



Beneath the iceberg:

Soft power and educational
diplomacy between the European
union and China (2003-2018)

K. Stoyanova, 6216765 | Supervisor: Dr. J. Schenk

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"There are two possible scenarios for the way in which the geopolitics of science will shape the future. One is based on partnership and cooperation, and the other on efforts towards national supremacy. I am convinced that, more than ever, regional and international scientific cooperation is crucial to addressing the interrelated, complex, and growing global challenges with which we are confronted. Increasingly, international diplomacy will take the form of science diplomacy in years to come."

Irina Bokova, Director-General (UNESCO, 2010)

Abstract:

The aim of the following work is threefold. Based on academic literature in the field, the first step will be to introduce academic discussion surrounding the evolution of the term “soft power”. Secondly, an understanding of educational diplomacy as part of the “soft power” toolbox will be provided. Lastly, a close examination of the diplomatic strategy of the European Union and the People’s Republic of China in the period between 2003-2018 will look into the factors which dictate the use of soft power and educational exchange programs in the EU-China Strategic Partnership framework. Even though “people-to-people” diplomacy is used as a complementary tool, its role in the efforts to consolidate and further expand the bilateral relations between the two would be regarded as important in the growing interconnected and globalized world that we live in.

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1. Introduction

The following paper aims to look at the role of soft power and educational diplomacy in bilateral relations, specifically in the case of the European union (EU) and the People’s republic of China

(PRC). Educational exchanges are part of the “soft power” toolbox that states could use. The linkage between the two terms will be explained further in the text.

Soft power according to the definition of Joseph Nye is “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals and policies” (Nye, 2004: 204). Natalie Yan Hong’s definition of educational diplomacy stating "the practice of utilizing education as a means to facilitate the achievement of the foreign policy goals of reshaping perception and cultivating goodwill, thus improving international relations" will be taken into consideration. It may take a variety of forms such as official dialogues and meetings, exchange of students and academic staff, joint schools, collaborative research projects, scholarship programs, language teaching, professional training and others (Hong, 2014:156). Exchange students are participants in exchange programs which constitute one of the channels of educational diplomacy and they are defined as "a student who, by prior arrangement, attends a school in a foreign country while a student from that country attends a school in the country of the first"¹.

International exchange students are not something new. One of the first documented cases of exchange student is from more than 800 years ago. Emo of Friesland was the first international student to study at Oxford and he arrived there in 1190. After finishing his studies in Oxford he returned to Friesland, the area of his home country where he was born and raised, first working as a teacher and then becoming a parish priest. Despite the fact that these early examples of exchanges were mostly intended for personal educational gain, exchanges ever since have contributed to the movement of ideas knowledge and people. The opportunity to experience the history and culture of another country in the context of international diplomacy means that a bridge for better understanding between people can be created.

Educational exchange students represent a potent resource which could be exploited by foreign policy makers under various forms such as scholarships, a collaboration between universities and support for the establishment of joined programs. The motivation for the choice this topic comes from the fact that the topic of "soft power" and "educational diplomacy" are often left overlooked as marginal and indirect when it comes to international relations (Bu, 1999).

The words of Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO in 2010, illustrate the context in which current international affairs are happening. Despite the fact that she refers to the science, a parallel

¹ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/exchange-student>

can be made to international politics which address the growing global challenges with which the world is faced. These "growing global challenges" are rarely contained within national borders. Because the multi-layered nature solving it demands collaboration, not coercion, educational diplomacy, as a means of soft power, might be attractive for national governments.

To name a few examples: the spread of terrorism and radicalization, infectious diseases, migration and climate change. As it will be discussed by the views represented by some academics in the debate introduced below - soft power represents one way of successfully overcoming transnational issues. In contrast "raison d'État" is a justification for a nation's foreign policy on the basis that the nation's own interests are primary². In opposition to this realist view on diplomacy, soft power offers strategies based on mutual interest in order to face global challenges where innovation and knowledge based solutions are required. Educational exchanges allow this flow of ideas to happen transnationally and it could potentially lead to the finding solutions for greater challenges that humanity is now faced with.

1.1 Research question

The research will examine as a case study the "people-to-people" relations between the European Union (EU) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). This constitutes an interesting case to look at that has been attracting a lot of international attention in the academic field recently. Alongside the great amount of research addressing the topic (d'Hooghe 2010; Paradise 2012; Burnay, Joëlle, Kolja, 2014; Hong 2014; Wang 2016; Bislev 2017) new academic collaborations are being dedicated to the research. For example, "The New Silk Road: Implications for higher education and research cooperation between China and Europe" which is carried out by an international consortium including universities from the United States, Europe and Asia coordinated by Utrecht University's Centre for Global Challenges (UGlobe)³. This research project focuses on China's rise in global higher education. It demonstrates the increased interest in China's higher educational institutions (HEI) and aims to identify further development and implications which this will have for other HEIs and research across the globe.

To reflect the importance of their relations, the EU and China have built a unique framework which is designed to improve and enhance their relations through furthering their cooperation. One channel

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/raison%20d%27état>

³ <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/centre-for-global-challenges/projects/the-new-silk-road>

for developing mutual understanding is to engage in more "people-to-people" contact. The objective to build a strategic partnership was agreed in 2003⁴. It was reaffirmed in the communication of the European Commission in 2006, where one of the agreed goals of the partnership was to strengthen the full range of people-to-people links "through significant and sustained action on both sides, from cultural exchanges and tourism to civil society and academic links"⁵. Finally the The Third Pillar of EU-China relations, High Level People-to-People Dialogue (HPPD) was established in 2012⁶. The objective of the HPPD is to contribute to the knowledge and common understanding between the EU and China through direct exchange of ideas and experiences through educational, cultural, and humanitarian activities. In addition this exchanged identified opportunities for cooperation based on mutual interest and reciprocity.

Because the last 15 years have been so important for the creation of this framework this will also be the scope of this research. The text will argue that there is an increase of the "people-to-people" contacts between the two, deliberately targeted by their governments and designed by the EU-China framework. Through the case study, an attempt will be made to answer the historical puzzle: **Which factors have dictated the increased use of soft power and educational diplomacy as tools for the deepening of the EU-PRC diplomatic relations between 2003-2018?**

In order for this question to be answered sub-research questions will be asked. First one is: what is in the name of soft power and how did the term come into being? Secondly, how can educational exchange diplomacy be successfully employed as a soft power resource?

1.2 Methodology

Firstly, the debate around "soft power" and "educational diplomacy" will be introduced. The term "soft power" which was coined by Joseph Nye in the 1990s is part of a wider academic discussion that began in the post Second world war period. By introducing the works of other scholars, a historiographic review of the evolution of the term, soft power, will be made. Secondly, the use of educational diplomacy as a channel of soft power will be examined. A closer look will be taken into how educational exchange programs are looked upon in the current historiographic debate.

⁴ http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2005/september/tradoc_124565.pdf

⁵ http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/october/tradoc_130875.pdf

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/international-cooperation/documents/china/joint12_en.pdf

Finally, the case study will illustrate the growing importance of soft power in the form of "people-to-people" and educational diplomacy in the bilateral relations between the EU and PRC. The High Level People-to-People dialogue (HLPPD) is a unique feature of the EU-China bilateral relations. This is why attention will be drawn to the evolution of the EU-PRC bilateral framework and what position soft power and educational diplomacy occupy within this framework. This would be done by introducing primary sources such as official documents released by both, as well as speeches by key diplomats regarding the building of "people-to-people" dialogue. In conclusion, attention will be paid to future challenges and opportunities that their relationship might impose for the world.

1.3 Academic relevance

The objective is to contribute to the development of a better understanding of educational exchange programs as a soft power tool. That is a new research angle because it is focused on non-state actors being used as part of foreign policy formulation between state actors. My case study will illustrate this growing importance of soft power that governments are faced with today.

2. Soft power

According to the definition used in Daryl Copeland work hard power is the use of military and economic means to influence the behavior or interests of other political bodies. This form of political power is often aggressive (coercion), and is most effective when imposed by one political body upon another of lesser military and/or economic power. Hard power contrasts with soft power, which comes from diplomacy, culture, and history (Copeland, 2010).

The term "soft power" began to emerge in the period that followed the Second World War. Over the past sixty years, various academics have examined the non-coercive part of diplomacy and have worked to construct viable theoretical framework around it. At least three important concepts have emerged from this debate. The post-WWII reconstruction of political and economic architecture emphasis was put on the creation of "mutual understanding". The Creation of branches of international relations theory, built around the ideals of democracy and the rule of law, was inspired by the victory of Western liberal states who ended the Cold War. Such theories are cosmopolitan democracy and liberal institutionalism.

Cosmopolitan democracy is a political theory which explores the application of norms and values of democracy at the transnational and global sphere. It argues that global governance of the people, by the people, for the people is possible and needed. The idea of cosmopolitan democracy has been advocated with reference to the reform of international organizations. This includes the institution of the International Criminal Court, a directly elected World Parliament or world assembly of governments, and more widely the democratization of international organizations. (Archibugi, Held, 2009)

In this regard, it is similar to liberal internationalism. The main features of this liberal vision are open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, progressive change, collective problem solving, the rule of law (Ikenberry, 2009). There is also emphasis on international law and international organisations which are aimed to protect the rule of law, which will allow democracies to advance their common interests, because governments of the world should cooperate in the name of their mutual long-term interests rather than their short-term disputes (Paris, 1997).

2.1 Historical perspective of the evolution of the term “soft power”

The work of Robert Dahl (1957) is one of the founding works dedicated to defining “power” and to think of it in the post-WWII liberal quest for non-coercive methods for achieving a consensus between states. Even though power has been a subject of interpretation since Plato and Aristotle, through Machiavelli and Hobbes, to Pareto and Weber, Dahl admits that few serious attempts have been made to formulate a rigorous conceptual clarity especially in the new post-WWII reality.

Dahl claims that people have an intuitive notion of what power means, which makes it difficult to form a single, consistent, and coherent “theory of power”. In his research, he tries to defy that and give a new potent definition of power and in which for the first time he includes some important elements. Even though his research has its limitations and it is strongly focused on the behavioral science it is important for the soft power term evolution because for the first time the effects of non-coercive methods such as threats and promises are considered into the power definition. In his definition power is a relation, and that is a relation among people (Dahl, 1957: 203).

The subjects in this relationship of power he calls actors. They can vary between individuals, groups, offices, governments, nation-states or any other human aggregates. There are numerous ways in which this “power” relationship between A and B can be exercised. In Dahl’s understanding, this is done through “means”. The means represent the mediating activity between A and B. Such representations are threats and promises, like sticks and carrots. For example the promise of patronage, the

threat of veto, the holding of a conference, the exercise of charm and charisma etc. Should a combination of those instruments is used by governments are to be employed power is created. In effect A can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do (Dahl, 1957: 206).

Dahl's work on power is furthered by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1962). They confirm his observations that defining power remains elusive. According to the "two faces of power" theory developed in the work of Bachrach and Baratz (1962) power is not simply "participation in decision-making" but it is wielded through attraction, persuasion, and cooperation too. The latter is defined by them as "the second face of power". This concept differs from the traditional idea of power because it recognizes an underlying layer which differs from military and economic might.

The second "face," which the authors feel is unrecognized by political scientists, who are focused too much on the coercive methods, is the "restrictive face of power". This is the form of power that involves the "dynamics of non-decision-making" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962: 952). Such influence is used to limit the scope of discussion or to prevent conflicts from ever being brought to the forefront. This capability, primarily through "manipulation", is able to influence the desired outcomes of decision making. In their research Bachrach and Baratz examine the influence of the "second face of power" in targeted communities, they take the discussion a step further and enhances the continuation of the research for future academics.

In his attempt to contribute to the power debate he coined the term "soft power" (Nye, 1990). When Joseph Nye first defined soft power, his intention was to explore non-coercive forms of power suitable for maintaining US influence in a post-Cold War world order. According to his definition soft power is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and policies.". Attraction, according to Nye, is the primary mechanism through which this happens. Soft power, therefore, 'rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others' (Nye, 2004: 204).

However, in the literature, there is a substantial selection of authors that criticise the potency as a theoretical concept of soft power. Despite its popularity among policymakers and academics alike, soft power as a theoretical construct has often been criticised as being analytically vague. In order to bring clarification in the matter Todd Hall suggests to make distinction between soft power as an analytical category and as a category of practice. These categories were first defined in the research of Brubaker and Cooper (2000). The main difference between the two divisions is that the wide and

popular use of a concept (category of practice) does not qualify it as an appropriate category of social science analysis (analytical category).

On the one hand, categories of analysis are defined as experience-distant categories used by social analysis. Valid categories for analysis are those that try to identify objects or groups of phenomena according to similarities rooted in shared, specifiable attributes or mechanisms that are discrete from the outcomes they are purported to explain. On the other hand, categories of practice as referred by Brubaker and Cooper are folk theories manifested in popular language and social behavior. They may seem intuitive to individuals in everyday life, but this assumption does not necessarily constitute a basis for a scientific research (Hall, 2010: 6).

His criticism is that the concept of soft power, by being given its adaptations by both practitioners and students of International relations, has led to a dual existence of the concept both as the category of practice and category of analysis. This is problematic because it contributes to the vagueness of the term.

Others, such as historian Niall Ferguson (2004) criticises Nye's concept about soft power as he states that there is nothing new about it and it used to be called imperialism. Further, he feels that soft power's reach is limited, and argues that cultural imperialism's real engine is hard power. As Ferguson explains "soft power is merely the velvet glove concealing an iron hand." (2004: 24). Consequently, Ferguson claims that soft power is too soft to be considered a true form of power. He provides the examples of Coke-drinking kids in the Middle East hating the United States or anglicised Indians plotting the downfall of the British Empire to illustrate the difference between adopting various parts of a given nation's cultural make-up and supporting that nation's foreign policy.

Ferguson is too quick to conclude that the effects of soft power over people are only the side effects of imperialism. Soft power is more than a public relations campaign. In his paper "The New Public Diplomacy" Nye discards such criticism, by renouncing those who claim that "whoever considers soft power solely as propaganda misses the point and the abilities which it offers" (Nye, 2010). This means that if soft power is used as propaganda it loses its credibility. As mentioned earlier it is the widely accepted actions, aligned with values, that accumulate soft power. In the following chapter the current use of soft power will be taken into account.

2.3 The use of Soft Power

The historiographic debate illustrates the change of political aims that occurred after WWII. The emphasis was put more on achieving mutual understanding through coercion rather than hard methods such as economic or military incentives. This makes soft power increasingly important in the world of international affairs which justifies researching it.

As mentioned previously the current use of soft power is wide in and outside of academia and popular media. As criticised by Hall, the distinction between the use of soft power as a category of analysis or category of practice is often unclear. One project that aims to use soft power as category of practice is the Soft Power 30 report. The project was founded in 2015 and the main aim of the project is to provide an opportunity for governments and policymakers to have a better understanding of the resources they can deploy, how to improve their efficiency and to give them an opportunity to compare their resources and capabilities with regards to soft power (McClory, 2015).

The existence of the report indicates that there is still a viable niche for exploitation of soft power. This undertaking to measure the intangible effects of influence and persuasion is not an easy task. However, the research attempts to do that by assessing 30 countries against a carefully considered set of objective metrics as well as international polling data. Its framework is built on the work of Nye, providing empirical proof for his theoretical concept (McClory, 2015).

It takes the stand that the political and economic powers are shifting from West to East and from governments to non-state actors. The report strives to expand the understanding of the capability of states deploying soft power, which is still not largely exploited by governments. (McClory, 2015).

2.3.1 Current reality

As demonstrated by the critical authors cited above and despite the existence of such reports, realist theories and hard power are traditionally dominating the international affairs in practice. In the last couple of years the world was faced with the tide of rising nationalism and a number of countries have turned their policies on into themselves.

Two of the biggest examples which have implication in the results of the Soft Power 30 report over its three years of existence is the election of Donald Trump for President of the US and the vote for Brexit in the UK. In 2016 The United States is on the top of the index (look at table 2) followed by the United Kingdom, while China ends up at the bottom of the rankings on 27th place. In 2017 the US and the UK have lost their position down the chart and France is now leading the chart. According to the report's findings Brexit is described as "the first major geopolitical disruption in the West"

until the Trump administrations "America First" doctrine truly altered the strategic calculations of world's leaders (McClory, 2017).

Moreover, recent actions undertaken by the President's Trump administration such as the withdrawal from the President Obama's administration carefully crafted deal with Iran, or the withdrawal from the Paris climate accord and threats to terminate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico, have made many state leaders in wary. Furthermore, the administration has called into question the value of traditional security alliances like NATO and even raised concerns about America's commitment to Article 5 of the NATO treaty, which defines the principle of collective defense. All of the above are alarming signs by the Trump administration have questioned the American global leadership on values such as democracy, human rights, and free speech.

2.3.2 Implications for China

As a result of the US policy turning its focus in on itself, both friends and adversaries are being forced to readjust their foreign policies. Relevant for this research is the case of China. Despite the internal nature of the non-democratic communist regime in China, in its foreign policy, the Asian state stepped up its game as an advocate for economic openness, free trade and even combating climate change.

President Xi Jinping's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2017 served as a marker for this accelerating change in global geopolitics⁷. The Chinese strategy is bolstered by the retreating US thus the country is taking up a stand in favor for globalization and environmentalism. President Xi noted that globalization is a double-edged sword. He reminded that there was also a time when China had its doubts about it and it was not sure whether it should join the World Trade Organisation.

However, in order for its economy to prosper China "must have the courage to swim in the vast ocean of the global market". He pointed out that the opportunities created by the digital revolution must be seized while the challenges of climate change and aging population must be addressed. In line with the idea of growing interdependence between states, he suggested that:

"...we should pursue a well-coordinated and inter-connected approach to develop a model of open and win-win cooperation. Today, mankind has become a close-knit community of shared future. Countries have extensive converging interests and are mutually dependent. All countries enjoy the

⁷ <https://america.cgtn.com/2017/01/17/full-text-of-xi-jinping-keynote-at-the-world-economic-forum>

right to development. At the same time, they should view their own interests in a broader context and refrain from pursuing them at the expense of others."⁸

China's ambition for such mutually beneficial global leadership projects undertaken by President Xi must be highlighted. In his mandate, he emphasized on the development of the One Belt, One Road initiative and the setting up of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The latter led to Western journalists to note the observation that China used more cement between 2011 and 2013 than the U.S. used in the entire 20th Century⁹. China's flagship in such initiatives is set to reshape the region, giving Beijing the opportunity to control the regional agenda in a way that has not been possible for centuries keeping in mind the new terms of globalization.

The effect of China's new balanced approach towards globalization and the concurrent withdrawal of American influence will be transformative for Asian and global geopolitics. "The rise of China" has become a common denominator of this transformation widely used in the press. The implications of this process for the West are subject to wide public and academic discussion¹⁰. When a big global actor such as China has a change in their path of how it interacts with other global actors the consequences will be felt by everyone. The historiographic puzzle of this developments is that despite the closed nature of the communist regime ruling in China an emerging use of soft power is observed in their relation to the EU. Later the case study will focus on the factors which explain this development and answer the research question. The growing importance of "soft power" for China is demonstrated by the implementation of new policies in areas in which China was for a long time criticised by the international community - such as climate change, human rights, and others. The potent of educational diplomacy in regards to soft power will be discussed in details the next chapter.

3. Education diplomacy as a soft power resource

In the following part of this research an analysis of the literature in the field undertakes answering the sub-research question: how can educational exchange diplomacy be employed as a soft power resource? More specifically an attempt will be made to answer of the other interconnected sub-research question: what are the conditions and factors which can contribute to the successful use of

⁸ <https://america.cgtn.com/2017/01/17/full-text-of-xi-jinping-keynote-at-the-world-economic-forum>

⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/consent/?toURL=https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2014/12/05/china-used-more-concrete-in-3-years-than-the-u-s-used-in-the-entire-20th-century-infographic/>

¹⁰ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2008-01-01/rise-china-and-future-west>

educational diplomacy as soft power resource? The importance of educational diplomacy as a channel of soft power deployment will be investigated in order to understand the value of the findings of the case study.

3.1 Culture and education

There are many strands to an effective long-term strategy for creating soft-power resources. As noted in the previous part, according to Nye's concept, the ability of states to generate soft power rests primarily on three resources: culture, political values, and foreign policies.

As mentioned earlier Nye's definition of culture which is described as the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society. However, the more universal those values and practices are, the wider the audience that could be affected by them. He points out that if a country can shape international rules that are consistent with the interests and values of other states, its actions will more likely appear legitimate in the eyes of others. (Nye 2004: 10-11).

In order to understand the concept of attraction it is important to introduce the term universal values. Universal values can be defined as "values that a great many human beings in the vast majority of places and situations, at almost all times, do in fact hold in common, whether consciously and explicitly or as expressed in their behaviour..." (Jahanbegloo, 1991). According to Nye if country's culture includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that others share This increases the probability of achieving its desired outcomes because of the relationships of attraction and duty that its culture creates. Consequently, narrow values, meaning not universal values, and parochial cultures are less likely to produce soft power (Nye, 2008).

The United States of America can be considered as a classic example of a country that benefits a lot from a universalistic culture, a culture that cuts across borders and contributes to making it relatively easier for the United States to gain support on a wide range of issues. The American culture and liberal norms enhanced the attractiveness of their society in the eyes of most ordinary citizens, whilst a number of elites in developing countries kept criticizing liberal democracy as a decadent form of life. The world-wide currents of migration suggest that more people prefer life in a liberal democracy than in an authoritarian society. In this way the Western ideals, resonated neatly with the people in Eastern

Europe and created a major power currency that helped demolish the Iron Curtain in 1989 and later extend the border of the political West to that of Russia in the following period.¹¹

Furthermore, according to Nye education is an essential part of a culture. He positions it in the high culture of art and literature, which according to him appeals to the elites. This is to be distinguished from the popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment (Nye 2008: 96). In his understanding educational diplomacy is aimed at the elites:

"The ideas and values that America exports in the minds of more than half a million foreign students who study every year in American universities and then return to their home countries (...) tend to reach elites with power. Most of China's leaders have a son or daughter educated in the States (...) when the United States was trying to persuade President Musharraf of Pakistan to change his policies and be more supportive of American measures in Afghanistan, it probably helped that he could hear from a son working in the Boston area."(Nye 2004:13)

Furthermore Nye makes a division between the different channels of communication through which soft power flows. The most immediate dimension is daily communications. This daily communication is used to explain the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions. The second dimension is strategic communication, which develops a set of simple themes much as a political or advertising campaign does, thus reinforces central themes or to advance a particular government policy. The third dimension of public diplomacy is the development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels. Each of these three dimensions of public diplomacy plays an important role in helping to create an attractive image of a country and this can improve its prospects for obtaining its desired outcomes. (Nye, 2008)

Moreover, in Nye interpretation of the soft power resource channels, educational diplomacy is positioned in the third dimension. This aspect is connected with the development of long-lasting relationships with key individuals. Long-standing friendly relationships may lead others to be more tolerant in their responses when an important change of foreign policy is about to happen. In Nye's words "Sometimes friends will give you the benefit of the doubt or forgive more willingly."¹²

¹¹ <https://www.munplanet.com/articles/soft-power/21st-century-diplomacy-the-role-of-soft-power>

¹² <http://www.publicdiplomacymagazine.com/soft-power-and-cultural-diplomacy/>

However, he points out that effective public diplomacy is a two-way street that involves listening as well as talking. Soft power rests on some shared values. That is why exchanges are often more effective than mere broadcasting. By definition, soft power means getting others to want the same outcomes you want, and that requires understanding how they are hearing your messages and fine-tuning it accordingly. (Nye, 2008)

“All power depends on context—who relates to whom under what circumstances—but soft power depends more than hard power upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers.” (Nye 2004:16)

For such roles of interpreters and receivers to be developed effectively educational exchanges constitute an important role. The process of developing long-term relationships through educational exchanges is not always profitable in the short term but is potentially recognized as valuable for governments. Thus leaving it simply to the market or letting it rely solely on privately funded scholarships may lead to underinvestment in the sector. That's why governmental support for those exchanges is of high importance for those who believe in benefits of educational diplomacy. Nye claims that because exchanges affect potentially future elites, where the contact with one or two key individuals may have a major political effect. Nye quotes Secretary of State Colin Powell, who in 2001 said:

"I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here" (Nye 2005: 14).

Furthermore, Nye argues that restrictions on higher education exchanges such as visa policies or unattractive domestic policies could cause a drop in applications from foreign students in the United States. He draws attention to today's restrictive visa and immigration policies of the US which cause a significant drop in applications from foreign students to study in the United States. The long-term implications of such policies are that talented foreign students seeking a quality higher education will go elsewhere, and thus the US will lose the opportunity to both influence and learn from foreign students. This potentially could diminish American's awareness of cultural differences precisely when they must become less parochial and more sensitive to foreign perceptions (Nye 2005: 14).

According to the provided analysis in Nye's work, it can be concluded that education has a central role for soft power diffusion. In his interpretation, culture and education are central resources for the dissemination of influence in internal and interstate affairs. Furthermore, he admits the growing role that education will have in the future. Even in his work from the 1990s, he argues that the factors of

technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more significant in international power. (Nye, 1990).

3.2 Does educational diplomacy matter?

In her research, Carol Atkinson looks critically at student exchange programs as transnational channels of norms and ideas. She is interested in studying the impact of those transnational channels of norm diffusion. Her research is focused on understanding the conditions under which educational exchanges might serve as a mechanism whereby democratic countries might help in the so-called ‘‘battle of ideas’’ with non-liberal forces.

Atkinson describes that this channel operates as it follows: The participants in the exchange experience, who may have little exposure to democratic norms and ideas, observe how people behave within a democratic system. Through that, they are able to acquire knowledge about how democracy functions, and learn what to expect from their own leaders and institutions. Consequently, these ideas travel across geographic borders when exchange participants return home. Once home, participants may hold their own government institutions accountable through overt actions such as protests. But more likely their influence is more subtle. Some participants may enter into government service and the ideas that had been learned abroad may be used to reform existing practices or political institutions (Atkinson, 2010: 2).

In her critical examination Atkinson points out that while exchanges are claimed to promote liberalization, there has been a little systematic empirical examination of their long-term effects across the international system. Thus she questions if all exchanges are equal in their potential to influence participants and examine the circumstances under which these exchanges can transmit norms and ideas more effectively. According to her research, the latter is possible under a number of specific contextual conditions. These conditions are (i) the depth and extent of social interactions between the exchange student and local populations, (ii) the extent to which the exchange student shares a sense of community or common identity with the local people with whom the social interactions occur, and (iii) whether the exchange student returns to the home country and attains a politically influential position. (Atkinson, 2010: 10)

Atkinson questions the extent to which exchange participants might exert influence in their own home countries varies greatly. She quotes researchers who have noted that for students who have studied abroad the political conditions in the home country, as well as age and experience, determine the

extent to which returnees are influential. The theoretical argument and empirical evaluation presented in her research confirm Nye's belief in the importance of the person-to-person level of interaction. The results of her research demonstrate that exchange students return home with a more positive view of the country in which they studied: "Research has consistently shown that exchange students return home with a more positive view of the country in which they studied and the people with whom they interacted. Frequently after returning home, they try to use the knowledge gained during their time abroad to improve the situation in their home country." (Atkinson, 2010: 14)

This, however, doesn't immediately transform former exchange students into a soft power resource. It is possible that student exchanges do have a positive impact on governments' propensity to respect citizens' rights of movement, speech, religion, political participation, and workers' rights, which are the categories that she looks into, but only if those exchanges were conducted in an environment where the exchange students are willing to listen. Educational exchanges promote the transition to more liberal political institutions in authoritarian states. She confirms the view of Nye that limiting the participation of authoritarian states, the United States as her case study, restricts its ability to build further its soft power across the international system. Over the long term, engaging with potential political elites from authoritarian states through educational diplomacy, rather than excluding, is an opportunity to diffuse liberal ideas into some of the most democratically austere regions of the world. (Atkinson 2010: 23) She confirms the view that education is part of soft power.

The research Atkinson highlights the importance of context in the educational diplomacy between states. (EXAMPLES) The successful role of educational exchange students as a channel soft power is directly linked to the background of their host country as well as their future role within their home country. However, it is clear that they can act as agents of positive change towards liberalization given that some of the variables are met.

3.3 Relevance of educational exchange

The importance of exchange programs as channels of political influence is further investigated in the work of Giles Scott Smith. In his own words: "Why exchange programs? First, over the past sixty years, U.S. Foreign Service officers have consistently reported on the value of exchanges such as the IVLP and the Fulbright Program as well as technical assistance and training, and have viewed them as one of the most effective means to influence opinion abroad." (Smith, 2008: 174)

Smith studies the value that can be gained from educational diplomacy by analyzing their impact within various theoretical positions in international relation theories. His work attempts to investigate the instrumentality of educational exchanges within IR theories. His claim is that the social scientific behaviorist research that was accumulated following the Second World War allowed the basis for the scholar research of the political implications of public diplomacy, soft power, and exchanges. Furthermore, the post-WWII reality was built on institutions which emphasized on the creation of mutual understanding and cooperation. Smith highlights the building of "mutual understanding" as one of the broader and long-term effects of educational diplomacy. This "mutual understanding" refers to the idea that a greater appreciation of other points of view can only contribute to a reduction in sources of conflict and a recognition of the universally beneficial results from the interdependence of peoples and the interchange of ideas, goods, and service (Smith, 2008: 176).

In order for this mutual understanding to be built Smith similarly to Atkinson Smith identifies contextual factors which determine the extent to which the success of the educational exchanges will serve as a soft power instrument. First one is the importance of context. As suggested by Nye culture, part of which education is highly contextual. Different cultural environments will provide very different outcomes if the same model of cultural communication is applied in each setting as if it were universally applicable. The research of Smith indicates that an educational exchange model which works well in Western Europe and Latin America could be less effective and can even have negative effects in cultures where status, hierarchy, and tradition are resistant to outside intervention, such as in Asia (Smith, 2008: 180).

Secondly, Smith identifies "the saturation approach" which has to do with the question of scale. This is the case when educational exchanges are used on a large scale to fuel certain reorientation of a given society. This saturation approach is an opposition to Nye's understanding that culture and educational diplomacy is aimed at the elites. This approach has been applied to West Germany after World War II and to a lesser extent to Japan. However, as noted previously, such examples are highly contextual and they shouldn't be taken as models to be applied elsewhere. The conditions under which those two exchanges simply cannot be re-created.

The democratization of access to information via information communication technology (ICT) channels in the last decades has necessarily had an impact on the efficacy of exchanges. Nowadays, everyone has the possibility to research the intent of a certain exchange or scholarship program. Nevertheless, the human factors remains a decisive element of the exchange experience. The importance of

firsthand experience and personal contact shouldn't be underestimated despite the rise of technology. (Smith, 2008: 190)

In conclusion, whatever the political intent of educational exchange programs is, it can never be said that they constitute a decisive factor in terms of their political effect. Too many variables are included to make such a claim plausible. By introducing the various contexts and factors which determine the efficiency of educational diplomacy as soft power tool a greater understanding of its limitations and capabilities was introduced. All the authors agree that there is a possibility of a creation for a positive effect with regards to values such as respect citizens' rights of movement, speech, religion, political participation, and workers' rights when students participating in educational exchanges are exposed to these circumstances. Nonetheless, there are many variables that need to be considered before it can be concluded that these new values have impacted the participants of the exchange. As noted by Atkinson the success of being exposed to those values will only occur if those exchanges were conducted in an environment where "ability to listen" exists. To a certain extent overlaps with the concept of mutual understanding. This makes the favorable outcomes educational exchange as soft power tool dependent on a sort of Catch 22. The assumption is that the more educational exchanges are conducted the more mutual understanding will be built. However, the mutual understanding can be established only if both sides are willing to listen, which is only enhanced if more exchanges are conducted. This loophole in a combination with the bias gap between quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis when measuring the outcomes makes it hard to evaluate the consequent political effects of exchange programs.

Regardless of the ambiguity that surrounds the measurement and categorization of the impact of educational diplomacy the following case study will demonstrate that states investing in the development of soft power by providing evidence of the increased attention to building a legislative framework that supports exchanges. The successive analysis will look at the factors which have determined this historical development of the establishment of "people-to-people" dialogue in the case of the relations between EU and China.

4. Case study: the EU and China “people-to-people” dialogue

What are the factors that stir the EU-China “soft power” bilateral relation? The following part of the text will firstly discuss the tradition that EU and China have with soft power and educational exchanges. What makes this case study worth looking at is that the EU and China have managed to establish a "soft power" framework that is built on category of practice. Educational exchanges and People-to-people have been used as means to calibrate the EU-China relation which evolved from idealistic in the early 2000s to more concrete and clearer sighted. After that a brief introduction of the architecture of the EU-China relationship will be provided and data about the actual growth, should such is to be found, of “people-to-people” diplomacy will be introduced. Finally a conclusion will summarize the findings and take a final look at what are the challenges that the EU-China bilateral relation is facing today.

4.1 The EU historical experience with Soft Power and Educational Exchanges

"No country is big or strong enough to face the world of today alone: we can do it only together if we want to do it effectively"¹³

The words of the High Representative and Vice President (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini in front the European Institute University in Florence in May 2018 summarize the tendency that was described

¹³ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/44432/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-european-university-institute%E2%80%99s_en

earlier in this paper about the interconnectedness of today's world. She further used the metaphor to describe the interconnectivity as the chain is as strong as the weakest of its rings and only if governments give up the "I win/you lose" approach the shared issues that the world is challenged with today can be solved.

This attitude is closely connected with the history of the emergence of the European union. Since its establishment the European community has some unique features which explain the long tradition and appreciation that EU has for soft power. The use of soft power and the concept of liberal institutionalism and mutual understanding behind it has been central for the creation of the common European space.

The aftermath of World War II saw much of Europe devastated. Approximately 36.5 million Europeans had died in the conflict, 19 million of them civilians. The city destruction, refugee camps, infant mortality and orphans are only parts of the problems that the Europeans were faced with after the war.¹⁴ It was in this context that the founding fathers of Europe envisioned the creation of what was to become the European Union determined to prevent another. In the words of the Declaration: to make war between historic rivals France and Germany "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible"¹⁵.

The sentence from the beginning of the Schuman declaration says "World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it" reflects of the value of non-coercive methods that founding Europe saw. In her speech Mogherini in refers to this ability to overcome old conflicts and wounds as "the European way". This doesn't mean that military means are not needed but never sufficient alone. The European way is described as the effective way to peace and security as:

"Soft and hard power together, smartly and carefully mixed, with local ownership as the compass for any decision."¹⁶

For the past seven decades the EU has grown in size and it has absorbed waves of new democracies. The existence and expansion of the EU is built on the promotion of shared values, such as human rights, freedom of speech and prosperity. A major way of dissemination of European values and principles is done through methods of soft power such as cultural exchanges within the EU, which is

¹⁴ https://www.nato.int/60years/doc/7-nac/NATO_History.pdf

¹⁵ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en

¹⁶ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/44432/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-european-university-institute's_en

seen as a key element for the promotion of EU cohesion. The often cited words attributed to Jean Monnet indicated that he would have preferred to start with culture rather than with an economic partnership¹⁷.

One of the most successful examples of international cooperation in terms of movement of people between the Member states is the Erasmus program. It was the establishment in the 1980s, when the process of integration has reached a still stand. Later this period would be described as "Eurosclerosis", a term coined by the German economist Herbert Giersch. (Giersch, 1985)

The EC increasingly lacked support especially among younger people, which constitute a generation born two decades after the end of the Second World War. Turnout to the European elections has been falling steadily since the first elections in 1979, indicating increased apathy about the Parliament despite its increase in power over that period (Reif, Schmitt, 1980). The European leaders were afraid that the European citizens might sooner or later start questioning the EC's existence and the whole purpose of the process of integration. That's why the European Council meeting at Fontainebleau in June 1984 marked a turning point in this critical period. (Feyen, 2013)

The ultimate aim was creating "A People's Europe" as the headline of the meeting's conclusion suggested. The Committee was composed by Member State's representatives and chaired by the Italian MEP Pietro Adonnino. The committee suggested to the European Council to establish a cross-frontier cooperation aimed at enabling students, to pursue their studies in a Member State other than their own. Adonnino Reports whose proposal on the "People's Europe" would lead many EC actions and finally it would achieve its goal to foster closer proximity of the European Communities and their citizens. In the end the program received support and it would soon become the most visible of all EC initiatives undertaken to foster the creation of a People's Europe. To this day the success story of Erasmus continues. (Feyen, 2013)

The overall emphasis of EU diplomacy remains on soft tools, based on mutual bilateral agreements, but examples such as the Balkan crisis of the 1990s and the current crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are painful reminders that diplomacy has its limitations and it sometimes requires a combination of soft and hard power to be effective.

4.2 China: Soft Power and Educational exchanges

¹⁷*Si c'était à refaire, j'aurais commencé par la culture*' was first used by Hélène Ahrweiler when she made her acceptance speech as chancellor of the Universities of Paris in 1988, adding that this was something Jean Monnet could have said.

"We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's messages to the world."¹⁸

The words of President Xi Jinping in 2014 only confirmed the strategy which was started by his predecessor the President Hu Jintao. In his report to the Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2007 Jintao said that the Chinese "We must keep to the orientation of advanced socialist culture, bring about a new upsurge in socialist cultural development, stimulate the cultural creativity of the whole nation, and enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests, enrich the cultural life in Chinese society and inspire the enthusiasm of the people for progress."¹⁹

This line of government policy was new for the Chinese state and it was something that Nye didn't foresee in his book about Soft power in 2004. He did not take China's soft power into account and his discussions of Asia's soft power are combined in the few pages. He describes Chinese soft power in comparison with Japan, as the latter "has more potential soft power resources than any other Asian country," an amount comparable with India. He concluded that "But the real promise for China and India still lies in the future". (Nye, 2004, 83-9)

The period of the last 150 years is known in the Chinese society as the "century of humiliation". It transformed China from a role-model for its neighbours to a humble imitator. At that time through the movement of people and ideas the Western countries became Chinese source of inspiration, from technology to institution to political philosophy. (Gill, Huang, 2014)

China has a long tradition of education and culture, which once helped to create a united and strong Chinese empire and spread China's influence across its borders. More than 3,000 years witnessed the spread of Chinese civilisation to neighbouring countries, including Korea, Japan and Vietnam. (Gill, Huang, 2014) However, this Chinese status-quo crumbled soon after the first conflicts with the Westerners started in the 19th century. China's closed-door society was transformed by the Westerners' technological superiority, which was demonstrated in their military victories against the Chinese in the Opium wars. As Ting-Tee Kuo noted, "since European military power appeared to depend on technology, the adoption of this technology was regarded as the primary task." (Gill, Huang, 2014: 106)

¹⁸ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-06-16/china-s-soft-power-push>

¹⁹ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229611.htm>

As direct result of this policy new schools emerged, starting with schools that trained translators for Chinese diplomats. In the late 19th century an unprecedented step was taken – sending students abroad. . In 1872, the first group of 30 Chinese youths was sent to the United States to study. By 1875, the number of students in the United States had increased to 120. Initially, these students had planned to study there for fifteen years, and were strongly advised to study military and industrial engineering in order to master the foreign technology of guns and ships. The Qing dynasty rulers also sent smaller group of Fuzhou school graduates to Europe, including Great Britain and France. Some of them were trained to be future ship captains, who could operate modern warships being ordered in Europe. Those first small scale programs produced a number of distinguished scientists, diplomats, and captains, but this was not to be the defining element of the learning from the West. The final collapse of the dynasty in 1911 pushed “learning from the West” to a new level: the mere emulation of Western technology and institutions gave way to the study of Western “isms.” A variety of “isms,”—including anarchism, liberalism, and socialism—made deep inroads into Chinese intellectual life, which in turn gave birth to various political parties, including the Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Communist Party (CCP). (Gill, Huang, 2014)

After the end of the WWII and the civil war in 1949 the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was established. Naturally due to the communistic nature of the regime educational exchanges were now focused towards the Soviet Union. But the Sino-Soviet split of 1950s made this exchange boom short-lived. What followed was the Chinese self-imposed isolation in the 1960s, but after the Deng Xioping initiation and his policy for opening a new renaissance for the Chinese educational exchanges was to follow.

In 1978, the Chinese government resumed the massive overseas study program, and more than 480 government-funded Chinese students were sent abroad that year. With the passage of time, the government’s control of self-funded overseas study was also relaxed. After 1980, Chinese students were allowed to accept scholarships provided by foreign institutions and individuals. “Studying abroad” became a huge phenomenon in Chinese society, as hundreds and thousands Chinese students pursued academic degrees overseas. From 1978 to 1989, about 60,000 government-funded students were sent out, including 20,000 graduates and 1,000 undergraduates. During the same time, the number of self-funded overseas students was over 20,000. Hu Yaobang, former General Secretary of the CCP, announced in 1983 that “we’ve sent nearly 20,000 students to study abroad; such a large scale has never been seen in China’s history.” The purpose of sending out so many students was simple: “to learn advanced science, advanced technology, and advanced managerial skills in order to facilitate China’s ‘Four Modernizations.’” But Western ideas also fueled the students’ movements that occurred in 1986

and 1989. “Learning from the West” was so strong that the Tiananmen incident did not derail the state-run overseas study program even though the program was somewhat scaled back. (Gill, Huang, 2014)

China’s reputation in the West suffered by the way the government dealt with the Tiananmen protests. In the decade that followed the Tiananmen incident, the country’s foreign policy was focused on how to break away from the international isolation. The period was marked by heightened domestic insecurity and international turbulence. (Gill, Huang 2014). This could explain why in 2004 Nye did not foresee the rise of soft power influence of China.

4.3 Towards an “People-to-People” dialogue between China and the EU

The period of the early 2000s is characterised as a period of early optimism between the EU and China. In the White Paper on China's EU policy released by the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2003 it can be described as highly aspirational relation. The White Paper depicts the potential between the two as boundless: "The European Integration process is irreversible" and the "EU will play an increasingly important role in both regional and international affairs"²⁰

One can see the 2003 and 2006 documents as marking something approaching a high tide of idealism about how the EU might be a transformative partner for China. In this period the Chinese government has established people-to-people dialogues with various partners, including with the United Kingdom through the China-UK High-level People-to-People Dialogue, China-Russia Cultural Cooperation Committee²¹ and the United States through the annual US-China Consultation on People-to-People Exchange (CPE)²². Nevertheless, the P2P dialogue between China and the EU is unique in its structure and scope.

In 2003, an EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership was launched²³, followed in October 2006 by a Communication entitled ‘EU-China: Closer Partners, Growing Responsibilities’ spelling out a new vision for cooperation with China based increasingly on mutual gains²⁴. The People-to-People

²⁰ <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20050817/index.htm>

²¹ <http://sino-german-dialogue.tongji.edu.cn/ger/28/55/c8230a75861/page.htm>

²² <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/258141.htm>

²³ http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2005/september/tradoc_124565.pdf

²⁴ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, “EU-China: Closer partners, growing responsibilities,” (2006), accessed COM (2006) 632 inal.

dialogue (P2P) was officially launched during the 14th EU-China Summit, which was held in Beijing on 14 February 2012. The People-to-People (P2P) Dialogue was not added to the two existing pillars as an additional dialogue but was conceived as the third pillar of the EU-China Strategic Partnership, alongside the Political Dialogue (Pillar 1) and the Economic and Sectoral Dialogue (Pillar 2) (see Annex Table 1). The P2P has several layers, including a High Level Dialogue (HPPD), sectoral dialogues in the field of culture and education, as well as a round table with the European Economic and Social Committee, as roundtable that cuts across Pillar 2 and Pillar 3 (see Annex Table 1).

This means that the third pillar aims to expand into new sectors, tourism, for example, which is currently covered by the second pillar, the expected level of interaction and possible horizontal nature give the P2P dialogues their main specificity. Although unique in its conception, P2P is not new. Indeed, policy dialogues on culture, education, training, mobility and youth, were already in place prior to 2012 and were then placed under the P2P umbrella. This status recognises both the depth of the current relationship as well as the high potential for increasing cooperation in various sectors.

A result of the accumulation of new experiences, along with new disappointments towards each other resulted in the issuance by the Chinese and the EU respectively in 2014 and 2016 of two new, revised high level documents.

In the 2014 White Paper by a further demonstration of the new Chinese mindset towards the EU: language on investment and trade, on economic cooperation and trade, nance, urbanisation, education, sustainability, and technical cooperation were all granted discrete sessions. But before these, there was a large section on political cooperation. The stress on reciprocity was made at the start – but on China’s terms, not the EU’s: ‘China stands ready to work with the EU to better align China’s comprehensive deepening of reform with the EU’s reform and readjustment, draw upon each other’s reform experience, share reform dividends, jointly improve the ability of reform and governance, and actively participate in the formulation and reform of the rules of global governance’²⁵

In the new strategy of the EU towards China published in 2016 special emphasis was put on the enhancement of the people-to-people dialogue. In the new Joint Communication to the European Parliament and Council issued by the European Commission on 22nd June 2016 entitled ‘Elements for a New EU Strategy on China’ all the more striking. In some ways, it is a response both to the Chinese assertive demands on the 2014 paper. In the Joint Communication it is stated that the EU-China relation should be broadened in scope, and new initiatives identified to encourage a greater pluralism in

²⁵ http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wjzcs/t1143406.shtml

contacts, while the people-to-people contacts should be mainstreamed throughout EU-China relations and the dialogue on mobility and mobility to be strengthened:

“The EU's Partnership Instrument, Development Co-operation Instrument, Horizon 2020, "Erasmus +" and other relevant sources of EU funding should be used more strategically to promote EU interests concerning China. Public diplomacy should be boosted line with EU priorities. Cultural exchanges and co-operation should also be further encouraged.”²⁶

Back in time another channel of major investments followed in 2004 in establishing Confucius Institutes and Cultural Centres around the world. By late 2005, 32 Confucius Institutes had been set up by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 23 countries to provide Chinese language and cultural resources to host countries, today there are more than 500 in 142 countries²⁷. Like the British Council, the Goethe Institut and the Institut Française, the network of Confucius Institutes has a political agenda: to present a kinder and gentler image of China to the outside world. (Gill, Huang, 2014)

Another one of the most important aims in achieving the improvement of the P2P dialogue is to align the EU and Chinese credit systems. By focusing on the outcomes of the learning process and the workload of students, which might imply to move forward the reform process of the present credit systems in China. By that it would be achieved the quality assurance mechanisms in China and the EU to facilitate recognition and mobility.²⁸

Furthermore, the initiative of ‘One Belt, One Road’, a symbolic route bringing Eurasia back as a crucial territory, opens the opportunity to expand people-to-people exchanges with China and to bring in new countries as key actors of EU-Asia cooperation. The ongoing review of the EU-China 2020 Agenda for Cooperation provides the ideal framework to the EU and China for re-discussing the role of people-to-people contacts in the wider context of EU-China relations.

4.4 Educational exchanges data

The current situation is that these exchanges are indeed growing in numbers. Extensive studies on the EU-China educational diplomacy was published in 2011. It is presented as a Joint study between the European Commission and the Ministry of Education in China and the study was jointly carried out

²⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52016JC0030>

²⁷ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-10/07/content_32950016.htm

²⁸ <http://tuningchina.org>

by two research teams, one based in Renmin University of China and one led by GHK Consulting (Brussels). Both teams followed a similar methodological approach consisting of a combination of desk research and stakeholder consultation at EU and national level, to collect the data for the research. Namely they looked at three types of data: statistical data on learning mobility between the EU and China (incoming and outgoing mobility) provided by national authorities; information on the main policies and strategies in place at EU and national level to promote learning mobility and cooperation between the EU and China and lastly qualitative data on learning mobility (e.g. main incentives and obstacles) through direct consultation with students, academic staff and staff from higher education institution (HEI) international cooperation departments. (Matheu, Yan, 2012)

According to the research of Matheu and Yan and their collected data by the national Ministries in the EU suggest there were between 118,700 and 119,638 Chinese students studying in the EU in 2010— about six times more than in 2000. Based on the available data in each Member State, the highest number of Chinese students were found in the UK (40% of total), France (23%) and Germany (20%), followed by the Netherlands (4%), Italy, Ireland, Sweden (3% respectively), Finland, Cyprus and Denmark (between 1% and 2%). The UK accounted for 65% of all entrants from China in the EU in 2008, followed by France (10%) and Germany (9%) (Matheu, Yan, 2012).

Mobility flows are influenced by a variety of factors of a complex, multidimensional nature. They are defined by number of push and pull factors. One of the strongest push factors include the growing prosperity of China; the limited capacity of Chinese HEIs to meet domestic demand for tertiary education, the high value placed on knowledge and overseas education in China, and the fact that more and more families can afford to pay for education abroad.

On the other hand, a number of ‘pull’ factors are driving the study destination choices of Chinese students. Findings indicate that Chinese students will certainly continue to go to Europe, due to the perception of the high quality of its education and living environment; however new ‘host’ countries, in particular in Asia, will attract large shares of students, increasing the global competition for attracting Chinese students. Countries’ positioning to attract mobile students will need to be supported by thoughtful strategies and efficient marketing. (Bislev, 2017).

Another remarkable trend is that China is striving to become a host country for international students: its capacity to provide higher education for its own students and to host international students. Although it is faced with a lot of challenges such as the fact that the student population in China continues to exceed domestic capacity. Current EU-China mobility flows are still overwhelmingly unbalanced. With about 22,500 European students in China in 2009, the outbound/inbound ratio was 1:5 for the

EU as a whole. However, outward mobility to China is now steadily increasing: the number of EU students studying in China has nearly doubled in the past five years, and trends suggest that outward mobility of EU students and scholars to China will further increase in the coming years, boosted by a growing number of cooperation programmes, the availability of courses and degrees in English and the improving competitiveness of Chinese research and teaching at elite universities. (Matheu, Yan, 2012).

5. Conclusion

The current context of global international affairs is increasingly complex, multi-dimensional and interdependent. To a large extent, this was allowed due to the digital revolution which made instant communication available, eroding national borders and allowing citizens to mobilize in new ways. Such bridges across political divides create new challenges and opportunities in equal measure. These challenges require collective action and international cooperation towards innovative and collective solutions.

From the introduced analysis it is clear that soft power exists as a potent foreign policy tool especially in terms of IR theories such as cosmopolitan democracy and liberal institutionalism. The relations between the EU and China in combination with the previously mentioned theoretical considerations describe the increased tendency of the use of P2P tools such as educational exchanges. The increased data of educational flow between the two draws attention to this channel of soft power.

The growing importance of China has changed the EU-China relation since the 2000s. Soft power provides an opportunity to shape the way the country is perceived and to enhance the Chinese image in bilateral and multilateral frameworks. Moreover, China has a long way to go to become a great educational power, still catching up with Western countries. China's ambition to transform itself from a global factory to a high quality education is dictated by a number of internal factors due to the transformation with which the Chinese society is faced with. The rise of China's 'soft diplomacy' resources such as education will only become fully successful when China fully addresses the changes it needs to undergo, both internally and through actions on the global scene.

On the other hand, educational diplomacy and soft power measures are mutually beneficial for both, while both are aiming to promote their soft power appeal internationally. Through the framework of their Strategic Partnership, both China and the EU enhance their global image. From the EU perspective, soft diplomatic resources contribute to spreading EU principles and values as well as economic

interests. Furthermore, in an era of US-China clashes the role of Europe as a mediator emerges ever more important.

One of the main challenges in political plan could be Being's friendship with dictators in the developing world, which creates a legitimacy problem and therefore costs "soft power". As Nye has pointed out, states whose ideas are closer to global norms, which now is emphasized liberalism, pluralism and autonomy, can generate more soft power. On the EU's side, the main challenge remains the development of a coherent public diplomacy policy, with a comprehensive diplomatic toolbox, which would also include soft diplomatic tools. EU is still divided between the interests of individual Member States and European institutions, with China often looking for opportunities to 'divide and rule'. This would require further efforts to rally round Member States and improve inter-institutional arrangements between the Commission and the European External Action Service and thereby ensure the coherence of EU external policies.

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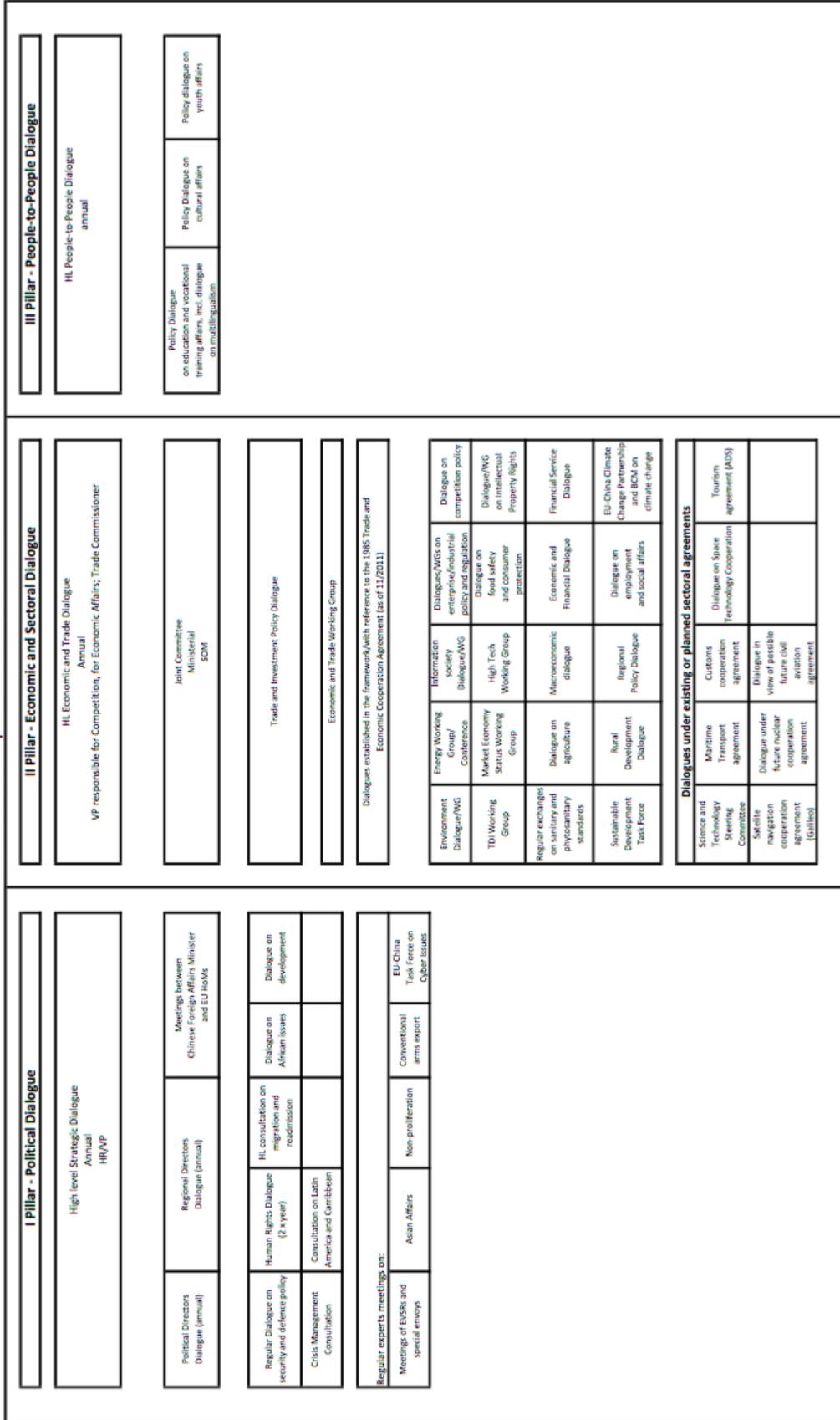
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7. Annex: Table 1

EU-China Dialogue Architecture – main elements*

Summit Annual

Presidents of the European Council and Commission



Source: European External Action Service

Date: August 2012

* This diagram is not exhaustive. The scope, nature and number of dialogues changes regularly