

Does the “Belt & Road Initiative” Possess Soft Power?

Saifur **Rahman***

Department of Politics, East China Normal University

Abstract

The Belt and Road initiative (BRI) discourse has generated political scholarship in the twenty-first century. It has implications in regional integrations and international politics. In order to realize BRI in full scale, there has to be a level of favorable engagement regarding concerned countries. Oppositional voices can foil the appeal of BRI resulting in the hesitation of nations to participate due to a mixed forecast of its success. A major concern is coercion which may alarm those who want to participate and those who are considering participation. Another is the use of soft power to facilitate favorable outcomes in transnational issues. Thus the assessment of soft power's presence in BRI provides a comprehensive insight of its appeal. In international politics, soft power seeks to establish stable economic relations, a mutually beneficial relationship and avoids the means of coercion. Nye's concept of soft power will be used to examine the features of soft power present in BRI. Soft power may resonate in BRI, but issues which are repulsive can curb the appeal of BRI.

Keywords: *Belt and Road Initiative, soft power, cultural exchange, peaceful development, China Dream, foreign aid*

1. Introduction

From a post-Cold War vantage point, soft power is a popular concept in statecraft. Its dimensions act as a fulcrum to proliferate and shape international relations and politics. Soft power can attract other nations through co-optive means of power, to implement and promote one's ideas in the international realm. China desires to successfully implement the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by appealing to the preferences of nations and to shape these preferences. There are two forks under BRI, which are the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "Maritime Silk Road". Originally it was unveiled as "One Belt, One Road", now it is commonly referred to as BRI. As observed by some, BRI is viewed as a regressive colonial order of Hyper-masculine Eurocentric Whiteness (Ling, 2017). It is a great game, geopolitically or economically. BRI's proposal is not as peaceful as it appears to present itself (Sibal, 2014). According to Dollar (2015), China cannot push BRI's agenda on developing countries who have strong governments. Take for example, India, Indonesia, and Vietnam who all have relatively strong governments. These countries may show disinterest in BRI because BRI will increase the flow of foreign labour and financial burden. On the other hand, it is more ideal for China to send some of its surplus production to countries with weak governance, for example, Pakistan and Cambodia. However, there are reasonable prospects for these countries to participate in BRI (*ibid.*). These points mentioned above can cause repulsion in transnational relations related to the development of BRI. In order to implement BRI, it first has to appeal to governments in the nations it wishes to infiltrate.

During the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping explained that China’s strategies for international relations are based on a peaceful and common development. She will promote cooperation through BRI and will pursue it through open discussion and collaboration. This is a soft power strategy that China is projecting. It has been more than five years since BRI was launched. During this period, there have been small implications of BRI development because there have been no major developments taking place yet. If there are any adverse project impacts under BRI, then it loses its legitimacy. China as the leading state actor can take measures to protect against the rise of BRI repulsion. Examining BRI as a source of soft power may provide insight on understanding political backlash from its development process and its appeal to other nation-states. The central query of this article seeks to answer the question: *Does the “Belt and Road Initiative” possess soft power?* BRI will play a role in transnational politics. Issues that span across nation-states face many challenges; it is beyond the control of governments and to deal with these challenges requires soft power (Nye and Goldsmith, 2011). China has developed her soft power in a strategic manner. Her method of attraction and agenda setting has received international attention. Her soft power practice in international relations has generated a platform where opinions on major issues can be shared (Ding, 2010). Therefore, the assessment of BRI as soft power is necessary to understand China’s international relations strategy. Culture, political values and foreign policies are sources of soft power (Nye, 2004: 11). The impact of BRI on the sources mentioned above can shape the preferences of other countries and it may act as a magnet to attract others.

The rest of this article is comprised of four sections. First, it begins with a discussion of soft power and its resources in the vein of Joseph

Nye's conceptual framework as well as a brief background on BRI. Second, it assesses how BRI can be a source of soft power as it appeals through culture. Third, it examines how domestic values are projected through BRI. Finally, it assesses BRI as a foreign policy to gain legitimacy from other nation-states.

2. Soft Power and a Brief Background on BRI

Soft power is the ability for states to achieve national interest goals in international relations: “*Power is based on the particular material capabilities that a state possesses*” (Mearsheimer, 2001: 55). Power can be exercised with distinction on the degree of intensity – or with command, as oppose to co-optive power. Both coercion and co-option are aspects of ability to shape and appeal to the preferences of others: “*Co-optive power is the ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own*” (Nye, 1990). Co-option is a manifestation of soft power. It is the ability to gain favor without deploying military and economic muscle (Gray, 2011). Soft power could represent a means that is an alternative to an armed force in foreign policy (Smith-Windsor, 2000). It consists of a country's international appeal, internal mobilization capabilities and external mobilization capabilities (Yan and Xu, 2008). International attractiveness has two aspects which are cultural attractiveness and the national model. International mobilization capabilities are exerted through strategic relations. External mobilization refers to elites and ordinary people who support the government. According to Nye (2004: 5), soft power is the ability of its possessor to get favorable outcome through persuasion instead of coercion. To put it simply, soft power is another form of power. It is not only cultural, including values which sets in internal policies as well as handles the

international relations in the same way. It is not just the same as influencing, but persuading people to move by argument. Its manifestation varies in different contexts and with different degrees of intensity. It does not depend on hard power (coercion or threat). Legitimacy is a core element of soft power. In a simple way we can sum up that soft power is evident in practices of persuasion, attraction, emulation and co-option. Nye argues that primarily soft power comes from three sources. First, culture is a source of soft power. Culture can be transferred by means of commerce. Travels by tourists and business people are important channels, and exchange programs are an important aspect of cultural exchange. Trade can attract visitors, investors, job seekers as well as people who want to gain knowledge. Culture diffuses by the creation of a unique identity to attract target groups, and the demand for cultural products, business processes, innovative communication technologies and managerial and working styles (Rae, 2005). Second, soft power rests on domestic political values and ideas. Domestic values set internal practices and policies which influence the ways to handle relations with others. It reflects what it does as well as its ideology. The expression of values can promote its image and legitimacy at home, and it can advance its foreign policy objectives. For example, “a path of peaceful development” / “harmonious world” or “development model” bears China’s vision and values, which are championed at localities and strengthened guidance from internal to external orientation (Cho and Jeong, 2008). Third, foreign policy is another source of soft power. Attractiveness as a source of soft power depends on the values expressed through the substance and style of foreign policy. In order to make a policy appealing, a state has to consider the priority of the other state’s interest. The action of a country should be perceived as welfare for other nations or as a signal of legitimacy. Foreign financial assistance can be one considerable well-

thought-out policy which maintains a degree of international development. Financial assistance for development projects can be both a persuasion of agenda setting and co-optive manner, which manifest soft power.

A Brief of Background BRI

In September 2013, Xi Jinping introduced the “One Belt, One Road” initiative during his trip to Kazakhstan. He emphasized the importance of a “Silk Road Economic Belt” (SREB), which consists of road and rail construction to link China to Europe through central Asia. A month later, while in Indonesia, he proposed an equivalent project termed as “Maritime Silk Road” (MSR). The MSR will link China’s eastern ports to Europe through Southeast Asia. It will pass through the Indian subcontinent and double back around the Bay of Bengal along the Indian Ocean, making its way towards the east coast of Africa before heading to the Suez Canal. In the nearest time of the BRI introduction, China revealed details about the routes and corridors for the type of construction that will be concentrated. Most of the largest state-owned enterprises released plans of their current projects and these projects are in compliance with the objectives of BRI. This is one of the ways in which BRI is beginning to take shape in practice (Murphy, 2016). The northwest province of Xinjiang and the southeast province of Fujian serve as the core development areas for SREB and MSR respectively. The SREB is designed to build a “Eurasian land bridge” – a logistic chain from China to Western Europe. Along the way, economic corridors will be developed to link China with Mongolia, Russia, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. The MSR is designed to link ports from China across the South China Sea to the India Ocean and heading east towards the South Pacific. The proposed six economic corridors are New Eurasian Land Bridge, China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor, China-Central Asia-West Asia

Corridor, China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor, China-Pakistan Corridor, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor. Not all the ports will be new as there are some existing ports already in MSR’s proposal. A few of these ports are Piraeus port in Greece, Port of Djibouti in Djibouti, Hambantota port in Sri Lanka, Antwerp in Belgium, Lamu port in Kenya, Mombasa port in Kenya, Gwadar port in Pakistan, and Colombo port city in Sri Lanka among others. The development plans of BRI has been considered to be China’s third round of opening up since becoming a World Trade Organization (WTO) member and the development of special economic zones. The objectives of BRI are to bring prosperity to the undeveloped parts in China, increased connectivity and economic growth, integration with neighbors, energy security, exploration as an outlet for excess production capacity and channelized outward investment.¹ The action plan and vision statement of BRI are in line with the principles of the United Nations charter. In addition, it follows five principles which are mutual respect of sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, an equally and mutually beneficial relationship, and a peaceful coexistence.²

3. BRI: Soft Power as Cultural Exchange

Culture (or, a set of practices that have been normalized) can be transmitted by commercial activities and visits. Nye (2004: 11) distinguished exchange programs or education as high-culture and mass entertainment like a company or brand, from commercial advertisement as popular culture. Through trade and exchange programs BRI would embody a set of practices. By normalizing this set of practices BRI would become a way for which soft power can manifest itself.

As China continues to open up its market, BRI will strengthen her competitiveness as the second largest economy in the world. BRI's purpose is to create a large trade economy linking China all the way to Europe and everything in between. If successful, it will be one of the biggest, most diverse marketplace where experimentation of new business can take place. Any knowledge and experiences produced from BRI can be distributed to participating nations. States with weak economies can find opportunities to generate income, whereas economically viable countries can explore new business ventures. Moreover, companies and corporations, brands, commercial and cultural goods will proliferate and distribution to participating nations can easily be done. These things are not only an economic indication, but are also intellectual, spiritual and emotional factors. These products convey manner, ideology and identity. Culture cannot be separated from this mass trade process because each product carries a narrative to be sold. The labor, trade agreements, services/products distribution methods, and standardization as a whole all concern cultural transmission and generate set of practice in a trading system. The increase flow of trade can more easily normalize and disseminate this set of practice which BRI is promoting.

BRI will proliferate trade in two ways. First, it reduces trade barriers and costs between countries who are perceived to be important trading partners. Second, it explores new trade routes to potential trading partners who are isolated. Improved connections and lower trade cost has significant global impact. BRI countries, including those who signed the BRI "implementation and partnership agreement" with China, involve more than a quarter of world trade, and halving trade costs can increase world trade by 12 percent (Konings, 2018). A well-developed infrastructure and connectivity is one way to reduce trade costs. Lu, Rohr, Hafner and Knack (2018) showed that transportation infrastructure

and connectivity has significant impact on trade. Investment in improving transportation infrastructure increased trade volume significantly, not only in the BRI region but also in other regions such as the European Union. Ramasamy, Yeung, Utoktham and Duval (2017) found that BRI is improving both hard infrastructure, such as roads, ports, and highways, and soft infrastructures, such as customs management and institutional factors etc. In spite of diversity of economies along the corridors, there is potential impact on trade in six economic corridors of BRI due to infrastructural improvement. It enhances export performance of BRI countries and with free trade agreements it acts as a catalyst of cooperation between countries. A report in *People’s Daily Online* (31 August 2018) gave a snapshot of the impact of BRI in the last five years. China has signed or upgraded five free trade agreements and traded goods between China and BRI countries have exceeded US\$5 trillion. It has created US\$2.01 billion of tax revenues. A total of 118 cooperation agreements were signed with 103 countries and international organizations. China is the leading state actor of BRI and has become the largest trading partner of 25 BRI nations. There are 82 economic and trade cooperative zones established that have attracted 3,995 companies. Till August 2018, the transportation of goods by freight train has made 10,000 trips from China to 15 European countries. In 2017, the inbound and outbound students of China in BRI regions exceeded 300,000 and 60,000 respectively. Tourism revenue is expected to increase to \$110 billion by the year 2020 (*ibid.*).

In the BRI region, 140 Confucius Institutes, 135 Confucius Classrooms, 85 academic programs and 206 partnership programs between Chinese and foreign institutions have started. Furthermore, 24 BRI nations and China have reached agreements on mutual academic degree recognition (*China Daily*, 10 August 2018). BRI countries

promoted exchange programs for cooperation and China provided 10,000 Chinese government scholarship per year. BRI has expanded exchange programs through youth employment, training, vocational skill development, social security management and exploring common interest areas. Along this region 50 joint laboratories were set up, 2,500 young foreign scientists were offered a chance to visit China for a short-term visit, and 5,000 foreigners were offered special training.³ Moreover, holding different festivals, connecting different heritage sites, and creating competitive tourist route will attract visitors to the BRI region. Academicians, scientists, professionals and visitors can familiarized themselves with local rules, gain inter-cultural competence and innovative ideas. These kinds of high cultural contact often produce soft power (Nye, 2004: 45). University students go back their home and they are a remarkable reservoir of goodwill in long term for the host country (where they studied). Simultaneously, these students contribute to change at the national level by adopting the normalized set of practices which BRI embodies. Cultural exchanges over time can affect policies in the domestic political spectrum (Nye, 2004: 46). In a commercial spectrum, trade flow introduces and utilizes new ideas both at home and abroad. BRI will encourage the exchanges of high culture and popular culture.

Long-term trade imbalance and short-term cultural confrontation may repulse the participation in BRI development. Trade imbalance is a cause of anxiety in potential BRI countries. There is already a trade imbalance between China and European countries. For example, Chinese export to BRI countries has increased, whereas European countries' export has decreased (Holslag, 2017). In 2015, China's trade with Central Asia has surpassed Russia's trade with Central Asia.⁴ The trade imbalance might lead to different types of long-term implications. Generally, the blessing of science, innovation and new-age business will

proliferate. Some countries occupy an advanced position in high-tech manufacturing and services. Technologically backward countries depend on technologically advanced countries who have reasonable prices. Like China, a low-cost manufacturing goods supplier is in a more favorable position. There may be an increase in welfare for low-income consumers, but low-priced goods and services may challenge the survival of local industries. Even technologically advanced countries may face challenges from China as the latter is known for producing goods and services at low cost. Due to infrastructure development, the economies of BRI countries may expand due to China's growing demand for goods and services. Importing popular products at a reasonable price and service and production methods all carry a cultural aspect which influences local traditions. Short-term anxiety might rise during BRI implementation phase because of quantitative restrictions, discriminatory taxation, regulatory prohibitions, licensing restrictions, and tariffs. Different conventions, communication expressions and social principles of different parties could be a front for conflict, whose roots derive from cultural diversity (Dai and Cai, 2017). There are two parties involved, one is the enterprise and the other is the host country. They are from different cultures who have different perspectives of the same problem and agreements. Therefore, balancing the trade deficit and cooperation mechanism is important to keep attraction of BRI. On November 5, 2018, the China International Import Expo (CIIE) was held in Shanghai. In this expo Xi Jinping stated China's plans to lower tariffs, reduce cost in imports, and facilitate customs clearance to expand the scope of imports. In the next 15 years, China is expected to exceed US\$30 trillion and US\$10 trillion of imported goods and services respectively (Wang, Xu and Li, 2018). If Chinese imports increases in BRI region, then the backlash of trade deficit will turn down. Furthermore, BRI-centric cooperation operates as a bilateral agreement

(making plans, initiating pilot projects etc.), a multilateral agreement (Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation etc.), and a regional exhibition (Boao Forum for Asia, China-South Asia Expo etc.) which can act to minimize space for concerns.

4. BRI: Soft Power as a Transfer of Domestic Political Values

The Confucian idea of harmony is embedded in Chinese domestic values. Chinese history is roughly calculated to be five thousand years old. China has experienced a number of changes in its history. China has taken these lessons as they continue their path of development in the 21st century. During President Hu Jintao's era, its soft power strategy emphasized the values of "peaceful development" which was coined with Confucius tones of "harmonious society". The previous leaders Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin had promoted that this will lead China to economic prosperity. The motivation for peaceful development is to gain acceptance and legitimacy from other nations and for China's own modernization. According to the White Paper titled *China's peaceful development* (2011), the distinctive features of the path to "peaceful development" is a path of scientific development, self-reliance, opening to other nations, and seeking common development. BRI will promote the path of scientific development through economic progress, social development, applying science and technology, enhancing social services and utilizing resources. BRI is China's own effort and idea. It implies China's independent capacity to pursue development and introduce innovative ideas to other nation-states. The improvement of social systems and institutions, and domestic market and income distribution will convey the impression of the Chinese development model. In addition, BRI proliferates development outside of the national

border. It will carry out domestic improvements in different aspects, engaging at a profound level with other countries, and contribute to human civilization. Creating a harmonious world is the idea of a peaceful development in international affairs, using a non-confrontational means to gain their own interest. On the 60th anniversary of the United Nations, Hu Jintao remarked on China’s aims to build a harmonious world. In 2012, Xi Jinping put forth the idea of the “China Dream”. It is an ideological objective of Xi’s regime, as his predecessor Hu Jintao had defined “harmonious society” (Ferdinand, 2016). Scholars have interpreted the “China Dream” as focused on improving economic aspects, living standards, political aspects and foreign relations (Duan, 2016). These are all reflected in the national values. According to Yang Jiechi, State Councilor and Director of the Office of the foreign affairs Leading Group of the CPC Central Committee, People’s Republic of China, and former foreign minister, writing in *The National Interest* (10 September 2013), the “China Dream” has garnered empathy around the world and contributes to development of others. BRI advocates the “China Dream”, by minimizing the development gap at the domestic level to achieve economic equality. Let us assess how BRI functions as the ideology of the “China Dream”. Let us first begin to understand at the domestic level. The western parts of China are left behind by the rapid urbanization and development of the east, which is based on an export-oriented strategy. The western regions are far from the east coast and are quite rural. The per capita income in the western provinces are lagging behind those of the eastern provinces. Reducing income inequality and addressing social instability is important for social justice, rule of law, and better living standards. Since the late 1990s, China has launched “the Western development program” to spur growth in these areas; however, these plans for development have not been as successful as

planned. Lastly, the financial crisis of 2008 caused even further unexpected shortcomings. The east coast is heading towards a capital-intensive development, whereas the west is more labor-intensive (van Dijk, 2011). This has important consequences for labor migration and income distribution. BRI will connect the western provinces (such as Xinjiang, Tibet) with neighboring countries. This would act as an energy corridor from Xinjinag to Eurasia. For Tibet, it would connect to the Himalayan economic rim project with BCIM. BRI is expected to mobilize more economic activities with bordering countries of the western parts of China and this should reduce the gap with the east coast. Second, let us look at a case at international level which is how BRI functions for other nations. Central Asia is distant from regions of major economic activities such as North America, Western Europe, East and Southeast Asia. This landlocked region is geographically disadvantaged because they are unable to access oceanic trade and are locked within the world's largest landmass. In this region, trade carries high costs and is time-consuming because of additional international boundaries, infrastructure and the absence of direct port access. Intra-regional integration is a set of trade policy and intra-regional trade can bring opportunities to this region (White, 2010). Through foreign direct investments, the economy of these countries can significantly expand. A notable territory of this region is the Asia-Pacific economic rim on the east and the European economic rim to its west. BRI can bring prospective advantages to this region by connecting it to the world, in particular China and European countries. In this way central Asia can improve their infrastructures, obtain sea ports and integrate into the global economy.

BRI has thus far proven itself to be in line with the objectives of the "China Dream". The implications of BRI are economic prosperity at the domestic level which should improve the living standards and conditions

of the people. Furthermore, it deepens the trust of the people in the government. It is resonating with the world’s common desire of economic prosperity. BRI has generated 244,000 jobs⁵ along its region and this is one of the factors which makes BRI so attractive in international cooperation. Others’ views, on how and why the BRI is implemented in national and international perspective is important for legitimacy. If the political values perceive that it is not spread with similar spirit at home and abroad, then it would appear as hypocritical to some other people (Nye, 2004: 55, 60). It may restrain the attractiveness of values. Some scholars argue that BRI is countering America’s “Pivot to Asia” and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). In 2011, the U.S. State Department’s secretary of state Hillary Clinton first outlined the pivot strategy in her article “America’s Pacific Century” (*Foreign Policy*, 11 October 2011). At the end of the same year, President Barack Obama formally outlined the Asia-Pacific foreign policy strategy. It reshaped USA’s geopolitical priorities moving towards a more Pacific direction and less Atlantic. The objectives of “Asia Pivot” are to preserve USA interest across the regional sea lanes, further expand trade with East Asia and free trade zones in the Asia-Pacific region, not explicitly but seem to contain China’s position (Del Pero, 2013). The TPP is a free trade agreement among twelve Asia-Pacific countries, including USA, Japan, Canada, Australia, Mexico, Malaysia, Singapore, Chile, Vietnam, Peru, New Zealand and Brunei. USA joined the TPP in late 2008 and soon it became the center of president Obama’s economic policy in Asia. In 2015, USA accounted for approximately 65 percent of the combined GDP among TPP countries⁶. The strategic and economic approach of “Asia Pivot” and TPP intrinsically caused security concerns and tensions in economic realities among non-allied states. While “Pivot” including TPP are dealing with Asia, BRI seeks to cultivate relations westward via Eurasia and Southeast Asia. Third parties suspect that BRI is a strategic

race of countering and rebalancing. This kind of suspicion influences state actor's decision whether to participate in BRI. For example, Washington's "Asia Pivot" and Beijing's "BRI" became two platforms vying for India's participation. Signing BRI for India makes sensitive the topics of security and the Indian Ocean strategy. Due to apprehension, New Delhi has opted out of BRI. Although one can argue that this is a geopolitical race, there is indeed a positive side with BRI. In times like Brexit and the US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, BRI has stood for and inspired international cooperation. The recent financial crisis slowed down economy and BRI has risen as an opportunity of hope. For India, BRI can further enhanced its confidence. She has previous experience in trade with China particularly along the ancient Silk Road. In 2006, India and China opened up the Nathu La Pass, which was part of the ancient Silk Road. They signed three significant border agreements in 2005, 2012 and 2013 (Ho, 2014). In 2013, they signed a series of MoUs to increase Indian exports to China. In 2014, China proposed US\$300 billion for Indian infrastructure development. In the near future, India may reconsider its position in BRI because this is a great opportunity for the "Made in India" campaign, deepening friendships with neighboring states by engaging in the BCIM, reclaiming with pride its former place as one of the ancient Silk Road destinations, and exploring the demand for her IT-based soft technology.

Again, some voices are concerned over a geopolitical dominance competition in Central Asia. Historically, Russia is influential in Central Asia, whereas the influence of BRI appears to be coming from China's thrall (Denyer, 2015). Russia is leading the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) which was established in 2015. The member states are Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. It is highly centralized to Russia, largely considered as political, and adopts a defensive approach against any regional supremacy (Patalakh, 2018). It brought many

opportunities to the area such as a free flow of commodities, services and labor force among member states, particularly the Russian market. There is also a regional financial arrangement, namely, the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (EFSD) also formerly known as EURASEC Anti-Crisis Fund. It was established by Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. It is managed by the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), where Russia is the leading contributor.⁷ In general, Russia’s dominance prevails in this organization so it can be presumed that the implications of the EAEU and the EFSD give Russia a presiding position in Central Asia. In a way some would argue, the attempt of BRI appears to be the expansion of China’s dominance in Central Asia. In fact, these kind of outlook on Central Asia undercuts the appeal of BRI. Potential economic interdependence can be a factor to reduce apprehension and building trust (Hu, 2017). Under BRI, China, Russia and Central Asia will be interdependent in many respects. Moreover, Russia has joined other initiatives undertaken by China, like BRICS, which is a group comprising Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). These platforms can act as cooperative mechanisms. Hence, it can be assumed that BRI might not be the cause of the stumbling block between Sino-Russian relations due to BRI being labelled as a hypocritical vision. Moreover, China should make a more objective assessment of BRI, which can redirect the mixed outlook.

5. BRI: Soft Power as a Source of Foreign Policy

Expression of shared values through substance and style has a pivotal role to attract foreigners (Nye, 2004: 60). According to Yang Jiechi (2013), the path of peaceful development and the strategy of “win-win”

co-operation with other nations are followed by BRI's leading state actor China. China's approach to foreign relations voices "equality and mutual benefit" (Geis and Holt, 2009). The expression of "mutual benefit" is the spirit of BRI in dealing with other nations. Infrastructure development brings a common ground to gain mutual benefits. The combination of land use and sea channels through BRI will improve accessibility to advantageous locations and resources, and offer various choices of transportation routes and modes of transportation. China has taken the lead in funding BRI by means of foreign aid which plays a double role. Besides helping to legitimize China as a state actor, it also leads to China gaining benefits from BRI development.

China's foreign aid principle gives recipient countries the freedom to utilize aid. Sometimes, developing countries fail to meet the conditions of traditional donors such as the World Bank, the IMF, the regional banks, and the Development Assistance Committee members. This limitation makes developing countries aspire for alternative sources of funding for emergency needs. There are three types of foreign aid, which are grants, interest-free loans and concessional loans, and eight forms of foreign aid are provided by China which are all no-strings-attached conditional policies (State Council, PRC, 2014). Conditionality on financial aid posits a kind of negative view such that it is considered to be a type of influence to control the recipient. Tying aid to domestic governance without conditionality ensures relaxation to expend fund according to the recipient's own domestic appropriateness. It also sensitizes non-intervened nationalism. Outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) is a way to channel foreign aid. China's OFDI was encouraged by "Go Global strategy" (GGS), which has increased since the wave of BRI. The objectives of GGS are to increase more outflow of capital, acquire higher experiences, and gather expertise as global competitive standard. Over the decade from 2006 to 2015, Chinese

OFDI has increased from US\$21.2 billion to US\$139.5 billion. In the year of 2015, 2016, 2017 and first three quarters of 2018 China’s direct investment along the BRI countries hit US\$14.8 billion⁸, US\$14.5 billion⁹, US\$20.17 billion¹⁰ and US\$10.78 billion respectively. Three types of institutions are providing financial support to BRI – they are specialized agencies such as AIIB, BRICS New Development Bank, Silk Road Fund, and multilateral institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and Chinese banks. The China Development Bank, the Export-Import Bank of China, and the China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation has signed agreements of different projects to finance in BRI countries. The financial aid for BRI is setting forth projects in a persuading manner and not in coercion manner, i.e. sanction or embargo. The foreign assistance will work as fuel for BRI projects bringing economic growth in participant nations, while simultaneously working as soft power. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an example of how both nations can benefit from BRI. The CPEC will be connected by Gwadar Port of Pakistan and Xinjiang province of China. In this way, Beijing will have access to the Arabian Sea. China’s oil is mostly transported through the Strait of Malacca to Shanghai, roughly about 16,000 km.¹¹ The Gwadar Port reduces the distance and enables more efficient transport for oil and energy resources from the Middle East. China has invested US\$19 billion to build or upgrade Pakistan’s infrastructure in Gwadar Port (*VOA*, 27 October 2018). China benefits from cost saving and time consumption in this development project, while Pakistan’s internal transportation expands. The CPEC has become a transit point to connect Eurasia with South Asia and Southeast Asia which places Pakistan at a strategic point. BRI appears to be mobilizing cooperation without threat or payoffs. The CPEC pursues both parties’ interest which is an example of soft power (Nye, 2004: 60-61).

There are some controversies concerning China's foreign aid. Recipient countries can manipulate funds for their own interest and there is less possibility to follow standard procedures because there is no stringent conditionality attached to these funds. Thus projects under BRI could be undermined. While other traditional donors are promoting institutional quality, joint responsibility, local capacity, and different cross-cutting themes that strengthen empowerment, China's financial aid policy undermines change and reform of quality (Shambaugh, 2013: 161-163). China's foreign aid creates substantial revenues for herself and challenges multilateralism (Kjøllestadal and Welle-Strand, 2010). China's foreign assistance insists on being mutually beneficial, which leads to her finding substantial gains. BRI-based aid could be posited for accessing local natural resources and creating business opportunities for Chinese companies. This may be a cause of repulsion for BRI. Again, China independently pursues her foreign aid policy, which is an alternative system parallel to traditional multilateral debt relief initiatives. Traditional donors are afraid of increased build-up of debt owed to China; however, the argument here is about another kind of advantage in spite of this controversy. Emerging donors may follow the Chinese foreign aid policy, follow the new approaches of their own aid system considering different goals, structures, and bring about new paradigms of foreign aid system. However, China has to pay heed to criticisms of her financial aid to ensure the quality of projects because BRI will have a long-term implication for human civilization. Though different projects will be implemented under BRI as joint partnership with the transferring of technology, some also follow build-transfer (BT), build operate-transfer (BOT) and public-private partnership (PPP) methods. Project quality management, integrated project solutions and consulting services will play pivotal roles to ensure the standards and

quality of development projects. These all above mentioned processes should be ensured.

Of late, there are a few alarming reports about the implications of BRI for debt distress. It is estimated that BRI would cost as much as US\$8 trillion for a full-scale implementation where China is the prime creditor. The Center for Global Development has indicated that BRI's 23 countries are significantly vulnerable to debt distress with 8 countries at a high risk of debt distress: Djibouti, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Montenegro, Pakistan and Tajikistan (Hurley, Morris and Portelance, 2018). Debt has an obligation – the borrower has to repay the lender at a future point in time. Debt crisis takes place when the borrower is unable to repay liabilities. Moderate-level debt has a positive side to fuel state economy, whereas high debt level has bad impact, i.e. sale of land resources, financial crisis, political instability and privatization of state enterprises.¹² Recently, Malaysia cancelled China-funded projects, Sri Lanka is facing a challenge, and Djibouti is also under crisis due to the implication of BRI debt (Hampstead, 2018). This raises the fear of debt crisis in developing countries and is a cause that curbs attraction to BRI. China has responded to the debt crisis stating that she is not the one to be blamed for debt distress because it is a complex and multifarious matter. According to Zhang Jianping, director of the Institute for West Asia and Africa, Ministry of Commerce, PRC, some developing countries are responsible for their excessive foreign debt and their ulterior motive may go against the reality (Zhang, 2018). The *China Economic Watch* (November 2017) mentioned that BRI recipient countries face debt sustainability due to inbound investment flows and bilateral currency swap agreements. BRI stimulates FDI in participating countries, which stimulates economic growth, and leads to sustainable future debt-service capacity. The renminbi (RMB) is internationalized and often used as payment and as traded settlement

currency. Currently, China has swap agreement with 24 BRI countries (Deorukhkar and Xia, 2017). Bilateral currency swap agreements settle trade payouts in RMB, improving operational efficiency and lowering transaction costs. In these currency swaps, both sides can draw upon the credit line at a pre-determined exchange rate. In lieu of debt sustainability due to currency swap arrangements, the implications of BRI brought out debate about debt distress. Both debtors and creditors must work together to identify risk factors and handle them strategically. The AIIB and the New Development Bank can assist to find a common set of practice for debt sustainability. Again, expanding more swap agreements can bring debt sustainability which will diminish worry about debt stress.

6. Concluding Remark

BRI has huge implications for international relations. Usually, states are eager to improve social welfare and BRI can elevate this eagerness. As commonly voiced BRI seeks a common ground while shelving differences for prosperity to attract others. Analyzing how it acts as a magnet is important to understanding the implication of the BRI. Joseph Nye first coined the term “soft power” which possesses the sources of appeal in transnational issues. Nye’s prescribed resources of soft power are considered to assess the appeal of BRI. Whether BRI’s strength bears potentiality for state actor’s national interest or will create chaos depends upon the perspective and choice of the actor. If state actors admire the BRI vision and aspire for the type of prosperity it offers, then they will gravitate towards it. BRI facilitates opportunities for interaction of different nations with trade and exchange programs. It acts as a platform of “flow in, flow out” of popular and high culture. It levers political values through the priority of economic prosperity at home and abroad.

It creates a consensus around shared meaning. It shares understanding and grasps onto shared national goals such as common development. It opens the door to legitimized actions perceived to be in cooperation with that consensus. On the other hand, there are some concerns like trade imbalances. Moreover, China’s state-owned enterprises and state-owned policy bank play pivotal roles for BRI development, even though she pledges to explore the market and allow decisive role in resource allocation (*China Daily USA*, 4 March 2014). These implications mentioned above may proliferate the sense that BRI can lead to a Sino-centric region. The view of countering geopolitical balance is a cause of undermining the domestic values. Furthermore, financial burden, environmental issue, and lack of coherent governance architecture can provoke repulsion along participating nations. While China’s BRI is going on through bilateral and multilateral arrangement, due to the absence of institutional platform, her actions may appear inconsistent in the eyes of others and raise ambiguity. Institution can channel all parties’ activities through legal framework and posit a universality. China should showcase itself as a responsible actor to curb repulsion of any sort.

Notes

* Saifur Rahman is currently pursuing his PhD in the International Graduate Program in Politics (IGPP) at the Department of Politics, East China Normal University in Shanghai, China. He belongs to Bangladesh civil service since 2008. He has worked in various administrative structures under the Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Social Welfare, Bangladesh. He has participated in many international fora. <Email: saifur.rahman27@yahoo.com>

1. Source: China-Britain Business Council.
2. Source: State Council, PRC.

3. “UNESCO and One Belt One Road Initiative”, <http://www.aetdew.org>, 20 October 2017. Kuala Lumpur: Academy of Engineering and Technology of the Developing World (AETDEW). <<http://www.aetdew.org/en/news/11.html>> (accessed on November 21, 2018).
4. China US\$24.7 billion, Russia US\$21 billion. (Source: Bruegel based on Trademap (data for Central Asian countries). Brussels: Bruegel (think tank). <[https://www.google.com/search?q=Bruegel+based+on+Trademap+\(data+for+Central+Asian+countries\).&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw0MnMusneAhUHYo8KHREZBbUQsAR6BAGFEAE&biw=1366&bih=604#imgrc=8hScSmygLBov5M:>](https://www.google.com/search?q=Bruegel+based+on+Trademap+(data+for+Central+Asian+countries).&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw0MnMusneAhUHYo8KHREZBbUQsAR6BAGFEAE&biw=1366&bih=604#imgrc=8hScSmygLBov5M:>)> (accessed November 10, 2018).)
5. Source: MOFCOM.
6. The combined GDP of twelve TPP signatories was US\$28,011 billion and USA's GDP was US\$18121 billion in 2015. (Source: The World Bank.)
7. Source: EFSO.
8. Source: *2016 China Outbound Investment Outlook*.
9. Source: *Belt and Road Portal*.
10. Source: MOFCOM.
11. “How will CPEC boost Pakistan economy?” <<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/pk/Documents/risk/pak-china-eco-corridor-deloittepk-noexp.pdf>>
12. *UK Essays*, 7 July 2017.

References

- AETDEW (20 October 2017). UNESCO and One Belt One Road Initiative. <http://www.aetdew.org>. Kuala Lumpur: Academy of Engineering and Technology of the Developing World (AETDEW). <<http://www.aetdew.org/en/news/11.html>> (accessed on November 21, 2018).

- Belt and Road Portal* (28 April 2017). Belt and Road Initiative boosts trade and investment. (Reported by Jason Lee.) <<https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/11991.htm>> (accessed October 20, 2018).
- Belt and Road Portal* (6 November 2018). China’s import expo opens, Xi urges building an open world economy. (Source: Xinhua News Agency, reported by Wang Xiuqiong, Xu Xiaoqing and Li Zhihui.) <<https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/70784.htm>> (accessed on November 17, 2018).
- Bruegel based on Trademap (data for Central Asian countries). Brussels: Bruegel (think tank). <[https://www.google.com/search?q=Bruegel+based+on+Trademap+\(data+for+Central+Asian+countries\).&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw0MnMusneAhUHYo8KHREZBbUQsAR6BAGFEAE&biw=1366&bih=604#imgrc=8hScSmygLBov5M:>](https://www.google.com/search?q=Bruegel+based+on+Trademap+(data+for+Central+Asian+countries).&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw0MnMusneAhUHYo8KHREZBbUQsAR6BAGFEAE&biw=1366&bih=604#imgrc=8hScSmygLBov5M:>)> (accessed November 10, 2018).
- China-Britain Business Council (CBBC). *One Belt One Road* 一带一路 : A role for UK companies in developing China’s new initiative – New opportunities in China and beyond. London and Beijing: China-Britain Business Council. <<http://files.chinagoabroad.com/Public/uploads/content/files/201704/OBOR-1-New-Opportunities-in-China-and-Beyond.pdf>>
- ChinaDaily.com.cn* (10 August 2018). International plan draws foreign students. (Reported by Zou Shuo, *China Daily*.) <<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201808/10/WS5b6cc4f6a310add14f384f51.html>> (accessed on November 21, 2018).
- China Daily USA* (4 March 2014). China embraces market forces. (Reported by Zhang Yang.) <http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/2014-03/04/content_17322623.htm> (accessed on November 10, 2018).
- Cho, Young Nam and Jong Ho Jeong (2008). China’s soft power: Discussions, resources, and prospects. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 48, No. 3, pp. 453-472.
- Dai, Guiyu and Yi Cai (2017). The cross-culture management of Chinese enterprises in Poland under the Belt and Road Initiative – Based on PEST Model. *International Business Research*, Vol. 10, No. 9, pp. 96-105.

- Del Pero, Mario (2013). US: Which grand strategy for Asia and China? *Analysis* No. 187, July 2013. Washington, D.C.: International Peace and Security Institute (ISPI).
- Deloitte. How will CPEC boost Pakistan economy? (London: Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited.) <<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/pk/Documents/risk/pak-china-eco-corridor-deloittepk-noexp.pdf>>
- Denyer, Simon (2015). In Central Asia, Chinese inroads in Russia's back yard. *The Washington Post*, 27 December 2015 (*China's Back Yard* occasional series). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/chinas-advance-into-central-asia-ruffles-russian-feathers/2015/12/27/cfedeb22-61ff-11e5-8475-781cc9851652_story.html?utm_term=.a8d0a0e00ea1> (accessed on November 27, 2018)
- Deorukhkar, Sumedh and Le Xia (2017). China | One Belt One Road – progress and prospects. *China Economic Watch*, November 2017. Mexico City: BBVA Bancomer (Banco de Comercio). <https://www.bbvaesearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/201710_ChinaWatch_OBOR.pdf>
- Ding, Sheng (2010). Analyzing rising power from the perspective of soft power: A new look at China's rise to the status quo power. *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 19, Issue 64, pp. 255-272.
- Dollar, David (2015). China's rise as a regional and global power: The AIIB and the 'one belt, one road'. *Brookings*, 15 July 2015. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution. <<https://www.brookings.edu/research/chinas-rise-as-a-regional-and-global-power-the-aiib-and-the-one-belt-one-road/>> (accessed on November 27, 2018).
- Duan, Peng (2016). Essay on the external communication strategies of the China Dream: Analysis and study of reports on the China Dream in *The Washington Post* and on CNN. *Global Media and China*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 261-270.
- Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (EFSD). <<https://efsd.eabr.org/en/members/ru/>> (accessed on November 1, 2018).

- EY (March 2016). *Going Out – the global dream of a manufacturing power: 2016 China Outbound Investment Outlook*. EY (London: Ernst & Young). <<https://www.ey.com/cn/en/services/specialty-services/china-overseas-investment-network/ey-going-out-the-global-dream-of-a-manufacturing-power-2016-china-outbound-investment-outlook>> <[https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-2016-china-outbound-investment-outlook-en/\\$FILE/ey-2016-china-outbound-investment-outlook-en.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-2016-china-outbound-investment-outlook-en/$FILE/ey-2016-china-outbound-investment-outlook-en.pdf)>
- Ferdinand, Peter (2016). Westward ho—the China dream and ‘one belt, one road’: Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping. *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, Issue 4, July 2016, pp. 941-957.
- Geis, John P. II and Blaine Holt (2009). “Harmonious Society”: Rise of the new China. *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Winter 2009, pp. 75-94.
- Gray, Colin S. (April 2011). *Hard power and soft power: The utility of military force as an instrument of policy in the 21st century*. Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), U.S. Army War College.
- Hampstead, John Paul (2018). Five years in, China’s Belt and Road looks like a giant debt trap. *Freight Waves*, 28 August 2018. <<https://www.freightwaves.com/news/chinas-belt-and-road-looks-like-giant-debt-trap>> (accessed on November 2, 2018).
- Ho, Selina (2014). China’s shifting perceptions of India: The context of Xi Jinping’s visit to India. *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 279, 2 October 2014. Washington DC: East-West Center. <<https://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/apb279.pdf>> (accessed on November 23, 2018).
- Holslag, Jonathan (2017). How China’s New Silk Road Threatens European Trade. *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 52, Issue 1, pp. 46-60.
- Hu, Richard W. (2017). China’s ‘One Belt One Road’ strategy: Opportunity or challenge for India? *China Report*, Vol. 53, Issue 2, pp. 107-124.

- Hurley, John, Scott Morris and Gailyn Portelance (2018). Examining the debt implications of the Belt and Road Initiative from a policy perspective. *CGD Policy Paper* 121, March 2018. Washington DC: Center for Global Development.
- Kjøllestad, Kristian and Anne Welle-Strand (2010). Foreign aid strategies: China taking over? *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 6, No. 10. October 2010. pp. 3-13. <<file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/6491-23754-1-PB.pdf>>
- Konings, Joanna (2018). Trade impacts of the Belt and Road Initiative. *Economic & Financial Analysis – Global Economics*, 6 June 2018. Amsterdam: ING. <https://think.ing.com/uploads/reports/Tradebelt_final2.pdf>
- Ling, L.H.M. (2017). Beyond soft power: Cultural power from India and China today through film. *China Report*, Vol. 53, No. 2, pp. 172-187.
- Lu, Hui, Charlene Rohr, Marco Hafner and Anna Knack (2018). *China Belt and Road Initiative: Measuring the impact of improving transport connectivity on international trade in the region – a proof-of-concept study*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation.
- Mearsheimer, John. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China (MOFCOM) (29 September 2018). Ministry of Commerce holds the press conference on the statistical communiqué of Chinese OFDI in 2017. <<http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/press/201809/20180902791965.shtml>> (accessed on November 15, 2018).
- Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China (MOFCOM) (26 October 2018). Regular press conference of the Ministry of Commerce (October 25, 2018). <<http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/press/201810/20181002800413.shtml>> (accessed on November 15, 2018).
- Murphy, David (2016). One Belt One Road: International development finance with Chinese characteristics (pp. 246-251). In: Gloria Davies, Jeremy

- Goldkorn and Luigi Tomba (eds.), *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*. Canberra: ANU Press, The Australian National University. <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n2095/pdf/ch06_forum_murphy.pdf>
- Nye, Joseph S., Jr. (1990). Soft power. *Foreign Policy*, No. 80 (Twentieth Anniversary), Autumn 1990, pp. 153-171. (Published by Washingtonpost. Newsweek Interactive, LLC.)
- Nye, Joseph S., Jr. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Nye, Joseph. S., Jr. and J.L. Goldsmith (2011). The future of power. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 64, No. 3, pp. 45-52.
- Patalakh, Artem (2018). Economic or geopolitical? Explaining the motives and expectations of the Eurasian Economic Union’s member states. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 31-48.
- People’s Daily Online* (en.people.cn) (31 August 2018), China’s merchandise trade with Belt and Road countries tops \$5 trillion in 5 years. (Reported by Lu Yanan, *People’s Daily*.) <<http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0831/c90000-9496013.htm>> (accessed on November 19, 2018)
- Rae, David (2005). Cultural diffusion: A formative process in creative entrepreneurship? *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, pp. 185-192.
- Ramasamy, Bala, Matthew Yeung, Chorthip Utoktham and Yann Duval (2017). Trade and trade facilitation along the Belt and Road Initiative corridors. *ARTNeT Working Paper Series*, No. 172, November 2017. Bangkok: Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) / ESCAP. <<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/172051/1/1006745505.pdf>>
- Shambaugh, David L. (2013). *China goes global: The partial power*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Sibal, Kanwal (2014). China’s maritime ‘silk road’ proposals are not as peaceful as they seem. *Mail Online India*, 24 February 2014. <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2566881/Chinas-maritime-silk-road->

- proposals-not-peaceful-seem.html*> (accessed on November 27, 2018).
- Smith-Windsor, Brooke A. (2000). Hard power, soft power reconsidered. *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Autumn 2000, pp. 51-56. <<http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol1/no3/doc/50-56-eng.pdf>>
- State Council, People's Republic of China (September 2011). Full text: China's peaceful development (White Paper). *Chinese Government's Official Web Portal* (Gov.cn). <http://english1.english.gov.cn/official/2011-09/06/content_1941354.htm> (accessed on July 12, 2018).
- State Council, People's Republic of China (updated: 10 July 2014). China's foreign aid (2014). <http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/08/23/content_281474982986592.htm>
- State Council, People's Republic of China (updated: 30 March 2015). Full text: Action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative (issued on March 28). <http://english.gov.cn/archive/publications/2015/03/30/content_281475080249035.htm>
- The World Bank (Data). *GDP (current US\$)* – World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files. (Washington, DC: The World Bank.) <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>> (accessed on October 25, 2018).
- UK Essays* (7 July 2017). Effects of debt – positive and negative. <<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/economics/positive-and-negative-effects-of-debt-economics-essay.php>> (accessed on November 01, 2018).
- van Dijk, Meine Pieter (2011). A different development model in China's western and eastern provinces? *Modern Economy*, Vol. 2, pp. 757-768.
- Voice of America (VOA)* (27 October 2018). China to give Pakistan 'grant' as UAE mulls \$6b in aid. (Reported by Ayaz Gul.) <<https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/china-give-pakistan-grant-uae-mulls-6b-aid>> (accessed on November 10, 2018).
- White, Kristopher D. (2010). Geography, policy, and barriers to international trade in Central Asia. *Central Asia Business Journal*, Vol. 3, November

2010, pp. 44-54.

- Yan Xuetong and Xu Jin (2008). Sino-U.S. comparisons of soft power. *Contemporary International Relations*, No. 2, March/April 2008, pp. 16-27. <<http://www.imir.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/iis/7236/20120308004022054904369/2008-3Sino-U.S.ComparisonsofSoftPower.pdf>>
- Yang Jiechi (2013). Implementing the Chinese dream. *The National Interest*, 10 September 2013. <<https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/implementing-the-chinese-dream-9026>> (accessed on November 1, 2018).
- Zhang Jianping (2018). China’s foreign aid not behind developing countries’ debt baggage. *Global Times* (China), 21 August 2018 (Opinion). <<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1116407.shtml>> (accessed on November 14, 2018).

