

**Ambiguity of hard power and soft power:
China's soft power in Myanmar as a case study**

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Abstract

The concept of soft power was developed by Joseph Nye in response to the decline of U.S power in the international governance system of the 20th century. The sources and criteria of Nye's soft power, however, have been widely argued and debated among scholars. The purpose of this paper is to further critique the sources of Nye's soft power using existing literature. Some scholars have already demonstrated that it is hard to distinguish between the sources of hard and soft power. Zheng and Zhang, who are unsatisfied with Nye's division of the sources of soft and hard power, alternatively they propose consent as soft power and force as hard power. According to them, a line between hard power and soft power cannot be easily drawn because single sources of power are interpreted differently by different actors in the changing circumstances of time in a recipient nation. They try to distinguish between hard and soft power in term of "force and consent". However, Zheng and Zhang's proposal still has weakness as both consent and force cannot be distinguished the two powers; in fact the lines between soft power and hard power assets are blurred as the spread of language and culture may well be achieved through partial coercion and acquired soft power assets serve as effective tools for the further expansion of influence without a necessity for consent. This paper further argues that on whatever sources of power can be either soft or hard depending on the context and situation which is being used. This scenario is relevant to this study on China-Myanmar relations, China's role in peace process in Myanmar, multiple ethnic armed groups that challenge the Myanmar's central authority.

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Introduction

Essentially, power is attractive to every single state; therefore, every nation wishes and desires power as an asset for national security, pursuit of national interest, and influence in global politics. From the national security perspective, economic strength and military power remain the most important strategic resources. In the past, nations highly paid attention to material power in cultivating power on the international stage. Nye is the first person who formally suggested a nation should use soft power to influence others rather than to rely exclusively on the traditional power pillars. The concept of soft power has substantially gained critical acclaim following Nye's publication; 'bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power'. Ever since the end of the Cold War, the concept of soft power has been widely circulated and discussed among academics and politicians alike. The general denotation of soft power refers to the ability to make friends with and influence other nations by attrition, cooperation, and persuasion rather than by use of force or coercions. The sources of Nye's soft power firmly depend on non-material sources such as political ideology, values, and culture.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to a critical approach to Nye's soft power and demonstrate that the list of Nye's sources of soft power is rarely effective in generating power to achieve foreign policy goals. This paper agrees with the argument of Zhang and Zheng that the sources of soft power cannot be completely distinguished between the soft power and hard power.¹ Although they attempt to distinguish between hard and soft power in terms of "force and consent", it still remains unclear. In many cases the lines between hard power and soft power assets are indistinguishable as the spread of language and culture may well be achieved through partial coercion and acquired soft power assets serve as effective tools for the further expansion

¹Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu. "'Soft power' and Chinese soft power YONGNIANZHE NG AND CHI ZHANG." In *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, pp. 33-50. Routledge, 2012. (P.27-28)

of influence without a necessity for consent. For example, Zhang and Zheng have been using case studies in other parts of the world to support their arguments, which are appropriate. But in case of Myanmar, consent and force cannot be separated as distinctive. Myanmar is geographically very strategic for China for both politically and economically. India also has great interest to accessing Myanmar seaport, but India interests are not as much as China interest.

For Myanmar, it has to be cautious to deal with China since it is situated between the two most populated nations (China and India) in the world. If Myanmar is too close to China, it makes India and western countries unhappy. However, since Myanmar had been sanctioned by western countries for many years, Myanmar had no choice but has to depend on China for foreign investments and economic development. China has been investing in Myanmar for billions of U.S dollars. In order to promote its investment projects in Myanmar, China has been using both hard and soft powers. However, China still has not gotten heart and mind of Myanmar people. Therefore, China-Myanmar foreign relations are a good case to further strengthen the claims of Zheng and Zhang on soft and hard powers and to demonstrate that in some cases, nation can cultivate soft power without consent.

Theoretical Framework

The term of soft power was coined and developed by Nye in the late 1990s in response to the decline of the U.S hegemony in world politics. He argues that the U.S. might lose its influence on international politics if merely relying on conventional power such as military capability alone.² Instead, Nye suggests that the U.S. should exercise its influences through attractive culture, political values, and foreign policy. Since the end of the Cold War, IR

² Nye Jr, Joseph S. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public affairs, 2004.

scholars, policy and decision makers, and international actors have paid more attention to the discussion around soft power. The concept of Nye's soft power is confusing and the words "attraction, persuasion, and cooperation" remain debatable issues in academic literature. How do political ideology, values, and culture generate enough power for a nation to achieve a foreign policy's goal? This question is insufficiently answered by Nye.

Some scholars disagree with Nye's criteria to distinguish between sources of hard and soft power.³ Li argues that military capability and economic strength do not always produce coercion, threat, and inducement but rather these sources of power can produce attraction.⁴ Scholars are widely divided on the topic of the sources of power; and some are of the opinion that is impossible to distinguish between sources of hard and soft power. The most distinctive among them are Zheng and Zhang, according to them, the difference between sources of hard power and soft power cannot be sufficiently defined because the same sources of power can be interpreted differently by different recipients or actors across changing circumstances and time in a recipient nation.⁵ They distinguish between hard and soft power in terms of 'force and consent'.⁶ However, in many cases the lines between hard power and soft power assets are blurred as the spread of language and culture may well be achieved through partial coercion and acquired soft power assets serve as effective tools for the further expansion of influence without a necessity for consent. In some cases, a nation can cultivate soft power assets without consent. When a certain language skill is required for economic survival, people need to speak that

³Chen, Gang, Jianfeng Chen, Xiaohe Cheng Xiaogang Deng, Yong Deng, Joshua Kurlantzick, Zhongying Pang, Ignatius Wibowo et al. *Soft power: China's emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books, 2009.

⁴Chen, Gang, Jianfeng Chen, Xiaohe Cheng Xiaogang Deng, Yong Deng, Joshua Kurlantzick, Zhongying Pang, Ignatius Wibowo et al. *Soft power: China's emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books, 2009. (P.3)

⁵ Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu. "'Soft power' and Chinese soft power YONGNIANZHENGAND CHI ZHANG." In *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, pp. 33-50. Routledge, 2012. (P.27-28)

⁶Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu. "'Soft power' and Chinese soft power YONGNIANZHENGAND CHI ZHANG." In *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, pp. 33-50. Routledge, 2012. (P.27-28)

language and not necessarily because they want to. For example, in Myanmar, despite increasing anti-Chinese resentment, China achieved the asset of soft power successfully with spreading Chinese culture, language, and tradition among the public. China achieved soft power assets without consent of the people in Myanmar.

Nevertheless, the short-fallings of its soft power approach to Myanmar in terms of winning over the peoples' hearts and minds does not necessary mean that China will give up their hope and intention altogether. The Myitsone Dam Project has come to light again in recent months proving that China is stressing and strengthening its position. Regardless of public opinion and opposition, China is likely to go ahead with the project as planned and signed off on during Senior General Than Shwe's tenure. The present Myanmar government led by state counselor Aung San Suu Kyi seems to be facing a dilemma if the voice of Myanmar's people should be listened or cringing their teeth and giving the Chinese a green light to proceed. This paper argues that with both soft power and hard power hand in hand, China will go ahead with its plans, thereby further strengthening its influence and position in the global geopolitical arena and concerning power-relations. Geopolitically, Myanmar lies between two giant nations—India and China, therefore, it is a gateway to the west for the Chinese mega project known as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or otherwise known as One Belt One Road (OBOR). For the Chinese dream to be realized, China will use any means of power, either soft or hard, or an amalgam of both to materialize its goals and position itself as a “superpower”, a global player.

Literature review

1. The framework of Nye's soft power

The concept of soft power was developed by Joseph Nye, an American political scientist and a professor of Harvard University, in the early 1990s. Soft power is defined as 'the ability to get what you want and to shape the preferences of others through attraction and co-option rather than using military forces and economic inducement'.⁷ The instrument of Nye's soft power is about "attraction" and "influence." Nye identifies three intangible categories of the sources of soft power: culture, foreign policy, and political value.⁸ Nye distinguishes between sources of hard and soft power in such a way that hard power relies on coercion, force or threat while soft power rests on attraction, persuasion, and cooperation. Nye considers economic power and military strength as hard power.

2. Critique of the concept of Nye's soft power

According to Nye, natural resource, economic and military strength are considered as sources of hard power while education, information, cultural, political value, and foreign policy are sources of soft power. Hard power is defined as "the capacity to coerce them to do so".⁹ The source of Nye's soft power remains confusing and the words of "attraction, persuasion, and cooperation" remain debatable across academic literature.¹⁰ Nye's source of soft power and hard

⁷Nye Jr, Joseph S. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public affairs, 2004. (P.11)

⁸ Ibid. (P.11)

⁹Wilson III, Ernest J. "Hard power, soft power, smart power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 110-124.

¹⁰Chen, Gang, Jianfeng Chen, Xiaohe Cheng Xiaogang Deng, Yong Deng, Joshua Kurlantzick, Zhongying Pang, Ignatius Wibowo et al. *Soft power: China's emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books, 2009.

power overlap each other. There are two types of culture: popular culture and high culture.¹¹ Popular culture refers to entertainment such as music, movies, popular branches¹² which directly relate to economic power. Zheng and Zhang further argue that the military power should not always be interpreted as hard power; it has its own soft aspects in terms of the power it can produce with regard to achieving foreign policy goals.¹³ Hence, it is impossible to separate sources of soft power from those of hard power.

3. Ambiguity of hard power and soft power

Hard power and soft power are very difficult to distinguish because whether it is soft or hard power depends on the perception of the recipients. Zheng and Zhang's proposed dynamic analysis of soft and hard power sources is three-dimensional: "horizontal, verticality, and relativity". Horizontal refers to a situation where the same sources of power have different effects on various actors;¹⁴ verticality refers to a situation where the same sources of power produce different effects at different points in time; and relativity refers to a situation where two nations reach an agreement through negotiation.¹⁵ The two scholars divide the sources of hard and soft power in terms of force and consent. If recipients are forced to accept a source of a leading state's power for a desired outcome which then turns out to produce negative effects, such a source of power can be interpreted as hard power.¹⁶ In contrast, if the recipients are willing to accept a source of power, such a source of power may always be viewed as soft

¹¹Nye Jr, Joseph S. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public affairs, 2004.(P.11)

¹²Ibid. (P.11)

¹³Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu, eds. *China's soft power and international relations*. Vol. 23. Routledge, 2012. (P.24)

¹⁴Ibid. (P.28)

¹⁵Ibid. (P.28)

¹⁶Ibid. (P.28)

power.¹⁷They also prove that sources of military power have the potential to produce positive effects in international politics.

Research Methodology

Methodologically, this research takes a qualitative approach. The study relies on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include statements, multilateral and bilateral ceasefire agreements, and meeting decisions of armed groups. All these pieces of data provide information that includes grievances of the conflicting parties. Moreover, published interview of stakeholders, international peace observers, and foreign journalists who have closely followed Myanmar's peace process for many years are included and will not only ensure reliability but also reflect the views of both locals and foreigners.

During my previous volunteering work from 2015-2017 at the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), a multiethnic political coalition organization compiled of various armed groups and founded for peace negotiations with the Myanmar government, we collected data by interviewing many ethnic leaders from all member groups. The published interview documents will be collected from the internet, and some updated data will be sent by a person involved in the peace process. To update the data collected in 2016, I undertook phone interviews with all relevant stakeholders whose contacts I have documented. The secondary sources include publications on related field studies from international organizations, leader's speeches, and reports.

The discussion mainly revolves around the good relations between the Sino-Myanmar regimes, the recalibration of Myanmar's foreign policy since the political reform in 2010, and the

¹⁷ Ibid. (P. 27-28)

subsequent failure of China's soft power approach to produce the intended outcomes in Myanmar. First, the paper explains the original framework of Nye's soft power; second, the paper criticizes soft power through existing literature; third, the discussion focuses on China's soft power in Myanmar as an empirical case study to demonstrate the difficulty of distinguishing between hard and soft power. The paper argues that China will use both soft and hard power in tail to strengthen its leverage and position across the global geopolitical arena.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 Framework of Nye's soft power

The concept of soft power was developed by Joseph Nye, an American political scientist and a professor of Harvard University, in beginning of 1990. Nye developed the concept by writing a series of articles and books. He first discussed the concept of soft power in the book of "Bound to lead" in 1990 and developed the concept while writing his book of "the Paradox of American Power in 2001. This is the period of time when the U.S power is in decline.¹⁸Nye defines soft power as an ability to get what you want and to shape the preferences of others through attraction and cooperation rather than using force and economic inducement.¹⁹Sovereign nations have competed in expanding soft power through applying various sources of power into their foreign policies. Nye claims soft power is about "attraction" and "influence." Despite the concept of soft power is very popular among international relation study, the main idea of "attraction and ability to influence other" are disconcerting.

¹⁸ Nye Jr, Joseph S. "Soft power." *The Means to Success in World Politics*. NY: Cambridge, 2004. (P.5)

¹⁹ Ibid. Nye Jr, Joseph S. "Soft power." *The Means to Success in World Politics*. NY: Cambridge, 2004. (8)

Nye identifies three intangible categories sources of power which are culture, foreign policy, and political value.²⁰ According to Nye, these intangible resources of power generate attraction, cooptation, and persuasion. He explains two type of cultures; popular culture which relates to economic materials such as Hollywood movies, popular brands, music and etc, and high culture which can be literature, art, and education.²¹ For Nye, political value is important in generating a country's soft power both in domestic and abroad. For example, the U.S. promotes the human rights, freedom, and value of democracy through its foreign policy to maintain an idea image and respected reputation on the international stage. Foreign policy can undermine soft power of nations if foreign policy is against the value, norm, and culture of other nation. For example, authoritarian regimes view the U.S foreign policy as threat against their national interest.

Nye distinguishes between hard and soft power, hard power relies on the coercion or force or threat while soft power depend on the attraction, persuasion, and cooperation. Nye considers economic power and military strength as hard power. Overall, he describes tangible source of power as hard power and intangible source of power as soft power. He argues that nation of soft power depends on its attractive culture, political value, and social value. If a nation's culture, value and social norm are attracting others, soft power is affected. He also agreed that "the effectiveness of any power resources depends on the context".²²

1.2 Critique of the concept of Nye's soft power

According to Nye, natural resource, economic and military strength are considered sources of hard power while education, information, cultural, political value, and foreign policy

²⁰ Ibid. (P.11)

²¹ Ibid.(P.11)

²² Nye Jr, Joseph S. "Soft power." In *Power in the global information age*, pp. 76-88. Routledge, 2004. (P.12)

are sources of soft power. Hard power is defined as “as the capacity to coerce them to do so”.²³ The source of Nye’s soft power is based on the words of “attraction, persuasion, and cooperation” the remaining are debatable issues among academic literature.²⁴ Nye explains that cultural, political ideology and foreign policy can generate soft power through attractiveness and persuasion.²⁵ However he does not explain clearly that how political ideology, value, and culture generate enough power for the nation to gain desired outcome in the international politics. He attempts to divide components of power as a source of soft and hard power.

Nye just assumes that cultural, ideology; political value or policies will generate soft power without providing a clear explanation. Some previous academic researchers suggest that soft power is rarely effective to cultivate without combining the traditional component of power.²⁶ Some scholar claim that the leading state does not have problem to persuade the target to be attracted to its values and ideal if the preferred policy of the leading state is compatible with an idea, goals and norms of target state.²⁷ Kearn claims that if the target state shares the same goals and norm of leading the nation, the target state will accept and support the leading the state's policy.²⁸ It means if the policy of soft power opposes the interest or value of receiver, this particular policy can undermine the soft power of applicants. Consequently, it is not easy to persuade a targeting nation to accept and support leading states’ policy which does not benefit to subject state.

²³Wilson III, Ernest J. "Hard power, soft power, smart power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 110-124.

²⁴Chen, Gang, Jianfeng Chen, Xiaohe Cheng Xiaogang Deng, Yong Deng, Joshua Kurlantzick, Zhongying Pang, Ignatius Wibowo et al. *Soft power: China's emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books, 2009.

²⁵ Nye Jr, Joseph S. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public affairs, 2004. (P.11)

²⁶ Lai, Hongyi. “The soft power concept and a rising China”. Vol. 23. Routledge, 2012. (P.5-10)

²⁷ Kearn, David W. "The hard truths about soft power." *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (2011: 73): 65-85.

²⁸ Ibid.

“Attraction” and “influence” are the two main criteria of Nye's soft power. The role of attraction and the idea of influence are problematic in practice. It is generally agreed among the scholars that it is difficult to measure because reputation, image, and trust cannot be measured since there is no data available.²⁹ Limitation of soft power is debatable among the critics and scholars. It is hard to claim, when an individual or a country changes its behaviors, actions, or values off of another states' attractive policy or soft power.³⁰ For example, Kim Jong Il, North Korean dictator, likes to watch Hollywood movies and collected all the Hollywood Academy Award movies, according to BBC report.³¹ Hollywood movies seem attractive to him and influenced over his mind. However it does translate to Kim Jong Il changing his behavior and supporting the United States' foreign policy. Therefore, it is hard to measure the soft power through the popularity and reputation.

Sources of hard and soft power overlap each other.³² Nye views economic power and military power as a hard power. Under the Nye's framework of soft power, culture is important sources of soft power. Nye's two types of culture are popular culture and high culture. High culture includes art, literature, and education while popular culture are more relating to entertainment such as music, movies, popular branches.³³ He states that if the culture and value of leading state are attracting subject nations, the leading states can have soft power. Recently countries use their various cultures to cultivate soft power in foreign countries through television

²⁹ Patalakh, Artem. "Assessment of soft power strategies: towards an aggregative analytical model for country-focused case study research." *Croatian International Relations Review* 22, no. 76 (2016): 85-112. (P.88)

³⁰ Yukaruc, Umut. "A Critical Approach to Soft Power." *Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 6, no. 2 (2017): 491-502.

³¹ Savage, Mark. "Kim Jong-il: The Cinephile Despot." BBC News. December 19, 2011. Accessed April 13, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-16245174>.

³²³²Nye Jr, Joseph S. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public affairs, 2004.(P.11)

³³Ibid. (P.11)

shows, drama, and movies.³⁴ Attraction does not always generate significant power to influence the behavior of other, to gain the desired outcome in the international politics. For example, Korea's television series have increased its audience across the global; including United State, Middle East, Asian, United Kingdom, and Europe.³⁵ Popular television series and drama might be influence the individual hearts and minds in neighboring countries, region, and across the globe; however, it does not equate to those individual supporting Korean policy. It is generally agreed that Korean drama series, and TV shows, can promotes Korean-make products, language, and Korean culture. There is a tendency to increase demand for Korean products from international community that lead to gradually improve Korean economic growth. The case explains that popular culture directly connects with the economic power which Nye considers hard power.

Additionally, Zheng and Zhang argue that the military power should not always be interpreted as hard power; it has its soft side that these sources of power can produce enough power for the nations to achieve foreign policy goals.³⁶ In international anarchic system, the state will look to embrace the values, idea, and system which will assure its security because national interest comes first for survival.³⁷ For example, Southeast Asian nations and Asia-specific region have a strong military relation with the U.S for their long-term security interest.³⁸ These nations have allowed the United States military presence on their land through bilateral

³⁴ Yukaruc, Umut. "A Critical Approach to Soft Power." *Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 6, no. 2 (2017): 491-502. (P.500)

³⁵ Suntikul, Wantanee. "BTS and the Global Spread of Korean Soft Power." *The Diplomat*. March 04, 2019. Accessed April 17, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/bts-and-the-global-spread-of-korean-soft-power/>.

³⁶ Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu, eds. *China's soft power and international relations*. Vol. 23. Routledge, 2012. (P.24)

³⁷ Kearn, thDavid W. "The hard truths about soft power." *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (2011): 65-85. (P.76)

³⁸ Lwin, Michael R. *Assessing China's Soft Power in Asia: Implications for US Strategy*. ASIA-PACIFIC CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES HONOLULU HI, 2012.

diplomacy.³⁹ Diplomacy is a tool of sources of Nye's soft power. In this case, both source of hard and soft power involve. Kearn states that applicants are hardly to possess a significant degree of soft power without a certain mouth of traditional instrument of power such as infrastructural development, industrial capacity and technological advancement, which are considered the source of hard power.⁴⁰ It means that sources of soft power and hard power do not need to distinguish. Therefore, it is impossible to separate sources of soft power form hard power. The following section explores more about ambiguity of hard power and soft power which are discussed by tow scholars, Zheng and Zhang.

1.3 Ambiguity of hard power and soft power

Hard power and soft power are very difficult to distinguish because both depend on the perception of receivers. Zheng and Zhang argue that "whether a power resource is soft or hard depends on the perceptions and feeling of various actors in specific situations".⁴¹ They are unsatisfied with Nye's division between what are the sources of soft and hard power. They discuss the concept of soft power from the perspective of international politics and propose dynamic analysis of soft and hard power. They claim that the policies tool and behaviors of Nye's soft power coincide with those of hard power.⁴² Under the framework of Nye' soft power, public diplomacy, and bilateral and multilateral diplomacy are tools of soft power; on the other hand, "coercive diplomacy, war, alliance, aid, bribes, and sanction" are part of the means of military and economic power.⁴³ Nevertheless, when a nation applies economic sanctions,

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kearn, David W. "The hard truths about soft power." *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (2011): 65-85. (P.74)

⁴¹ Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu. "'Soft power' and Chinese soft power YONGNIANZHeNGANd CHI ZHANG." In *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, pp. 33-50. Routledge, 2012. (P.21)

⁴²Ibid. (P.24)

⁴³Ibid. (P.24)

provides aid, and makes alliance, they go through the bilateral or multilateral diplomacy.⁴⁴ This is the reason that any source of power cannot be completely divided. They assert that ambiguity of source of hard power and soft power reflects the reality of international anarchic system.⁴⁵ Therefore, any sources of power can have either soft or hard effect according to influenced factors of situation in the international system.

Zheng and Zhang analyze source of soft and hard power from three perspectives: “horizontality, verticality, and relativity”. According to the Horizontality’s perspective, the same sources of power have different effect on various actors.⁴⁶ They use the case of the U.S military assistance for Israel during the war time in the Middle East(1949-1973)to demonstrate that certain source of power interprets differently by different actors in the region. The US military assistance has soft effect for Israel because it agrees and accepts willingly.⁴⁷Meanwhile, other Arab nations viewed the U.S military assistance for Israel as hard power.⁴⁸ Another good example is that Myanmar military regime refused the emergency humanitarian aid for the victim of Nargis cyclone from the west and the U.S in 2008 because the junta was afraid of the international intervention in its domestic political affairs.⁴⁹ In contrast, freedom movements, struggle for democracy and human rights since 1962 demonstrated that America’s political value, belief, and ideology have attracted the general public in Myanmar. The two events prove that a source of power interprets differently by different actors in a country.

⁴⁴Ibid. (P.24)

⁴⁵Ibid. (P.24)

⁴⁶Ibid.(P.28)

⁴⁷Ibid. (P.28)

⁴⁸Ibid. (P. 27-28)

⁴⁹Selth, Andrew. "Even paranoids have enemies: Cyclone Nargis and Myanmar's fears of invasion." *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 30, no. 3 (2008): 379-402.

Zheng and Zhang's concept of 'verticality' refers to the same sources of power that produces different effect on different time.⁵⁰ The two scholars mention the case of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1980 and the current US intervention of it in their article.⁵¹ The U.S military assistance appeared as soft power when U.S provided military assistance to the Afghanistan rebels during the Soviet Union's invasion; however, the current US military presence in Afghanistan can be perceived as hard power since the U.S launched a global anti-terrorism campaign.⁵² In this case, the Afghanistan rebels supported and accepted the U.S military intervention in 1980 as their ally; however, the recent U.S military deployment and intervention in Afghanistan can be viewed as hard power because the then rebels who later became the government of Afghanistan was toppled by the American invasion and therefore it is absent of consent and involves coercion. This case proves that similar sources of power interpret differently because of changing circumstance.

Their concept of 'relativity' refers to the bargaining power that the two nations reach an agreement through negotiation.⁵³ For example, there are two nations: nation A and nation B. Nation A mostly exercises hard power; and sometime, nation A uses soft power to achieve its national interest. On the other hand, nation B reaches its national interest through bargaining power, something through soft power and hard power.

Some influenced factors can affect the perception of receivers. For example, general public in Myanmar views China as a threat because of Chinese invasions associated hostile

⁵⁰Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu, eds. *China's soft power and international relations*. Vol. 23. Routledge, 2012. (P.28)

⁵¹Ibid. (P.28)

⁵²Ibid. (P.28)

⁵³Ibid. (P.28)

history and wars, and the spread of Chinese language and culture in the country.⁵⁴ Perception can be viewed into two ways: “perception as an ally and a threat”. If receivers view the leading state as a threat, it does not matter what sources of power the leading state applies, the receiver nations perceive the applier as hard power and may not gain the desired outcome. In this paper, sources of power refer to both tangible and intangible sources, either material or non-material.

Scholar Mingjiang Li expands the sources of soft power by counter-arguing Nye’s sources of soft power as a clear-cut boundary between source of soft and hard power.⁵⁵ Li suggests two points: first, the instrument of soft power should not be only political value, culture, and ideology, which is impossible to generate enough power to achieve what you want; second, military power and economic power do not always produce coercion and threat but on the contrary, they even produce attraction and persuasion.⁵⁶ It means that sources of soft power should not be limited because both non-material and material sources of power have the potential to produce either soft or hard power. According to Li, Zhang, and Zheng, a certain source of power has the potential to generate threat against interest of receivers. It also means, if the foreign policy, political value, and culture of a nation oppose the interest of other national interest, those intangible sources of power will be viewed as hard power.

According to Rousseau, there are the “threat against individual” and the “threat against collection”.⁵⁷ The threat against collection is more relevant to this paper, and it includes “military

⁵⁴ Zin, Min. "Burmese attitude toward Chinese: Portrayal of the Chinese in contemporary cultural and media works." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 115-131.

⁵⁵ Chen, Gang, Jianfeng Chen, Xiaohe Cheng, Xiaogang Deng, Yong Deng, Joshua Kurlantzick, Zhongying Pang, Ignatius Wibowo et al. *Soft power: China's emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books, 2009.

⁵⁶ Gupta, Rukmani. "Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics by Mingjiang Li (ed.)" Lexington Books, Plymouth, 2009. (P.3 – 7)

⁵⁷ Rousseau, David L., and Rocio Garcia-Retamero. "Identity, power, and threat perception: A cross-national experimental study." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 5 (2007): 744-771.

threat, economic threats, or cultural threats”.⁵⁸ Aukia states that national culture is the symbol of nation, national identity, and “a source of strength for ethnic affinity and cohesion”; therefore, it is hard to expand soft power through promoting a national culture abroad.⁵⁹ It is a nature for nations to maintain and protect their culture and tradition because losing national culture is equivalent to losing national sovereignty.⁶⁰ For example, the image and reputation of the U.S is very low among Arab nations because those nations have viewed American culture and political value as threat against the Islamic culture.⁶¹ In this sense, both culture and political ideology have the potential to generate threat against the interest of receivers. On the other hand, Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia, once allowed the U.S military presence on their soil to protect their national security.⁶² Similarly, the military cooperation between the American and Asia-specific region, Japan, South Korea, and Australia can be also interpreted as soft power because all these nations have relied on the U.S as their ally for their long-term security interest in the region.⁶³

Some influenced factors can affect the perception of receivers. It is clear that these Asian nations are in fear of the rise of China; so they depend on the U.S military for their national security. Therefore, it is not possible to make clear boundary between the source of hard power and soft power because it depends on the perception of receivers that the outsiders have no position to decide whether it is either soft or hard power.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Aukia, Jukka. “The Cultural Soft Power of China: A Tool for Dualistic National Security”. JCIR: Vol.2, No.1 (2014). (P.82)

⁶⁰Ibid. (P.82)

⁶¹Nisbet, Erik C., and Teresa A. Myers. "Anti-American sentiment as a media effect? Arab media, political identity, and public opinion in the Middle East." *Communication Research* 38, no. 5 (2011): 684-709.

⁶²Roy, Denny. "Southeast Asia and China: balancing or bandwagoning?." *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 27, no. 2 (2005): 305-322.

⁶³Lwin, Michael R. *Assessing China's Soft Power in Asia: Implications for US Strategy*. ASIA-PACIFIC CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES HONOLULU HI, 2012.

According to Zheng and Zhang, hard and soft power can distinguished in term of “force and consent”. If receivers are “forced” to accept a source of leading state’s power for the desired outcome then produce negative effect, such a source of power can be interpreted as hard power.⁶⁴By contrast, if the receivers are willing to accept a source of power then it has a positive effect, such source of power can be viewed as soft power.⁶⁵ They prove that source of military power has potential to produce a positive effect in the international politics. However, in many cases the lines between hard power and soft power assets are blurred as the spread of language and culture may as well be achieved through partial coercion and acquired soft power assets serve as effective tools for the further expansion of influence without a necessity for consent. According to social perspective, “language is a part of culture” and “culture would not be possible without language”.⁶⁶ Therefore, language cannot separate from culture which is a source of soft power. For example, United Kingdom uses English language as a powerful tool to expand its soft power in the international politics.⁶⁷

In some cases, a nation can cultivate soft power assets without consent. When a certain language skill is required for economic survival, people need to speak that language and not necessarily because they want to. For example, China has expanded many international communication channels in many countries to deal with international criticism and negative opinion against the China, and to promote the Chinese traditional culture.⁶⁸ In this sense, Chinese needs to use “English language” to communicate with the international community. When China

⁶⁴Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu. "'Soft power' and Chinese soft power YONGNIANZHE NGAND CHI ZHANG." In *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, pp. 33-50. Routledge, 2012. (P.28)

⁶⁵Ibid. (P. 27-28)

⁶⁶Jiang, Wenying. "The relationship between culture and language." *ELT journal* 54, no. 4 (2000): 328-334. (P. 328)

⁶⁷Nisbett, Melissa. "The art of attraction: soft power and the UK's role in the world." *Cultural Trends* 24, no. 2 (2015): 183-185. (P.25)

⁶⁸Xiaoling, Zhang. "Chinese state media going global." *East Asia Policy* 2, no. 1 (2010): 42-50.(P.2,3,4)

uses the “English Language”, the U.S and the U.K achieves some asset of soft power in China. Communication channels include a 24-hour English news channel, a new English language newspaper called Global Time, and etc.⁶⁹ It does not mean that China wants to use ‘English language’ for their communication channels since they themselves attempt spreading Chinese language across the globe by sending teachers out, and providing Chinese language programs.⁷⁰ However, the factor of negative foreign perception forces China to set up English program channel. In this situation, “consent” is not needed. China’s soft power in Myanmar is a good example of an empirical case demonstrating how a certain source of power interpreted differently by different actors in the course of time and circumstance and achieved soft power asset without “consent”. In Myanmar, despite increasing anti-Chinese resentment, China achieved the asset of soft power successfully spreading Chinese culture, language, and tradition among the public. China achieved soft power assets without consent with the people in Myanmar.

While Joseph Nye defines sources of soft power in terms of foreign policy, cultural and political values, and hard power on military and economics⁷¹; Zheng and Zhang provide sources of soft and hard power from three perspectives: “horizontal, verticality, and relativity and force and perceptions and feeling of various actors in specific situations⁷²; then Mingjiang Li suggests that soft and hard power are ambiguous as their sources of power cannot be drawn a clear line distinguished.⁷³ This paper further argues that on whatever sources of power can be either soft or hard depending on the context and situation which is being used. This scenario is relevant to this

⁶⁹Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu. “‘Soft power’ and Chinese soft power YONGNIANZHE NGAND CHI ZHANG.” In *China’s Soft Power and International Relations*, pp. 33-50. Routledge, 2012. (P.115)

⁷⁰Ibid. (P.93)

⁷¹Nye Jr, Joseph S. “Soft power.” *The Means to Success in World Politics*. NY: Cambridge, 2004.

⁷²Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu, eds. *China’s soft power and international relations*. Vol. 23. Routledge, 2012.

⁷³Chen, Gang, Jianfeng Chen, Xiaohe Cheng Xiaogang Deng, Yong Deng, Joshua Kurlantzick, Zhongying Pang, Ignatius Wibowo et al. *Soft power: China’s emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books, 2009

study on China-Myanmar relations, China's role in peace process in Myanmar, multiple ethnic armed groups that challenge the Myanmar's central authority.

Chapter 2: Sino-Myanmar Relations

2.1 Sino-Myanmar relations under the military regime

The long-established the bilateral relation between China and Myanmar is base on the five principles of peaceful co-existence. Myanmar is depending on China for economic cooperation, diplomatic protections and national defense and security since 1988, following a student-led uprising for democratic reform. Reciprocally, Burma was the first country to recognize the Chinese Communist Party, People's Republic of China formally since 1948.⁷⁴ China and Burma have treated each other as "Pauk-Phaw" which means 'sibling from the same worm'.⁷⁵ On April 22, 1954, China and Burma signed the first bilateral trade agreement based on "five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence; mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equal and mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence".⁷⁶ Whenever Myanmar is relatively isolated from the rest of the world, China keeps its promise of these five principles by providing political-diplomatic protection, political support, military cooperation, and economic assistance. Recently, China still intensively competes with Taiwan for international recognition.⁷⁷ Myanmar as a good neighboring country has recognized One-China policy and respects the right of China to protect

⁷⁴ Kudo, Toshihiro. "Myanmar's Economic Relations with China: Can China Support the Myanmar Economy?." (2006).

⁷⁵ Lintner, Bertil. "The People's Republic of China and Burma: Not Only Pauk-Phaw." Project 2049 institute. May 09, 2017. (P.3)

⁷⁶ Ibid. (P.6)

⁷⁷ Harrington, Maxwell. "Conference report: China-Myanmar relations: The dilemmas of mutual dependence." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 133-139.

its sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁷⁸ Myanmar clearly stands by China on Taiwan issue. The Myanmar military regime is increasing reliance on Beijing since 1988 because of lack of support from the rest of world. However, it remains unclear whether Myanmar will continue to support China's position over the South China Sea's territorial dispute.⁷⁹

In 1966, China's foreign policy toward Myanmar shifted after anti-Chinese riot began in Yangon that ended Pauk-Phaw relation (brother relationship) between China and Myanmar.⁸⁰ Yet, the relationship improved and the two regimes started to provide diplomatic protection for each other as the international community condemned the Burmese military regime for the violent crackdown in 1988 and China's regime for Tiananmen Massacre 1988. The relations between two regimes become closer since 1988. Burmese military heavily depends on China with the purpose of importing armaments and modernizing Burmese armed forces since the early of 1989.⁸¹ Burmese military junta has attempted to consolidate its political power through its strengthening its relationship with China. China is the largest supplier of military hardware to Myanmar.⁸²

China increases its influence on Burma's politics, and economy by providing economic and technological cooperation as well as providing diplomatic protection from the UN. China has increasingly expanded its economic ties with Burma since 1997 after the U.S. imposed economic sanction against the Burmese dictators in 2003 in response to widespread violation of human

⁷⁸Myoe, Maung Aung. *In the name of pauk-phaw: Myanmar's China policy since 1948*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011.

⁷⁹Harrington, Maxwell. "Conference report: China–Myanmar relations: The dilemmas of mutual dependence." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 133-139.

⁸⁰ Fan, Hongwei. "The 1967 anti-Chinese riots in Burma and Sino–Burmese relations." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012): 234-256.

⁸¹ Lintner, Bertil. "China and Myanmar: Not Only Pauk-Phaw." *The Irrawaddy*. June 06, 2017. Accessed May 14, 2019. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-and-burma-not-only-pauk-phaw.html>.

⁸²Than, Tin MaungMaung. "Myanmar and China: a special relationship?." *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2003, no. 1 (2003): 189-210.

rights and violently crackdown peaceful demonstration in 1988.⁸³ At that time, China supported the Burmese dictator and provided diplomatic protection to the international community.

For example, Cyclone Nargis killed 140,000 people, ruined 80,000 homes⁸⁴ and affected around 2.5 million people⁸⁵ in May 2008 in Myanmar. Despite the fact that victims of Cyclone Nargis needed humanitarian emergency, Myanmar military regime refused any foreign humanitarian aid for the victims of Cyclone Nargis offered by the United States and Western government in 2008.⁸⁶ Blocking international humanitarian's aid for the victims of Nargis by the military regime led to invoke the concept of Responsibility to Protect in the UNSC.⁸⁷ The United States, UK, Europe and Australia claimed that providing humanitarian aid without government consent should be applied in the principle of R2P; however China, Russia, South Africa and Indonesia opposed the proposal of applying R2P to deliver aids for the victims.⁸⁸

Despite China's use its veto power in the United Nations Security Council to protect the Burmese military regime from the international economic sanction and condemnation, Sino-Myanmar relation is not always good in the history. As mentioned above, Sino-Myanmar relationship ended the following the anti-Chinese riots. Simultaneously, Beijing provided military assistance and financial support to the Burma Communist Party (BCP), which was undertaking an armed struggle against the Myanmar military regimes.⁸⁹ After Deng Xiaoping became the leader of China, he cut off all the assistance to Burma Communist Party (BCP)

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴ Simpson, Adam. "Challenging hydropower development in Myanmar (Burma): cross-border activism under a regime in transition." *The Pacific Review* 26, no. 2 (2013): 129-152.

⁸⁵ Asia-PacificCentre. "Cyclone Nargis and the Responsibility to Protect." Myanmar/Burma Briefing No.2. May 16, 2008.

⁸⁶ Simpson, Adam. "Challenging hydropower development in Myanmar (Burma): cross-border activism under a regime in transition." *The Pacific Review* 26, no. 2 (2013): 129-152. (P.134)

⁸⁷Asia-PacificCentre. "Cyclone Nargis and the Responsibility to Protect." Myanmar/Burma Briefing No.2. May 16, 2008.

⁸⁸ Asia-PacificCentre. "Cyclone Nargis and the Responsibility to Protect." Myanmar/Burma Briefing No.2. May 16, 2008.

⁸⁹ USIP. "China's Role in Myanmar's Internal Conflicts." USIP senior study group final report 2018.

resulting in the collapse of BCP in 1989. In spite of everything, Sino-Myanmar relation has become a stronger and closer after the leaders from two countries have continued visiting each other.⁹⁰ Despite Myanmar has increased depending on Beijing, Myanmar authoritarian regime is certainly concerned about the growing of Chinese influence over Myanmar domestic affair. During the transitional period, President Thein Sein suspended the most Chinese development projects, which included Myitsone Dam, Letpadaung copper mine, Sino-Myanmar railway project, and Kyaukpyu special economic zone, without informing the Chinese government about the decision in advance.⁹¹ The incident of suspending the construction of Myintsone Dam in 2011 and canceling Kyaukpyu-Kunming railway project in 2014 proved that Naypyidaw seeks to play balancing game to reduce dependence on China.⁹² In this situation, China's real challenge is a competition for influence in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

2.2 Sino-Burma relation with the current government

It is a well-known fact that China has been supporting the military regime for a long time while isolating the pro-democracy movement that was led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who was under house arrest. However, China's diplomatic strategy toward Burma has shifted quickly to build a strong relationship with new government after the 2015 general election. Sino-Burma relation tie declined when President Thein Sein, head of quasi-civilian government, suspended the construction of Myitsone Dam unexpectedly in 2011. In history, this is the first time that Burmese government bowed to a public pressure over the construction of Myitsone Dam. Myitsone Dam is a mega hydroelectric power project which is led by China's state own

⁹⁰Keyuan, Zou. "China's possible role in Myanmar's national reconciliation." *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 17 (2003): 59-77.

⁹¹ Han, Enze. "Geopolitics, Ethnic Conflicts along the Border, and Chinese Foreign Policy Changes toward Myanmar." *Asian Security* 13, no. 1 (2017): 59-73.

⁹²Reilly, James. "China and Japan in Myanmar: Aid, natural resources and influence." *Asian Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (2013): 141-157.

enterprise. If this dam is to be completed it would become the seventh largest dam in the world, and 90% of hydropower production will be exported to China.⁹³ The suspension of Chinese hydroelectric project has negatively affected on the bilateral relation between the two countries.

In March 2015, Beijing deployed its troops along the border with Burma after the Burmese air force's bombs strayed over China's territory that killed five Chinese.⁹⁴ Chinese immediately responded to the incident with troop deployment to protest the Burmese military's action. The accident was settled peacefully after the Burmese government provided compensation and made a formal apology to the victims' families.⁹⁵ Additionally, China sent fighter jets warning the Burmese fighter-jets that attempted to drop bombs on the Kokang's administration (an armed resistance group) area in the Northern Burma. Burmese military are unable to fight against Kokang rebel with the deployment of the Chinese troops along its border. In this way, China expands its leverage among Burmese government, military, and ethnic armed organizations by coercion. Overall, finding the solution to the suspension of Chinese hydroelectric project is seriously important than dealing with ethnic armed groups that operated actively along the Sino-Burmese border for the current democratically elected government.

2.3 Relationships of China-Armed Ethnic Organizations

China has kept its relation with several ethnic armed resistance organizations which are actively fighting against the Burmese military in the northern part of Burma and along China's

⁹³InternationalRiver. "The Myitsone Dam on the Irrawaddy River: A Briefing." International Rivers. September 28, 2012. Accessed May 19, 2019. <https://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/the-myitsone-dam-on-the-irrawaddy-river-a-briefing-3931>.

⁹⁴ Beech, Hannah. "Myanmar: China Accuses Burmese Military of Fatal Bombing Across Border." Time. March 16, 2015. Accessed May 19, 2019. <http://time.com/3745604/china-burma-kokang-myanmar/>.

⁹⁵ Blanchard, Ben. "China Says Myanmar Apologizes for Bombing, Admits Responsibility." Reuters. April 02, 2015. Accessed May 19, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-myanmar/china-says-myanmar-apologizes-for-bombing-admits-responsibility-idUSKBN0MT0MA20150402>

southern border. On the one hand, China repeatedly expresses its support for Burma's peace process by contributing financial assistant to peace fund; on the other hand, China has also sold a wide variety of military-hardware and war-weaponry including armored fighting vehicles, heavy artillery, and other sophisticated military equipment to ethnic armed resistance organization.⁹⁶ China's diplomatic strategy not only approaches to the Burmese government but also develops its relation tie with the ethnic armed groups in the northern Burma. These ethnic armed groups are useful for China's long-term strategic and economic interests. It is a well-known fact that in 2017, through its special diplomatic channel, China has been influential in Burma politics, by convincing the so-called northern alliance, the ethnic armed groups, active along the Sino-Burmese border to attend the Union Peace Conference, the 21stPanglong at Nay Pyi Taw to engage with the government in current peace negotiation.⁹⁷

China's political and diplomatic protection remains significant and crucial for the Burmese military regime for the political survival; therefore, the military junta is inevitable to reduce dependency on China any time soon. Additionally, China's influence over the several ethnic armed groups in the Northern Burma is a big threat to the military generals and government.

Chapter 3: China's power in Myanmar

It is no secret that China attempts to polish a good image by increasing its soft power around the world. Since the rise of Chinese economic and military capability at the beginning of

⁹⁶ Lintner, Bertil. "The People's Republic of China and Burma: Not Only Pauk." Project 2049 institution, May 9, 2017. Accessed May 19, 2019.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317167085_The_People%27s_Republic_of_China_and_Burma-Not_Only_Pauk-Phaw

⁹⁷ USIP. "China's Role in Myanmar's Internal Conflicts." USIP senior study group final report 2018.

Wang, Yiwei. "Public diplomacy and the rise of Chinese soft power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 257-273. (P.25)

the 21st century, Chinese leaders realized that development of soft power is an important to strength its position on the international stage; therefore, they try to improve its capacity to attract regional and global communities for its long-term security interest.⁹⁸ The Chinese government is expanding soft power by various means to sustain its alliance with neighboring countries, and developing countries in order to strengthen its position on the international stage. Following the decline of the U.S power, Nye developed the concept of soft power which becomes a heated debatable issue over making boundary between hard and soft power.⁹⁹ Some scholars argue that military capability and economic strength do not always produce coercion, threat, and inducement that these sources of power can produce attraction and has its soft side.¹⁰⁰ The most distinctive among them are two scholars. Zheng and Zhang argue that the diffidence between source of hard power and soft power cannot be completely distinguished because the same sources of power can be interpreted differently by different recipient's actors in the changing circumstance and time in a recipient nation.¹⁰¹

China's non-intervention foreign policy toward developing countries/Myanmar, bilateral trade agreement, and energy/resource diplomacy has generated many favorable outcomes for China during the "blood brother" relation. In general, Chinese leader's defined non-intervention policy as not interfering in other national internal affair.¹⁰² However, China's influence in other politics without intervention can be viewed as a part of China's soft power's strategy without force according to Zheng and Zhang. Indeed, China has served the military regime for mutual

⁹⁸Wuthnow, Joel. "The concept of soft power in China's strategic discourse." *Issues & Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008): 1-28.

⁹⁹Nye Jr, Joseph S. "Soft power." *The Means to Success in World Politics*. NY: Cambridge, 2004.

¹⁰⁰ Chen, Gang, Jianfeng Chen, Xiaohe Cheng Xiaogang Deng, Yong Deng, Joshua Kurlantzick, Zhongying Pang, Ignatius Wibowo et al. *Soft power: China's emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books, 2009. (P.3-6)

¹⁰¹Lai, Hongyi, and Yiyi Lu. "'Soft power' and Chinese soft power YONGNIANZHE and CHI ZHANG." In *China's Soft Power and International Relations*, pp. 33-50. Routledge, 2012.

¹⁰² Li, Hak Yin, and Yongnian Zheng. "Re-interpreting China's Non-intervention Policy towards Myanmar: leverage, interest and intervention." *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 61 (2009): 617-637. (P.633)

benefit and interest. Both leaders from Beijing and Nayphidaw share the same view regarding the Western political value, human rights, and liberation.¹⁰³ Certainly, they oppose the idea of international intervention in other domestic affair and support each other in meeting of United Nation. China has used widely development assistance, bilateral trade agreement, grand aid, preferential loans and debt relief to influent other politics without coercion that is considered as tool of China's soft power.¹⁰⁴ The idea of China's non-interference, mutual benefit, development aid, and economic cooperation apparently become important tools of China's soft power. To strength relation tie with the military junta, Beijing has used all various material powers that will help the junta to maintain in the political power.

3.1 China-Myanmar relations and mutual interests

China has played a significant role to block any type of international intervention against Myanmar government internal politics in the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) even though the international community increasingly criticizes China for protecting the military regime. The West and Japan stopped economic assistance following the brutal military regime crackdown against the 1988 nationwide demonstration.¹⁰⁵ When the international government stopped development assistance and funding to Myanmar, Chinese took advantages by increasing its investment in and offering development aid to Myanmar. Nowadays, China is the most important trading partner, and a key foreign investor in Myanmar.¹⁰⁶ China's development

¹⁰³ Keyuan, Zou. "China's possible role in Myanmar's national reconciliation." *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 17 (2003): 59-77. (P.69)

¹⁰⁴ Haacke, Jürgen. "China's role in the pursuit of security by Myanmar's State Peace and Development Council: boon and bane?." *The Pacific Review* 23, no. 1 (2010): 113-137. (P.119)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. (P.119)

¹⁰⁶ Bolesta, Andrzej. "Myanmar-China peculiar relationship: Trade, investment and the model of development." *Journal of International Studies* 11, no. 2 (2018): 23-36.

aid includes grant aid, soft loan and debt cancellation. China becomes “the biggest creditor, donor, and engineering contractor” in Myanmar after the international government and communities condemned the military regime for widespread violation of human rights.¹⁰⁷

China regards Myanmar’s military regime as a main consumer of raw material resources. Between 1997 and 2006, Myanmar received US\$24.2 million in grants, US\$82.7 and US\$400 million in subsidized loans, and US\$1.2 million in debt relief from China.¹⁰⁸ Myanmar mainly exports to China raw material resources such as timber, jewelry, gas, oil, hydropower, agricultural products, and aquatic products.¹⁰⁹ Myanmar imports agricultural machinery products, electronic products, food, and daily consumer goods from China.¹¹⁰ Chinese state-owned enterprises are the main investor in developing infrastructure projects which include the rail, road, bridge, construction of stadiums and government buildings, and a number of building factories.¹¹¹ Additionally, Chinese State-Owned enterprises continuously invested in mining, natural gas, and logging in Myanmar. Even the trade imbalance between China and Myanmar existed; China becomes the largest foreign direct investment in which 31% of foreign direct investments come from China in 2016.¹¹²

Since the military seized the political power in 1962, consistently violation of human rights against the minority ethnic groups, violent crackdown on peaceful nationwide demonstration in 1988 and attacked violently against the peaceful protest during 2007 Saffron

¹⁰⁷ Reilly, James. "China and Japan in Myanmar: Aid, natural resources and influence." *Asian Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (2013): 141-157.

¹⁰⁸ Reilly, James. "China and Japan in Myanmar: Aid, natural resources and influence." *Asian Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (2013): 141-157. (P.150)

¹⁰⁹ Bi, Shihong. "The Economic Relations of Myanmar-China." *Myanmar's Integration with Global Economy: Outlook and Opportunities*, BRC (Bangkok Research Center), Bangkok, Research Report 13 (2014). (P.179)

¹¹⁰ Bi, Shihong. "The Economic Relations of Myanmar-China." *Myanmar's Integration with Global Economy: Outlook and Opportunities*, BRC (Bangkok Research Center), Bangkok, Research Report 13 (2014).

¹¹¹ Reilly, James. "China and Japan in Myanmar: Aid, natural resources and influence." *Asian Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (2013): 141-157. (P.150)

¹¹² Bolesta, Andrzej. "Myanmar-China peculiar relationship: Trade, investment and the model of development." *Journal of International Studies* 11, no. 2 (2018): 23-36. (P.25)

Revolution highly brought international attention on Myanmar military regime.¹¹³ When a strong Cyclone Nargis completely destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes and killed about 140,000 people in the Ayeyawaddy Delta, the military regime rejected the international emergency aid from the West and the U.S despite a massive scale of humanitarian aid for the victims of cyclone Nargis was needed.¹¹⁴ Consequently, France called for a debate whether the military regime's inability to respond in emergency need justified the principle of responsibility to protect in UNSC, China disagreed the idea of delivering humanitarian aid to the victims of cyclone Nargis by coercion.¹¹⁵ China opposed the UNSC resolution on Rohingya crisis which has kept China as diplomatic protector for the military regime.

Beijing not only plays as a main development donor but also become a major supplier of military hardware to Myanmar that assisting the military junta to strengthen its national security and build a strong military sector. According to USIP 2018 report, Myanmar received military assistance from China which has been providing military training, selling advanced weapon, and helping the military junta in constructing military installation.¹¹⁶ When China sells the military equipments to the Myanmar military regime, non-Burman ethnic groups might view as hard power which imposes a threat against the minority ethnic groups. India and Japan also might interpret China military assistance for the military junta as hard power that will threaten stability, peace and security in the region.

¹¹³ Junk, Julian. "Testing boundaries: cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the scope of R2P." *Global Society* 30, no. 1 (2016): 78-93.

¹¹⁴ Selth, Andrew. "Even paranoids have enemies: Cyclone Nargis and Myanmar's fears of invasion." *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 30, no. 3 (2008): 379-402.

¹¹⁵ Bellamy, Alex J. "The Responsibility to Protect and the problem of military intervention." *International Affairs* 84, no. 4 (2008): 615-639.

¹¹⁶ USIP. China's Role in Myanmar's Internal Conflicts. USIP senior study group final report, 2018. (P.12)

3.2 China interest in Myanmar

3.2.1 Geopolitical interest

Due to the fact that geographically Myanmar is a strategically essential country which will serve Beijing as a gateway to the Indian Ocean, and as a main economic channel between South and Southeast Asia. Myanmar is, therefore, a strategically significant country for China to expand its regional hegemony in South/Southeast Asia for its national security interest. Beijing offered the military regime development assistance, political support, military assistance, diplomatic protection, and breaking international sanction and condemnation in the UNSC to strengthen the military junta position in the politics. In return, China has accessed to valuable natural resources in Myanmar, to Indian Ocean for its long-term national security interest, and able to spread Chinese traditional culture in Myanmar. To expand regional hegemony, China needs an effective plan to influence both on land and maritime route that Myanmar is part of its strategic plan.

China has attempted to seek an alternative sea route for energy due to increase in concern over a potential blockade by the United States and its allies in the Malacca Strait. In 2013, Beijing developed a new economic strategy which is called “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative to build infrastructures including roads, railways, port, gas pipeline across the Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe. China has developed many new routes to avoid using the Malacca Strait. One route is going to cross Myanmar to use as a transit route for energy. The Chinese government invests largely in the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) establishing a deep-sea port on the Bay of Bengal. This SEZ is an important component of China’s “One Belt, One Road” project. It will essentially provide a short cut route for China’s energy imports from the Middle East, resources from Africa, and trade with Europe. Additionally, China has

been building a network of highways, railroads, and maritime routes which directly link to Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. In 2013, China completed building oil and gas pipelines connecting Kyaukpyu sea port to Kuming city in Yunnan province, China. OBOR will provide China to dominate South/Southeast Asia as well as the whole Indian Ocean through promoting economic integration among the region. Myanmar becomes one of the key elements of Beijing's "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

One of China's most important projects is located closely to conflict area. The conflict in Arakan State has been one of key controversies among International Relations. The fight between Myanmar security forces and Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) caused about 370,000 Rohingya refugees to flee to Bangladesh.¹¹⁷ The international community expressed their disappointment over Daw Aung San Su Kyi's speech for not publicly condemning the military operations that have driven thousands of Rohingyas out of western Myanmar into Bangladesh. When French and British attempted to find a solution to the Rohingya crisis, China uses its veto to protect Burmese government on the Rohingya crisis in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting. China will provide diplomatic protection on any issue to consolidate its relationship tie with Myanmar in the United Nation to limit the U.S and the West influence on Myanmar. Moreover, the Western government's strong pressure to the Burmese government on the current humanitarian crisis in the Western Burma consolidates the relationship between China and Myanmar. Regarding the humanitarian crisis in Western Myanmar, China will undoubtedly exercise its political veto power to protect Myanmar. If Myanmar is isolated from the western, China will have more influence over Myanmar to expand its regional hegemonic power.

¹¹⁷ Das, Krishna N. "Myanmar Faces Mounting Pressure over Rohingya Refugee Exodus." Reuters. September 12, 2017. Accessed May 20, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/myanmar-faces-mounting-pressure-over-rohingya-refugee-exodus-idUSKCN1BN0AQ>.

It is not secret that while in the Rohingya crisis, China maintains its principle of non-interference of other nations' internal affairs while involving directly in Burmese peace process through using its leverage. On the one hand, China provides financial assistant to the Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh in order to maintain a good friendship with the Bangladesh government. On the other hand, China provides diplomatic protection to the Burmese government amid the international communities. Myanmar is not only used as a new energy transport line for oil, and natural gas, but also used for importing materials route which guarantees the safety of alternative route for China. Therefore, China will block any international intervention against Myanmar that China will maintain trading partner as strong as ever in response to humanitarian crisis and will provide any assistance to help the military junta to maintain a good relation.

3.2.3 Economic interest

China significantly increases demand for energy and natural resources for its economic development; China has managed its energy/resource diplomacy with developing nation like Myanmar. Myanmar has been serving China as a raw material appendage since the early of 1970.¹¹⁸ At the same time, the military regime has been heavily depended on the China with the purpose of importing armaments and modernizing Burmese armed forces since the early of 1989.¹¹⁹ China has increasingly expanded its economic ties with Myanmar since 1997 after the United States imposed economic sanction against the Burmese dictators in response to widespread violation of human rights and violently cracking down on peaceful demonstration in

¹¹⁸ Kudo, Toshihiro. "Myanmar's Economic Relations with China: Can China Support the Myanmar Economy?." (2006).

¹¹⁹ Lintner, Bertil. "The People's Republic of China and Burma: Not Only Pauk." Project 2049 institution, May 9, 2017. Accessed May 19, 2019.

1988.¹²⁰ China increases its influence on Myanmar's politics, and economy by providing economic and technological cooperation as well as providing protection from the UN. China has made a huge amount of money from exporting military equipment to Myanmar, which has spent a large amount of national income on buying the military equipment from China even the quality of equipment is low. In 1990, the military junta brought F-7 jet fighters, naval patrol boats, air forces, missiles and others equipment from China, which cost between US\$ 1 to 2 billion.¹²¹ In 1994, the junta spent US\$ 400 million on military equipments from China.¹²² It is not easy to know exactly how much the regime expends on military since no data is available. Therefore, it is obvious that China has made enormous amount of money from Myanmar on military sector alone.

Economically, China's State-own enterprise and Chinese private companies have controlled about 60% of economy and have engaged in manufacturing, energy, and infrastructure development in Myanmar.¹²³ These State-own enterprises engage with the government while Chinese private companies engage with the local level in Myanmar. Chinese enterprises have invested 63% of capital resources on the sector of mining, natural gas and oil, and hydropower.¹²⁴ There are at least 45 Chinese firms have connected with the hydropower project in Myanmar.¹²⁵ China has largely invested in building energy infrastructure as well as transport infrastructure to meet its increasing demand for energy and other resources in expanding its

¹²⁰China increases its influence on Burma's politics, and economy by providing economic and technological cooperation as well as providing protection from the UN.

¹²¹Kuppuswamy, C. S. "Sino-Myanmar Relations and its impact on the region." *South Asia Analysis Group, Paper* 4357 (2011).

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Haacke, Jürgen. "China's role in the pursuit of security by Myanmar's State Peace and Development Council: boon and bane?." *The Pacific Review* 23, no. 1 (2010): 113-137. (P.122)

¹²⁴ Dunn, Christopher, Lin Ji, and Kui Peng. "Chinese Investments in Myanmar: A Scoping Study." *China: Global Environmental Institute* (2016).

¹²⁵Haacke, Jürgen. "China's role in the pursuit of security by Myanmar's State Peace and Development Council: boon and bane?." *The Pacific Review* 23, no. 1 (2010): 113-137. (P.122)

economy. For instance, China has been trying to build a new giant dam in Kachin state, expanding gold and copper mine in Mandalay and extending new oil and natural gas pipeline in Arakhan state.¹²⁶

China has been investing in building transport infrastructure such as roads, and railways which is a new shortcut connecting to China, Myanmar and Indian Ocean. It spent \$7.3 billion in the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in establishing a deep-sea port on the Bay of Bengal.¹²⁷ This Kyaukpyu sea port is regarded as the most important China project to expand its regional influence into the India Ocean in term of a Chinese naval base. Via the port China can avoid using the Malacca Straits, a shipping chokepoint, which is the conventional route for Chinese energy imports from the Middle East. China has more benefit to do trade with Myanmar. Geographically, Myanmar is an important as trade route or land bridge that is connecting between Southeast Asia and South Asia. Cross-border trade between Myanmar and China is an important to develop economy for a landlocked province like Yunnan, which is one of the poorest districts in China and is a major strategic significance for China's long-term ambition that connecting from Myanmar's deep sea port in Kyaukphyu to Kunming city.¹²⁸

3.2.4 China's role as mediator in Myanmar's peace process

Engagement with international institutions and actively participation in the conflict resolution is a part of tools of China's soft power. This enhances Chinese traditional culture and

¹²⁶ Clapp, Priscilla A. "China's Relations with Burma." United States Institute of Peace. April 25, 2018. Accessed May 20, 2019. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2015/05/chinas-relations-burma>

¹²⁷ Lee, Yimou. "Exclusive: China Seeks up to 85 Percent Stake in Strategic Port In..." Reuters. May 05, 2017. Accessed May 20, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-silkroad-myanmar-port-exclusive/exclusive-china-seeks-up-to-85-percent-stake-in-strategic-port-in-myanmar-idUSKBN1811DF>.

¹²⁸ Kudo, Toshihiro. "Myanmar's economic relations with China: who benefits and who pays?." *Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar* (2008): 87-109. (P.95)

creates a good image and reputation of nation.¹²⁹ The incidence of suspending several China important projects and shifting of Myanmar foreign policy apparently made China further step to be a witness and a mediator in Myanmar's peace negotiation. China's participation in Myanmar's current peace process successfully prevents the U.S from involving in peace process. If the U.S participates in peace process, it has potential to influence over Myanmar domestic politics that will bring the U.S near the China border. This is the main concern of China when the Myanmar's foreign policy shifted.

After four years of long peace negotiation, quasi-civilian president Thein Sein failed to bring all ethnic armed groups to sign Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Consequently, Myanmar government has to deal with two main coalitions of ethnic armed groups: United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) in the South and Federal Political Negotiation Consultative Committee (FPNCC) in the North. These two coalitions have not signed the NCA-pack as the former ethnic bloc and government's peace commission (PC)'s negotiation of 8-point proposal amendment to NCA is incomplete and the latter bloc has totally rejected the NCA roadmap for peace and proposed an alternative.

FPNCC is led by United Wa State Army (UWSA) which is a successor of Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and the largest ethnic army in Myanmar that possesses advanced military weapons.¹³⁰ The FPNCC rejects Myanmar's peace roadmap: nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) and seeking an alternative to achieve peace. Moreover, all the members of the FPNCC have directly or indirectly, one way or another been relying on China for their economies and military's hardware equipment. Therefore, China's influence on the Northern ethnic armed group

¹²⁹ Wang, Yiwei. "Public diplomacy and the rise of Chinese soft power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 257-273. (P.264)

¹³⁰ Lintner, Bertil. "The People's Republic of China and Burma: Not Only Pauk." Project 2049 institution, May 9, 2017. Accessed May 19, 2019.

has come through this mutual benefit. China demonstrated its influence over the northern ethnic armed groups by convincing them to attend the Union Peace Conference, the 21st Panglong at Nay Pyi Taw to engage in the Myanmar government-led current peace negotiation. This is very clear signal that Beijing plays an important role in current Burma's peace process. In other words, this means that China plays as a mediator role in Myanmar peace process, such as arranging several peace negotiations between FPNCC and Myanmar government's representatives to meet in Kunming, Yunnan Province.¹³¹ For China, being an official international witness in peace negotiation and become a main mediator in ceasefire negotiation between the Myanmar army and Northern armed group not only increases its images and reputation among the international community but also expand its leverage in the Myanmar politics.

3.3 Myanmar political reform and decline of China's influence

The then semi-military-civilian government taking public opinion into account to suspend the Myintsone Dam project was an unexpected decision. There are two possible reasons of shifting Myanmar foreign policy; first, the government wanted to earn support and trust from general public to consolidate and legitimate political power; and second, the government wanted to develop relation tie with the United States and its allies to reduce the China influence through playing power balancing game.¹³² The shifting of Myanmar foreign policy may threaten China's long-term geostrategic goal and economic interest. Strategically, Myanmar is important for the

¹³¹ USIP. "China's Role in Myanmar's Internal Conflicts." USIP senior study group final report 2018.

¹³² Li, Hak Yin, and Yongnian Zheng. "Re-interpreting China's Non-intervention Policy towards Myanmar: leverage, interest and intervention." *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 61 (2009): 617-637. (P.624)

U.S., India, and Japan not only to prevent the China hegemony in the region but also to use as a trade gateway to connects to Asian countries.¹³³ Since the beginning of Myanmar political reform, Obama administration recognized a new government's effort for reforming through lifting economic sanction on Myanmar that improving the two nation's relation.¹³⁴ The US rapprochement with Myanmar became a debatable issue whether the U.S foreign policy toward Myanmar aims at China¹³⁵ because improvement in US-Myanmar relationship would threaten China's national long-term strategic interest, security interest and economic interest in the region. The following the U.S government official visiting and the public demonstration against the Myintsone Dam led to suspending China's important projects in Myanmar indicated that Myanmar government's perception toward China has changed. According to Min Zin, "the Burmese military generals do not trust the Chinese" because of hostile history which relates to the struggle against the Community Party of Burma (CPB).¹³⁶

Several important Chinese development projects have been suspended, including Myitsone Dam, Letpadaung copper mine, Sino-Myanmar railway project, and Kyukpyu special economic zone.¹³⁷ It is unexpected event. China still has a card to play political game in

¹³³ Schoff, James L. *What Myanmar Means for the US-Japan Alliance*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014. (P.3)

¹³⁴ Schoff, James L. *What Myanmar Means for the US-Japan Alliance*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014. (P.17)

¹³⁵ Sun, Yun. "Myanmar in US-China relations." *Issue Brief* 3 (2014). (P.5)

¹³⁶ Zin, Min. "Burmese attitude toward Chinese: Portrayal of the Chinese in contemporary cultural and media works." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 115-131. (P.119)

¹³⁷ Han, Enze. "Geopolitics, Ethnic Conflicts along the Border, and Chinese Foreign Policy Changes toward Myanmar." *Asian Security* 13, no. 1 (2017): 59-73.

maintaining its leverage on Myanmar. In this scenario, China has potential to keep its leverage on Myanmar if the genuine peace agreement between the military and the ethnic armed organizations has not succeeded. On the one hand, China's support for the Northern ethnic armed groups such as Kachiin, Wa, and Kokang can undermine political and economic reform process in Myanmar. On the other hand, China will provide any assistance to the military junta to maintain its leverage on Myanmar politics. Nevertheless, China can not abandon the Northern ethnic armed group even the intensive conflict along China border could damage the border trade. The reason is that China's important hydropower project is located at the confluence of the Mali and N'Mai rivers under the administration of Kachin Independent Organization (KIO).¹³⁸

Since the accident of suspending Myintsone Dam, the relationship between two countries declined unexpectedly. It is interesting to raise questions about how China responded to the decision of President Thein Sein? Will China take legal action against Myanmar if the current government keeps the suspension? In fact, Myanmar breached the contract. However, anti-Chinese and general public resentment in Myanmar are obstacle to China in addressing the controversial Myintzone Dam recklessly because a strong anti-Chinese resentment will not benefit China. In this situation, China clearly realized the importance of public opinion in following liberalized domestic political situation in Myanmar. China started set up public diplomacy programs to win the heart and mind of Myanmar general public for purpose of reconstructing the dam. On the other hand, China threatened the military regime by using Northern ethnic armed groups and by deploying Chinese troops on the Sino-Myanmar border

¹³⁸ CHAN, Sze Wan Debby. "Asymmetric Bargaining between Myanmar and China in the Myintsone Dam Controversy: Social Opposition as David's Stone against Goliath." (2016). (P.10)

after the Burmese military air forces killed five Chinese civilians during the fight between Kokang army and Burmese army in 2015.¹³⁹ This is the first time that Chinese government uses its leverage over northern ethnic armed groups to deal with Myanmar government in history. In recent months, China's increasing pressure over the suspended Myitzone Dam in the ethnic Kachin state that has been suspended since 2011. The pressures include Chinese ambassador to Myanmar issuing a "clever" statement that the Kachin people do not oppose the Myitzone Dam Project.¹⁴⁰ Then Chinese officials also approached the Kachin Baptist Council pastors and Kachin State leaders to convince the Kachin Independent Army (KIA) not to oppose the dam projects, otherwise will face consequences.¹⁴¹ The way China responded the decision of suspending the dam includes threat or coercion. Whether the construction of the dam is resumed, decision is largely depended on the current government. This situation has highlighted Myanmar's dilemma in choosing between environmental protections and safeguarding the great Irrawaddy River, and its political and economic dependence on Beijing. The following section discusses how Burmese general public perceive the spreading Chinese language and influence of China in economic, political and cultural sectors in Myanmar.

3.4 General public perception and China's public diplomacy in Myanmar

China does not succeed in attempt to win heart and mind of the people by expanding its soft power among general public in Myanmar. Generally, majority of Myanmar people do not view Chinese as friend or ally. In this situation, China's real challenge is a competition for

¹³⁹ Han, Enze. "Geopolitics, Ethnic Conflicts along the Border, and Chinese Foreign Policy Changes toward Myanmar." *Asian Security* 13, no. 1 (2017): 59-73.

¹⁴⁰ Zaw, John. "China's Diplomatic Shield Has a Price for Myanmar." Ucanews.com. January 21, 2019. Accessed May 22, 2019. <https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinas-diplomatic-shield-has-a-price-for-myanmar/84313>.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

influence in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. Deng and Zhang assume that a nation has more cultural power in the world if the nation exports more cultural product such as books, and newspapers.¹⁴² However, this assumption might not work in Myanmar. Chinese government understood that public opinion and the influence of civil society have become an important in internal politics and decisions making process during the transitional period in Myanmar. China's new approach targets the general public to win the heart and mind of people in Myanmar for the project resumption.¹⁴³ Since 1988, Chinese government developed its relation with the elites from the top exclusively while ignoring the junta's crackdown on peaceful public demonstration in 1988 and 2007, and embracing the military junta for their national interest. In 2012, following the suspending of Myintzone Dam, China brought Burmese CBO (Community Based Organizations), journalists and opposition parties to China under the program of China-Myanmar Friendship Association, China NGO Network for International Exchanges and Yunnan University.¹⁴⁴

China has focused more on public diplomacy to promote the peaceful rise of China by cultivating soft power.¹⁴⁵ With the purpose of expanding soft power among the Myanmar general public, Beijing has developed cultural study center¹⁴⁶, China-Myanmar culture exchange program¹⁴⁷, educational exchange program, and Chinese-Myanmar Friendship school

¹⁴² Chen, Gang, Jianfeng Chen, Xiaohe Cheng Xiaogang Deng, Yong Deng, Joshua Kurlantzick, Zhongying Pang, Ignatius Wibowo et al. *Soft power: China's emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books, 2009. (P.130)

¹⁴³ CHAN, Sze Wan Debby. "Asymmetric Bargaining between Myanmar and China in the Myitsone Dam Controversy: Social Opposition as David's Stone against Goliath." (2016). (P.10)

¹⁴⁴ CHAN, Sze Wan Debby. "Asymmetric Bargaining between Myanmar and China in the Myitsone Dam Controversy: Social Opposition as David's Stone against Goliath." (2016). (P.12)

¹⁴⁵ Wang, Yiwei. "Public diplomacy and the rise of Chinese soft power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 257-273. (263)

¹⁴⁶ 李平. "China Cultural Center Opened in Myanmar." July 07, 2018. Accessed March 10, 2019.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201807/10/WS5b440fe1a3103349141e1c7a_3.html.

¹⁴⁷ Xinhua. "Cultural Heritage Exhibition of China's Yunnan Province Held in Myanmar's Yangon." January 30, 2019. Accessed March 11, 2019. <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201901/30/WS5c510046a3106c65c34e73fa.html>.

project.¹⁴⁸ Cultural resources for China's public diplomacy include Panda, Chinese opera, festivals, religious forums, sports, music and Confucius.¹⁴⁹ Among various sources of power, "a sacred Buddha tooth" is a special gift from the Beijing that was sent to the general public at the local level in Myanmar. Chinese government conveyed the Buddhist tooth relic to Myanmar after President Thein Sein, suspended the construction of several Chinese important projects.¹⁵⁰ A big crowd worshipped the tooth relic on the street at that time. Beijing also helped the previous military regime to change the public attention by bringing Chinese Buddhist Tooth Relic and displayed for 54 days at Mahha Atula Waiyan monastery in Mandalay during boycotting the National Convention by the NLD and all ethnic armed organizations in 1997.¹⁵¹ Kieschnick states that both China and Myanmar governments tended to use Chinese Buddhist tooth relic for the political purpose that the tooth relic was expected to create a favorable impression on the Myanmar military regime.¹⁵² It is clear that Chinese government tries to gain support from majority of Myanmar population, who are the believers and practitioners Buddhism, through sending Buddha tooth to Myanmar.

Under the name of Chinese-Myanmar friendship school project, Chinese government invested a huge amount of money to build High Schools and brought young Burmese students to study in China.¹⁵³ For example, more than 100 outstanding Burmese students have studied in

¹⁴⁸ Fengjuan, Wang. "China-Myanmar Friendship School: Connecting people through Education". China Pictorial. 2017. Accessed April 20, 2019. http://www.chinapictorial.com.cn/en/features/txt/2017-06/05/content_741662.htm

¹⁴⁹ Lai, Hongyi. "China's Cultural Diplomacy: Going for soft power". EAI Background Brief No. 308, p. 7. 2006

¹⁵⁰ Embassy. "Chinese Buddha Sacred Tooth Relic Re-conveyed after Public Obeisance in Myanmar." Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. December 26, 2011. Accessed May 20, 2019. <http://mm.china-embassy.org/eng/sxw/t890419.htm>.

¹⁵¹ Mon, Kyaw Hsu. "China to Send Sacred Tooth Relic." The Myanmar Times. August 15, 2011. Accessed May 20, 2019. <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/2320-china-to-send-sacred-tooth-relic.html>.

¹⁵² Kieschnick, John. *The impact of Buddhism on Chinese material culture*. Vol. 5. Princeton University Press, 2003.(P.43)

¹⁵³ A New Page for Folk Arts. Accessed March 10, 2019. http://www.chinapictorial.com.cn/en/features/txt/2017-06/05/content_741662.htm.

China under the Chinese education scholarship program since 2013.¹⁵⁴ All the high school children, who do not learn any political ideology, are pure and clean without any political ideology, so it is easy to dominate their mind and political belief. It is clearly that through this program, China tries to promote its political value and culture. However, China does not get the desired outcome.

Myanmar attitude toward Chinese is yet negative.¹⁵⁵ As increasing number of Chinese migration, have dominated on local business, embracing the Myanmar military regime, exploitation of natural resources, spread of Chinese language, and cultural instruction have increased the fear of Chinese among the ethnic groups and threaten local identities in the Northern Myanmar.¹⁵⁶ A local man, a secretary of the Shan literature and Culture Committee, mentions to media that his concern is that Shan language might be disappeared in the future if Shan people prefer to speak Chinese language rather than their mother tongue.¹⁵⁷ Perception of general public toward Chinese can be found from “news reports, cartoons, comedian movies, poems, articles, local short stories, and social medias, and plenty of negative comments from the readers, songs, and media expressions”.¹⁵⁸ It is that China’s soft power is effective in one way, and not in the others in Myanmar because of Chinese language is popular among the local people. There are other influential factors that Chinese language is essential to get a job since most

¹⁵⁴ Song Lifang. "Over 100 Outstanding Myanmar Students to Study in China under Scholarship Program." Profile: Peru's Engineer-turned-president Martin Vizcarra - Xinhua | English.news.cn. August 30, 2017. Accessed March 10, 2019. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/30/c_136568724.htm

¹⁵⁵ Zin, Min. "Burmese attitude toward Chinese: Portrayal of the Chinese in contemporary cultural and media works." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 115-131.

¹⁵⁶ Zin, Min. "Burmese attitude toward Chinese: Portrayal of the Chinese in contemporary cultural and media works." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 115-131.

¹⁵⁷ "Ethnic Language Struggles near China Border." The Myanmar Times. November 19, 2015. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.mmtimes.com/lifestyle/17707-ethnic-language-struggles-near-china-border.html>.

¹⁵⁸ Zin, Min. "Burmese attitude toward Chinese: Portrayal of the Chinese in contemporary cultural and media works." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 115-131.

of local businesses are controlled by the Chinese, a local man said.¹⁵⁹ According to Min Zin, Chinese businesses presence in Myanmar and popular Chinese language are viewed as threat against to the national identity, culture, and national economic security. In the eyes of majority in Myanmar, China is not their ally or friend.

Conclusion

During the hey days of China-Myanmar relationships, both sides of the governments were seeing eye-to-eye, there are mutual respects and interests; thus, activities such as exchanging of culture and trades have taken place. This case is with the consent, therefore, is soft power, according to Zhang. At the time, major economic sanctions and embargo were lifted by the western countries, Myanmar tends to become pro-west. Therefore, China-Myanmar relations become deteriorated. In this scenario according to Zhang, can be interpreted as hard power. This case study demonstrates that Chinese traditional culture and language are not an attractive in the eye of Myanmar; however, China successfully spread them among the people. In this case, China gains some asset of soft power without people consent.

I observed through Zheng and Zheng's theoretical lens it appears that current Chinese influence in Myanmar may be, in many areas, rather defined as hard power than soft power reliant. When President Thein Sein, semi-civilian-military government, came into power in 2011, all Chinese mega dam projects were suspended. The semi-military-civilian government appears to have taken public opinion into account, and that the unexpected decision is seen as a reversal to the authoritarian rule since the coup in 1962. It is a relatively rare event for a massive Chinese overseas dam project to be blocked by a popular protest. Following liberalized domestic political

¹⁵⁹ Language Struggles near China Border." The Myanmar Times. November 19, 2015. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.mmtimes.com/lifestyle/17707-ethnic-language-struggles-near-china-border.html>.

situation and suspensions of building Myintsone dam, China has developed many social programs which target the general public to gain their support for the resumption the building of China's important projects. However, China did not win the hearts and minds of the general public because of China's engagement with the Burmese military regime in the past, influence of Chinese language and culture across the country, and Chinese monopoly over the economy in Myanmar. It appears that China will not give up its leverage on Myanmar. Although it does not win the heart of people in Myanmar with its soft power and cultural capital space, China would still push ahead with mega economic zone projects and other plans in the country. China would not easily give up its hope and intention altogether.

I have discussed, Joseph Nye defines sources of soft power in terms of foreign policy, cultural and political values, and hard power on military and economics; Zheng and Zhang provide sources of soft and hard power from three perspectives: "horizontality, verticality, and relativity and force and perceptions and feeling of various actors in specific situations; then Mingjiang Li suggests that soft and hard power are ambiguous as their sources of power cannot be drawn a clear line distinguished. This paper further discussed that on whatever sources of power can be either soft or hard depending on the context and situation which is being used. This scenario is relevant to this study on China-Myanmar relations, China's role in peace process in Myanmar, multiple ethnic armed groups that challenge the Myanmar's central authority.

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