

Western scholars are sceptical of "soft power" efforts. Researchers from the National Endowment for Democracy Institute, K. Walker and D. Ludwig introduced the term "sharp power" in the report "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence in the Democratic World" [6]. The adjective "sharp" is a tactile metaphor like "soft" and "hard." They see "sharp power" in China's policy because China targets democratic systems to neutralize criticism of its authoritarian regime. "Sharp power" is not direct engagement or force. It includes elements of information war [6] and employs distractions and manipulations. To secure and protect its interests, China is interested in undermining political pluralism and applies "sharp power" in the international arena [1]. The principle of "sharp power" is asymmetry. For example, China creates barriers to external political, and cultural influence inside the country but takes advantage of the open democratic systems [10].

Over the past decade, the People's Republic of China invested a lot of energy, time, and money in reshaping its image. The PRC used various tools: university exchanges, cultural events, educational programs, media programs, and initiatives. China builds its "soft power" on five principles: peaceful coexistence, mutually beneficial economic contacts, the development of dialogue to build trust and peaceful settlement of disputes, "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development"[2]. The Chinese model of peaceful development and an Asian identity is rooted in the historical achievements of Chinese civilization.

Three aspects can be detected in the definition of "soft power": 1) it focuses on cultural policy, mostly education and sports, 2. It promotes democratic values, 3. It is public diplomacy in a broad sense. There are two versions of "sharp power" offered by China and the West. The Chinese version is more national and domestic.

"Soft power" is viewed as a weak link in Chinese policy and used to correct China's image in the world, counteract misconceptions and respond to Western criticism. Chinese government oppose Western "sharp power." On March 2, 2018, a spokesman for the People's Political Consultative Conference of China Wang Guoqing said that the term was introduced to undermine China's policies. He compared the phrase to the stereotypical phrase "Chinese threat" popular in the West [6].

**Conclusion.** The peculiarities of China's foreign policy directly depend on the general perception of the state in international relations, as well as the ideological and ideological paradigm or theoretical school.

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