



INDEPENDENT STUDY

**AN ANALYSIS OF CHINA'S SOFT POWER DIPLOMACY
TOWARDS THAILAND IN THE 21ST CENTURY**



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**IS Title: An Analysis of China's Soft Power Diplomacy toward Thailand
in the 21st Century**

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requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Peace Studies and Diplomacy**

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ABSTRACT

"Soft power" is an important issue in the field of contemporary international politics. "Soft power" is "the ability to get expected results by letting others do what they want to do", which is embodied in a country's "culture and values, social system, development model, lifestyle, and ideology". In essence, "soft power" belongs to the broad cultural category, so it is an important part of a country's comprehensive national strength.

The qualitative research was conducted by documentary research method and in-depth interview, aiming to study China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand in the 21st century. The documentary research collected the online and offline documents from the reviewing on the reliable data and information, selecting from the theories and related research. This research was also conducted in Bangkok, Thailand, in order to obtain the research results. The six respondents were selected for primary data collection from the in-depth interview: three from china's diplomatic expertise and three from Thailand's diplomatic expertise, who have experience in diplomacy for the past 10 years.

Based on the result of this study, the researcher focuses on China's soft power foreign policy in the 21st century functions and its impact in Thailand. This study analyzed and discussed the research results on the economic, political, educational and social and cultural exchanges between Thailand and China since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1975. Thailand and China has replaced cultural exchanges as their country's main diplomatic means of cultural

soft power. The relationship with hard power can consolidate the theoretical basis of soft power diplomacy in order to analyze the basis of China's soft power diplomacy toward Thailand. Therefore, the soft power is another form of power that people obey without coercion or counter measures. It can inspire others to adjust their behavior consciously and voluntarily. China's soft power diplomacy with Thailand is based on diplomacy, economic relations, trade, and education. Further analysis of the areas involved in the operation of China's soft power diplomacy with Thailand is in politics the actual effects and significance achieved in the fields of diplomacy, social-cultural tourism, education and media cooperation.

Keywords: Soft Power Diplomacy, China's Diplomacy, Thailand, 21st Century.



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DEDICATION

This independent study is dedicated to the promoters of soft power diplomacy for the peaceful diplomatic relations between China and Thailand.



DECLARATION

I, Mubaruka Hamza, do hereby declare that this research is entirely my work and that it is original unless specific acknowledgements state otherwise. I have done this independent study by myself, under the close supervision of an advisor.

Signature.....

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Date6...../.....June...../.....2025.....

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Date.....6...../.....June...../.....2025.....



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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definitions
AC	ASIAN Communist
CPC	Communist Party of China
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IR	International Relation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PRC	People's Republic of China
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
TICA	Thailand International Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
EEC	Eastern Economic Corridor
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
FTA	Free Trade Area

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of Research

Diplomacy is an inevitable product of the progress of human society. It is a rational means for countries to settle disputes, promote cooperation, and seek development. After the end of the Second World War, with the development of economic globalization, the exchanges between countries have reached an unprecedented height in both depth and breadth and the diplomatic environment has also undergone tremendous changes. The concept of modern diplomacy is no longer just an activity between the governments of independent countries in the traditional sense the participation in diplomatic activities is no longer confined to the scope of government officials and political elites. The public plays an increasingly important role in the country's political life. The public has become the main participants in diplomatic activities from passive recipients in the form of organizations, companies, and even individuals, and this kind of public participation plays an increasingly important role in diplomacy. China is the largest developing country in the world. Over the past 30 years of reform and opening-up, China's national strength and hard power have been continuously enhanced, and the distance between China and developed countries has gradually narrowed. China has made remarkable achievements in economic and social development. With the enhancement of China's military strength, people's living standards have been significantly improved. At the same time, China's soft power is unexpectedly enhanced. China's "soft power" has expanded globally, especially in its close neighbor ASEAN and Thailand. In a world with 4 competitive superpowers, China, as a potential power, has increasingly emphasized the use of soft power in international relations. Thailand is a close neighbor of China and a vacuum zone of great powers. Naturally, it has become the first choice for China to implement soft power. "Soft power" is a new concept of international relations. The status of soft power in current international relations is increasing. In the years of exchanges between China and Thailand, soft power has actually been well utilized and embodied. Now, China Thailand relations are in the best period in history. Of course, this is also closely related to China's soft power diplomacy thought and practice.

At present, China's development and construction of soft power in Thailand is a relatively prominent and eye-catching focus. Therefore, the study of China's soft power construction in Thailand has practical and theoretical significance. The practical significance is reflected in: In

July 2009, at the eleventh meeting of diplomatic missions abroad in Beijing, the former Chinese President Hu Jintao emphasized that it is necessary to strengthen the soft power foreign policy and carry out various forms of foreign cultural exchange activities. Spread the excellent Chinese culture. In November 2012, the current Chinese President Xi Jinping clearly stated in the report of the 18th National Congress that we should strengthen soft power diplomacy. Strengthening soft diplomacy is an inevitable development of China's diplomacy, and implementing public diplomacy in Thailand is China's strengthening of international public diplomacy in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the status quo of China's soft power development and to analyze a full understanding of China's soft power construction in Thailand, and a clear understanding of China's national image and Sino-Thai relations. (Tungkeunkunt, 2013) Therefore, this research intends to analyze the roles of China's soft power diplomacy toward Thailand in the 21st century in order to answer the research questions leading to conclude the research results and recommendations.

1.2 Research Questions

The independent study is designed to respond to the following research questions:

- 2.1.1 What is China soft power diplomacy in the 21st century towards Thailand?
- 2.1.2 What is China strongest soft power diplomacy function and its impact on Thailand?
- 2.1.3 How does china soft power diplomacy succeed and achievements in Thailand?

1.3 Research Objectives

- 1.3.1 To examine China's soft power diplomacy in the 21st century towards Thailand
- 1.3.2 To analyze China strongest soft power diplomacy and its impacts in Thailand.
- 1.3.3 To propose China's soft power diplomacy success and achievements in Thailand

1.4 Scope of Research

This research was scoped and carried out in Bangkok, Thailand in order to know about an analysis of China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand in the 21st century. Furthermore, this research is to conduct and explore the results of China's soft power diplomacy, function, and its impacts in Thailand in the 21st century.

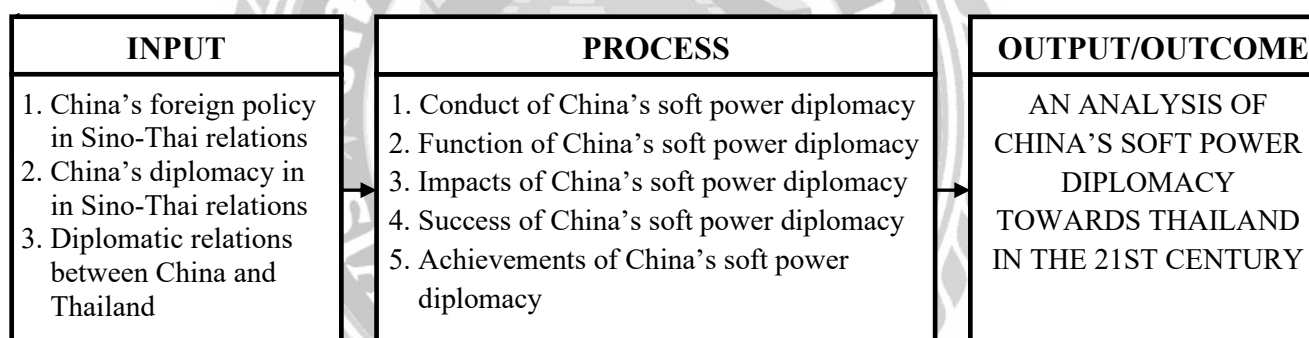
1.5 Research Methodology

This research applies qualitative research by using documentary research methods the secondary data was collected from various documents, such as academic books, research reports, and newspapers, and official documents of governments and international organizations. Furthermore, the primary data was collected by in-depth interview from. The collected data shall be used to analyze the China's soft power diplomacy toward Thailand in the 21st century. The researcher analyzes all collected data by using content analysis, logical analysis, and comparative analysis in order to make the research's conclusion, discussion and recommendations.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The researcher shall analyze the conduct of China's soft power diplomacy, its functions, and its impacts in Thailand in the 21st century, as well as its success and achievements in Thailand, as shown in the following Diagram 1.1.

Diagram 1.1: Conceptual Framework of Research



Source: Researcher, 2025.

This conceptual framework is required to guide the independent study of the China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand, identifying the main elements and interaction that explain how China's non-coercive influence operate in the global environment. The paradigm enabling to examine how several dimension of soft power: culture, education, economy, and technology interact with Thailand's domestic and foreign policy. It can be based on essential components that shape the conduct, function, impacts, success and achievements of the process of influence of China's soft power diplomacy, diplomatic strategy, public diplomacy and cultural exchange.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Public diplomacy means the complex of activities carried out or supported by a state and non-state actors, which focuses on influencing public opinion abroad with the aim of reaching or promoting a certain foreign policy goal of any countries.

China's diplomacy means the diplomacy of China based on maintaining friendships and peaceful relations with all countries around the world. As a super power nation, China adopted foreign policy by using soft power and hard power for making friends, playing several cards, building up global networks, which are all about mutual interest and together contribute to global peace, security and prosperity.

Soft power means the ability to influence other nations through persuasion and attraction rather than through force. This influence is rooted in culture, the arts, and science. In diplomacy, soft power is cultivated through education, science, public, and digital diplomacy. Soft power is the ability to affect other nations to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment. A country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, values and policies.

Soft power diplomacy means the ability to influence other nations through persuasion and attraction rather than through coercion or force that is hard power.

1.8 Expected Benefits of Research

- 1.8.1 To know the China's soft power diplomacy in the 21st century towards Thailand;
- 1.8.2 To obtain the analysis of the results of China's soft power diplomacy in the 21st century towards Thailand;
- 1.8.3 To recommend the China's soft power diplomacy success and achievements in Thailand.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

In the study of this independent study on “An Analysis of China’s Soft Power Diplomacy toward Thailand in the 21st Century”, the researcher has collected all related literature and research for literature review before continuing to undertake the data collection and the data analysis, as well as research findings, conclusion and recommendations. This chapter reviews the existing literature to study the conceptual theory of soft power, the conceptual theory of public diplomacy, the demography’s roles in China’s soft power Diplomacy in Thailand, and the rules-based international order. The researcher will undertake a literature review on the conceptual theories related to Cambodia’s diplomacy in the balance of powers between China and the United States as follows:

2.1 Conceptual Theory of Soft Power

Soft power is a hot issue in the field of contemporary international politics. The concept of “soft power” was first proposed by the famous contemporary American political scientist Joseph Nye in his book *Doomed Leadership: Changes in the Nature of American Power*. Nye further enriched and developed the concept of “soft power” in a series of essays, including “The Nature of Power in the Changing World” and “Soft Power”. Joseph Nye also systematically and in-depth demonstrated the concept of “soft power” in his monographs “Can America Lead the World” and “The Way to Success in World Politics”. On the basis of “qualitative” analysis and elaboration, necessary “quantified” analysis and demonstration of “soft power” should be carried out. The concept of “soft power” has attracted the attention of all walks of life in the United States. American scholars and politicians have written or commented on this concept and related theories. Although some scholars such as Paul Kennedy have a negative attitude towards the concept of “soft power”, it is undeniable that the theory of “soft power” has been recognized by more and more people in the post-Cold War period.

In 1990, Joseph Nye published *Soft Power* in “Political Science Quarterly” and “Foreign Policy” and other magazines. He believes that soft power is “obtaining the capabilities we need by attracting rather than threatening or bribing others. It is based on our culture, our political ideas, and our policies. After the incident, Nye published the book *The Confusion of American Hegemony*, criticizing arbitrary actions that would seriously damage the soft power of

the United States, and called on the government to learn to define its own interests while taking into account the interests of the world, so as to ensure that "soft power" can maintain long-term world leadership. (Nye, 2004).

In 2004, Joseph Nye, in his new book "Soft Power: The Way to Success in World Politics", he believed that soft power is the ability to achieve what you want by attracting others instead of forcing them. It is derived from a culture that can attract other countries, political values consistent with words and deeds, and a foreign policy with legitimacy and moral authority. In this book, Nye also pointed out that due to the improper foreign policy adopted by the Bush administration; the soft power of the United States has fallen sharply after the Iraq War. However, despite this, the soft power of the United States is still second to none and dominates the world. In addition, he also pointed out that China's soft power resources are rapidly expanding and may pose a threat to US soft power at some point in the future, but the current Chinese soft power resources are still far behind the United States and Europe (Nye, 2004).

"Rethinking Soft Power" was published in "Foreign Policy" magazine Nye (1990) briefly defined this concept as changing the behavior of others through attraction rather than coercion or inducement, so that the ability of the party to get what it wants. Joseph Nye gave a profound explanation and analysis of the connotation of "soft power". In order to demonstrate and explain "soft power", Joseph Nye (1990) first defined "national power" as the ability to influence and achieve its strategic goals. The specific ways to achieve it include: threat (usually called "big stick"), temptation usually called carrots attraction (often called free choice). According to Joseph Nye's concept, sticks and carrot constitute the "hard power" of a country.

The hard power can be defined as the ability to use military threats and economic temptations to drive people to do things they don't want to do. Joseph Nye "pointed out that the competition and cooperation between countries in the historical tradition and the competition and cooperation between countries during the Cold War mainly rely on hard power, that is, mainly rely on the country's economic strength, military strength, territory, population, and technology. Natural resources and combat capability is often the yardstick for testing great power" (Nye, 1990). However, Joseph Nye's view, after the end of the Cold War, countries in the world are in the process of maintaining, realizing and enhancing their fundamental interests 'The definition of power no longer emphasizes the extremely of prominent military power and conquest in the past and the Technology, education and economic growth are playing more and more important roles

in international power (Nye, 2015) Joseph Nye pointed out “Factors such as technology, education, and economic growth” which play important role in international power” refer to soft power diplomacy that is the ability to obtain expected results by letting others do what they want.

It can be seen that "soft power is a concept corresponding to "hard power" which is the ability to obtain expected goals through the attraction rather than force. In Joseph Nye's view, "soft power" can work by persuading others to obey or make them agree to norms or systems that can produce expected behaviors. This means that soft power can depend on the attractiveness of someone's idea or culture, it can also depend on the ability to set agenda through standards or system that shape the preferences of others (Nye, 2004). It can be seen that the soft power argued by Joseph Nye. It involves concepts in various fields such as a country social system, cultural resources, values, ideologies and development model.

Based on Joseph Nye's definition and analysis of "soft power", it is not difficult to find that "soft power" generally includes the following aspects: **first**, the attraction of culture; **second**, the appeal of ideology and ideas, **third**, the ability to formulate international rules and establish international mechanisms; **fourth**, appropriate foreign policy; and **fifth**, the international image, the charm and affinity of national leaders sixth the cohesion of the country and the nation. Since economic and trade exchange between countries can not only spread culture but also directly enhance a country's influence, economic and trade relations themselves are also one of the important component of the soft power. From another perspective, "soft power manifests itself as external and internal, it is reflected in a country's international influence and charm internally, it is reflected in the cohesion and centripetal force of a country or nation.” (Li, & Hongtao, 2017).

China's proposal of soft power was later than that of the United States. China's foreign strategy and policies have undergone major changes. They have begun to build the country's cultural soft power and carry out the public diplomacy in order to enhance the foreign public understanding of China's conditions, policies, and values, and create more an objective and friendly public opinion environment improves China's international image. Men Honghua has made constructive thoughts on the importance of research on the significance of soft power, the meaning and core elements of soft power, the research methods of soft power, the evaluation of China's soft power, international comparisons, and the improvement strategy of China's soft power. The construction of a soft power theoretical system with “Chinese characteristics” has

laid a solid foundation and is an important phased achievement on the road of China's soft power theoretical research (McGiffert, 2009).

Professor Chen Zhengliang has conducted a comprehensive and systematic study on soft power issues, studying and expounding factors that affect China's "soft power" from multiple perspectives. He conducted a fully detailed study on the cultural attraction, international cohesion, social development model, national quality, international image charm, and the interaction between diplomatic activities and international mechanisms involved in soft power and proposed strengthening China's soft power. The relative measures of constructions (Chen, 2008). Therefore, China's soft power diplomacy in ongoing discourse on soft power, some scholars views China's traditional foreign policy as the obstacle to soft power promotion and also China's soft power policy will likely remain largely and primarily reactive, purposed at the combating the China focused on promoting the cultural soft power.

2.2 Conceptual Theory of Public Diplomacy

The concept of public diplomacy refers to statecraft activities and engagements beyond traditional diplomacy, predominantly cultural and informational, that are designed to inform, influence, and engage global publics in support of diplomacy and foreign policy objectives tied to national interests. Many scholars in the multiple disciplines, including political science, communications, public relations, and international studies, have produced a substantial body of literature since the modern introduction of the term in 1965. The first prominent usage of the phrase public diplomacy is attributed to Edmund Guillion, then dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University (Massachusetts, United States), who broke ground on the parameters of the field in a pre-digital era. The Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy was established at the Fletcher School as a tribute to the respected World War II war correspondent and news broadcaster at CBS who had become John F. Kennedy's chief public diplomat as Director of the United States Information Agency (USIA). The Murrow Center shifted the spotlight of diplomacy from within the corridors of ministries to the person on the street that had an opinion on foreign matters of state. Not only the influence of public attitudes was emphasized but also cross-border interaction of private groups and individuals and the agenda-setting role of the press in foreign policy formulation. In sum, public diplomacy concerns itself then as now with the flow of people, information, and ideas in an intercultural context (Wolf & Rosen, 2004, p. 3).

The theory of public diplomacy focuses on how nations can engage foreign audiences to build trust, foster cooperation, and influence perceptions, ultimately supporting their foreign policy objectives. It's a dynamic field, evolving with technological advancements and shifting global dynamics. The public diplomacy is a subfield of political science, diplomacy and international relations that involve study of the process and practice by which nation-states and other international actors engage global publics to serve their interests. It developed during the era of Cold War as an outgrowth of the rise of mass media and public opinion drivers in foreign policy management. The United States, in a bipolar ideological struggle with the Soviet Union, recognized that gaining public support for policy goals among foreign populations worked better at the times through the direct engagement than traditional diplomacy, often closed-door, government-to-government contact (Snow, 2020).

The public diplomacy is still not a defined academic field with an underlying theory, although its proximity to the originator of soft power, Joseph Nye, places it closer to the neoliberal school that emphasizes multilateral pluralistic approaches in international relations. The term is a normative replacement for the more pejorative-laden propaganda, centralizes the role of the civilian in international relations to elevate public engagement above the level of manipulation associated with government or corporate propaganda (Nye, 1990). The building mutual understanding among the actors involved is the value commonly associated with the public diplomacy outcomes of an exchange or cultural nature, along with information activities that prioritize the foreign policy goals and national interests of a particular state. In the mid-20th century, the public diplomacy's emphasis was less scholarly and more practical - to influence foreign opinion in competition with nation-state rivals (Snow, 2020). In the post-Cold War period, the United States in particular pursued market democracy expansion in the newly industrializing countries of the East.

The soft power, the negative and positive attraction that flows from an international actor's culture and behavior, became the favored term associated with public diplomacy. After 9/11 incidents in the United States, messaging and making a case for one's agenda to win the hearts and minds of a Muslim-majority public became predominant against the backdrop of a U.S.-led global war on terrorism and two active interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The public diplomacy was utilized in one-way communication campaigns such as the Shared Values Initiative of the United States' Department of State, which backfired when its target-country

audiences rejected the embedded messages as self-serving propaganda. In the 21st century, global civil society and its enemies are on the level of any diplomat or culture minister in matters of the public diplomacy. Narrative competition in a digital and networked era is much deeper, broader, and adversarial while the mainstream news media, which formerly set how and what we think about, no longer holds dominance over national and international narratives. Interstate competition has shifted to competition from non-state actors who use social media as a form of information and influence warfare in international relations. As disparate scholars and practitioners continue to acknowledge public diplomacy approaches, the research agenda will remain case-driven, corporate-centric (with the infusion of public relations), less theoretical, and more global than its Anglo-American roots (Snow, 2020).

As for the main components of public diplomacy, British historian Nicholas J. Cull, the most cited academic in the field, refers to listening as an imperative foundational skill in global approaches to public diplomacy, especially among industrialized democracies that place such a normative value on the power of the individual as an agent of change (Cull, 2019; Dobson, 2014; Martino, 2020). Listening is information gathering, most closely aligned with ongoing data collection to analyze and use to adjust a policy or its direction, and “overlaps with the covert realm of intelligence gathering” (Cull, 2019). Depending on budgets, organizations may have in-house research units that conduct surveys or they may commission market and government research on attitudes and opinions. This method of information gathering was a cottage industry in the first decade after 9/11 when over two dozen reports were released on the United States’ public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

Another primary component of public diplomacy, advocacy, is the direct appeal by presenting an idea or policy to global publics. It utilizes diplomatic outreach methods, including social media, press releases, management of websites, and other information tools, to tell one’s story to the world. Advocacy can include non-state actors’ attempts to influence state actors or other non-state actors. The Australian government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2011) refers to advocacy as a “process of communicating programs, policies or perspectives to target audiences to win their support. It is core business and is the responsibility of all DFAT officers.” Credibility, relevancy, and consistency in messaging are critical measures of success. The Fisher and Bröckerhoff (2008) spectrum of public diplomacy places advocacy or direct messaging at one end of the communications spectrum next to international broadcasting.

Advocacy approaches are usually shorter term, immediate, and closely tied to near-term policy goals. In the middle are located the more one-way cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange methods of influence. On the opposite end is the more two-way arena of listening, facilitation, and building longer-range relationships.

Advocacy can be technical or political, depending on the philosophy of the actor. Political advocates would argue in favor of outward-gazing regional expertise, a grasp of history and journalism principles and practice, and comparative culture in order to successfully reach foreign audiences. As USIA Director Edward R. Murrow told members of the Radio Television News Directors Association, “What we do is solely for export” (Snow, 2013). In contrast, Leo Bogart (1995) explains in *Cool Words, Cold War* that some public diplomacy actors view advocacy as more of a technical expertise, easily transferable from a domestic to an international audience. To those advocates, it “makes no difference whether an operator is writing an ad for soap, a movie script for ‘Sadie Smith in New Orleans,’ or a message for a foreign audience. A top officer of a large advertising agency or public relations firm is an ideal propaganda program executive” (Bogart, 1995). In 2001, when former Ogilvy & Mather and J. Walter Thompson advertising executive Charlotte Beers was nominated as the first post-9/11 assistant secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs in the U.S. President George W. Bush administration, then Secretary of State Colin Powell crowed about her skills in product management and their transfer readiness in selling Uncle Sam, the national personification nickname for the United States: “Well, guess what? She got me to buy Uncle Ben's rice and so there is nothing wrong with getting somebody who knows how to sell something” (Carlson, 2001; Lopez, 2001). Her government advertising Shared Values Initiative received strong criticism for targeting a global Muslim audience as a sole means to serve U.S. policy objectives - reducing anti-American tensions in the Muslim world - by offering video testimonials from “happy Muslims” living in the United States. In that context, the short-lived campaign was seen by some as a form of American propaganda disguised as sponsored media (Plaisance, 2005).

If listening is the first foundation of public diplomacy, then culture is its centerpiece. Cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy are overtly committed to enhancing a country's soft power. Edward Corse (2013) maintains that cultural diplomacy is the human kingdom's version of the animal kingdom's peacock tail. It can entice and put on display one's best features. Cultural diplomacy definitions vary as much as those of its parental sponsor, public diplomacy.

Mark (2010) defines it in almost military terms: “the deployment of aspects of a state’s culture in support of its foreign policy goals or diplomacy”; while Milton Cummings (2003) places it in a two-way context: “the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding.”

The last two components, exchanges and international broadcasting, are mainstays of public diplomacy across national governments (Seib, 2008). They are also often the least studied aspect of public diplomacy today (Sevin, Metzgar, & Hayden, 2019). In her May 2009 commencement address at Yankee Stadium to graduates of New York University, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said: “You know, study abroad is like spring training for this century. It helps you develop the fundamentals, the teamwork, and the determination to succeed.” Clinton made over 100 trips abroad where she regularly touted exchanges, particularly the Fulbright Program, as fundamental to promoting democracy and human rights and empowering women. Exchanges are viewed as the relationship-building layer of the public diplomacy cake, located at the base to provide structure, and whose outcomes are expected in the long term (Bettie, 2015; Scott-Smith, 2020; Snow, 2020b).

Because scholarship on the practice of public diplomacy first took root in the United States, its components outlined here tend to influence approaches globally, although countries may place a stronger emphasis on one over another. For instance, countries that are consistently seen as soft power superpowers, such as Japan (Watanabe & McConnell, 2008) or France (Wintour, 2017), will likely emphasize culture as the centerpiece of their public diplomacy. This evolved out of the contributions from the founding fathers of their respective disciplines, Harold Lasswell in political science, Walter Lippman in journalism, and Edward Bernays in public relations. All were involved in counterpropaganda efforts during the era of the world wars when mass media and advertising were used to shape public opinion of overseas audiences to the American war cause (Bernays, 1928; Davison, 1965; Lasswell, 1927; Lippmann, 1922). In peacetime, even with ideological battles looming between the United States and Soviet Union, a new term was needed, public diplomacy, which would not carry such a heavily loaded or negative connotation like propaganda. This does not mean that propaganda was discarded altogether, as is pointed out by Stecopoulos (2011) in his review of authors Cull (2009), Falk (2010), Snow (2009) and Richmond (2008) who “has played a long-standing role in the making of propaganda studies within and without the academy.”

Therefore, the public diplomacy scholarship, which is understood as an approach that an international actor can use to leverage soft power (Nye, 2004), continues to be produced predominantly in the United States and the United Kingdom, but adaptations elsewhere, especially in China, show that it is no longer exclusively Anglo-American. Daya Kishan Thussu points to the rise of non-U.S. soft powers such as India, Turkey, and Russia as examples of “de-Americanizing soft power” (Thussu, 2013). A global network of scholars is contributing facts-on-the-ground cultural and geopolitical realities to add much-needed diversity to the field (Chang & Lin, 2014; Ociepka, 2018; Pamment, 2011; Vickers, 2004; White & Radic, 2014; Wilding, 2007). Nevertheless, research foundations inevitably return to U.S. legacy approaches in the Cold War and post-Cold War (Huntington, 1993; Lake, 1993) and the War on Terror (Holbrooke, 2001; Ross, 2003).

2.3 Demography’s Roles in China’s Soft Power Diplomacy in Thailand

Thailand and China are both densely populated countries yet their demographics differ greatly which affects their bilateral relations. China is the world's most populated country, with over 1.4 billion people whereas Thailand has over 70 million inhabitants (World Bank, 2023). Despite this gap, China's vast population gives it significant cultural, intellectual, and economic power that reaches beyond the borders. Thailand's workforce is predicting to diminish over the next few decades, increasing its needs on foreign cooperation, notably soft power diplomacy, to sustain economic growth and social stability. This demographic trend makes Thailand increasingly open to the Chinese influences, particularly in the areas such as education, cultural interchange, and economic cooperation, where China provides both human capital and infrastructure developments. Population trends are critical in determining Thailand's foreign relations and diplomatic goals, as the country's population ages and birth rate declines.

2.3.2 Age Structure and Generational Influence

The age structure of both countries is also influence the success of China's soft power diplomacy. China's population is ageing with a sizable part of the population that is currently classified as middle-age or elderly. This demographic shift it may influence China's domestic goals, but it also has global implications. As younger generation are less likely to be influenced by traditional state media and more attuned to the global digital platforms and China has adapted

its soft power strategies to include more youth focused diplomacy such as leveraging social media and digital content to appeal to the young people in Thailand.

Thailand, on the other hand has a younger population than China in with a higher percentage of its citizens under 30's. Because of this, a key component of China policy in Thailand is young diplomacy. China aims to influence the younger Thai population through programs like the Confucius Institutes, student exchange programs and scholarships. As these young people grow up to be future leaders in the Thai society, these initiatives not only advance Chinese language and culture but also provide the groundwork for long term diplomatic and commercial relationship.

2.3.3 Mobility and the Urbanizations

China and Thailand's urbanizations has a big impact on how they interact diplomatically and culturally and both nations have seen a sharp increase in urbanization in recent decades with millions of people relocating from rural to urban areas in pursuit of the better prospects. China's urban population today makes up more than 60 percent of the country overall population, which has greatly expanded China's impact in international affairs, trade, and culture. China's soft power diplomacy is extended globally by major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, which serve as centers for Chinese business, education, and media technology.

Urban areas like Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Phuket are not only major tourist destinations and commercial hubs in Thailand but they are also places where China's soft power initiatives have the most effect. Thai people are exposing to Chinese culture, technology, and educational possibilities as more of them particularly young professionals, relocate to cities. As more Thai people use Chinese social media sites like WeChat, TikTok, and Youku all of which are a component of China's media diplomacy the development of digital technology has further expedited this tendency. Furthermore, the migration of Chinese people to Thailand and Thai people to China has improved educational and cultural exchanges. Due to Thailand's close proximity to China and its status as a regional center for Chinese enterprises, Chinese migrant workers and expatriates play a significant role in Thai society and people-to-people diplomacy.

2.3.4 Transnational Communities and Migration

The bilateral relationship between China and Thailand has been significantly impacted by migration. Although there are still not many Thai people living in China, Chinese enterprises and

expats are well-known in Thailand. With their centuries-long presence in Thailand the Chinese diaspora especially those from the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian has established the robust cultural and economic link between the two nations. In the long run, this migrant pattern help China project its soft power diplomacy in Thailand by strengthening Thai familiarity with China's development models.

2.3.5 The Impact of Diplomacy Using the Soft Power Diplomacy

According to the demographic parameters mentioned above, China is deliberately focusing soft power diplomacy in Thailand on the most pertinent age groups, geographical areas, and industries and The cultural interchange between Thailand and China is deepening the country's youth interact with China more and more through media, education, and travel. China's economic diplomacy and trade partners will remain crucial in Thailand due to the ageing population and desire for economic development. Demographic consideration will therefore continue to impact how China and Thailand interact in the future, providing China with chances to sway public opinions and fortify its long standing diplomatic connections.

A diplomatic relationship between China and Thailand is significantly shaped by demographic development in both countries. We can gain a better grasp of how China adapts the soft power strategies to Thailand by examining the country's age distribution urbanization trends, and migration patterns. Through a variety of diplomatic initiatives, China has a rare potential to establish long term cultural, educational, and economic relations with Thailand, especially with its young populations.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

In this chapter the researcher wanted to present an analysis of china soft power diplomacy towards Thailand in 21st century. The research will help to a better understand the development of China's soft power diplomacy in the 21st century functions and its impacts and also succeed achievement in Thailand.

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative research was approached in this independent study. The author used the prepared question of in-depth interview as to the research instrument. Moreover, as regarding the content validity, all questions were valid and approved by the 6 different experts three from china and three from Thailand as triangulation of agreement, according to their experiences, the data were collected by using the in-depth interviewing method among the 6 participant and all the participant had shared their experience towards china soft power foreign diplomacy towards Thailand in the 21st century.

3.2 Population and Samples

The population of this research consists of two groups of the key informants that were selected by purposive sampling: three from china's diplomatic expertise in Thailand and three Thailand's diplomatic expertise those who have experience in diplomacy. The list of the six key informants was shown in **ANNEX 1**

3.3 Research Instruments

The Researcher used the qualitative research method by using purposive and semi structure by using the participants for in-depth online interview method among the six participants three china diplomatic expertise who have experience in diplomacy for the last 10 years as well as three diplomatic expertise participants in Thailand those who has experience for the last ten years in diplomacy also obtaining data from Siam university library, china public diplomacy association portal website resources, using china Zhihu.com network to obtain a large number of the literatures, journals, master's thesis and other searching engine to collect to the relevant literature and also information to provide.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was started as the summary of the process of the data collection are explained as this following step In this study the researcher conducted the data collection by collecting the information of the participants the total number of the participant, objective of the study by interviewing, researcher through prepared questions for the participants.

Therefore, primary data were collected by using the in-depth online interview from the selected participant, moreover, the secondary data also collected by selecting from the theories and related previous research, thus, according to data will be used as well such data derived from the reviewing the reliable sources including the relevant theories and the researcher approximately spent two months collecting all the data from the online interview and related to previous research. In some cases the researcher had to go back to interview again since the researcher needed more information.

3.5 Research Limitation

This research method, like similar other studies, faces different application of soft power diplomacy in international relations, especially bilateral diplomatic relations between China and Thailand. It was very difficult for the researcher to collect data and information from the diplomatic instruments and the limited number of key informants during the period of cold war and post cold war.

CHAPTER 4

Research Results and Discussion

This independent study found out the research results of the influence of China's soft power diplomacy on Thailand and its practical impacts of the roles of soft power diplomacy. The researcher analyzed and discussed the research results of China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand from the perspective of the educational development, speed establishments of Confucius Institutes in Thailand and the planning of China's high-speed rail project in Thailand. Thailand's accession to the Asian Investment Bank and related cultural industries as well as Sino-Thai economic and political exchanges. Despite the cognizance of this notion in the case of China's diplomacy, the context that either generates or hinders the growth of soft power is understudied (Ferguson, 2003). Through comparative analysis, this research explored differences between Thailand's soft power diplomacy and China's soft power diplomacy in the Sino-Thai relations. One can see China providing supports to Thailand by sending volunteers in Thailand to teach Chinese language, presence of the Chinese media into Thailand, and influences of China's soft power diplomacy in Thailand. In analyzing the formation and interpretation of foreign policy that conduct different levels of Sino-Thai soft power diplomacy for understanding cultural and social values between China and Thailand in order to achieve expected effective cooperation.

4.1 Analysis of Thailand's Soft Power Diplomacy Factors



In order to maximize its potential for balancing the interest between the USA and China, Thailand's cooperation with other great countries, medium powers, and multilateral institutions must be maintained. Thailand's current foreign policy and strategy emphasized strengthening ties with its neighbors in Southeast Asia. Thai foreign policy of strategic allies has been promoting Thailand's positive role in the ASEAN Community and the global community as well as boosting Thailand's economic competitiveness and cooperation with all countries around the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). Thailand modern military capability can be enhanced with the use of military technology and Japan's current shift in security policy may allow the country to collaborate with Thailand's defense sectors. (Pejsova, Stanley-Lockman, 2016).

The achievements of Thai diplomacy have been conducted through collaboration with Russia, India, and Japan. Firstly, Thailand benefits have been maintaining long connections with Japan interests, which include competing with China in Southeast Asian politics and also economics. This demonstrates Thailand's ability to use the geopolitical significance to collaborate with Japan in order to protect its interest and maybe reduces China's influence. Moreover, Thailand's 'Look West plan' and India's 'Act East policy' complement each other well and will work together to connect with Northeast India to Southeast Asia through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sector Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), in which Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand are members. Finally, the greater engagement with Japan and Russia in the context of security cooperation could aid Thailand's military capabilities development because Russia military equipment is affordable for Thailand purchasing. At the same time, Thailand's soft power diplomacy has been maintained its economic, political, educational, social, and cultural exchanges with China since their diplomatic relations were established in 1975. As China global influences growing as the second world economic superpower, so does its use of the soft power in diplomacy and relationship between China and Thailand.

Therefore, Thailand adopted the policy guidelines that apply the concept of soft power as a mechanism to enhance its bargaining power at international level and pursue economic goals. The Thai diplomacy has leveraged soft power to gain favor within the international community, at both the regional and global levels. Factors that give rise to soft power such as music, film and literature can enable Thailand to more easily attract and persuade other countries through a positive Thai image. Given that soft power is a multifaceted concept, such may be accomplished using cultural appeal, liberal political ideologies and values, favorable foreign policy agendas,

and ethical behavior on the world stage. The previous Thai government administrations have advanced policies aimed at soft power promotion to achieve economic development goals. These policies emphasize cultural resources that have been identified as broadly appealing and are easily accessible to domestic and international consumers (Kaewanant & Sirisunhirun, 2024). Thailand would stand to gain through the spreading Thai cultural awareness around the world. The role of Thai government is thus to foster creative ecology and to support public diplomacy through the conveyance of relevant information conducive to promoting a positive Thai image.

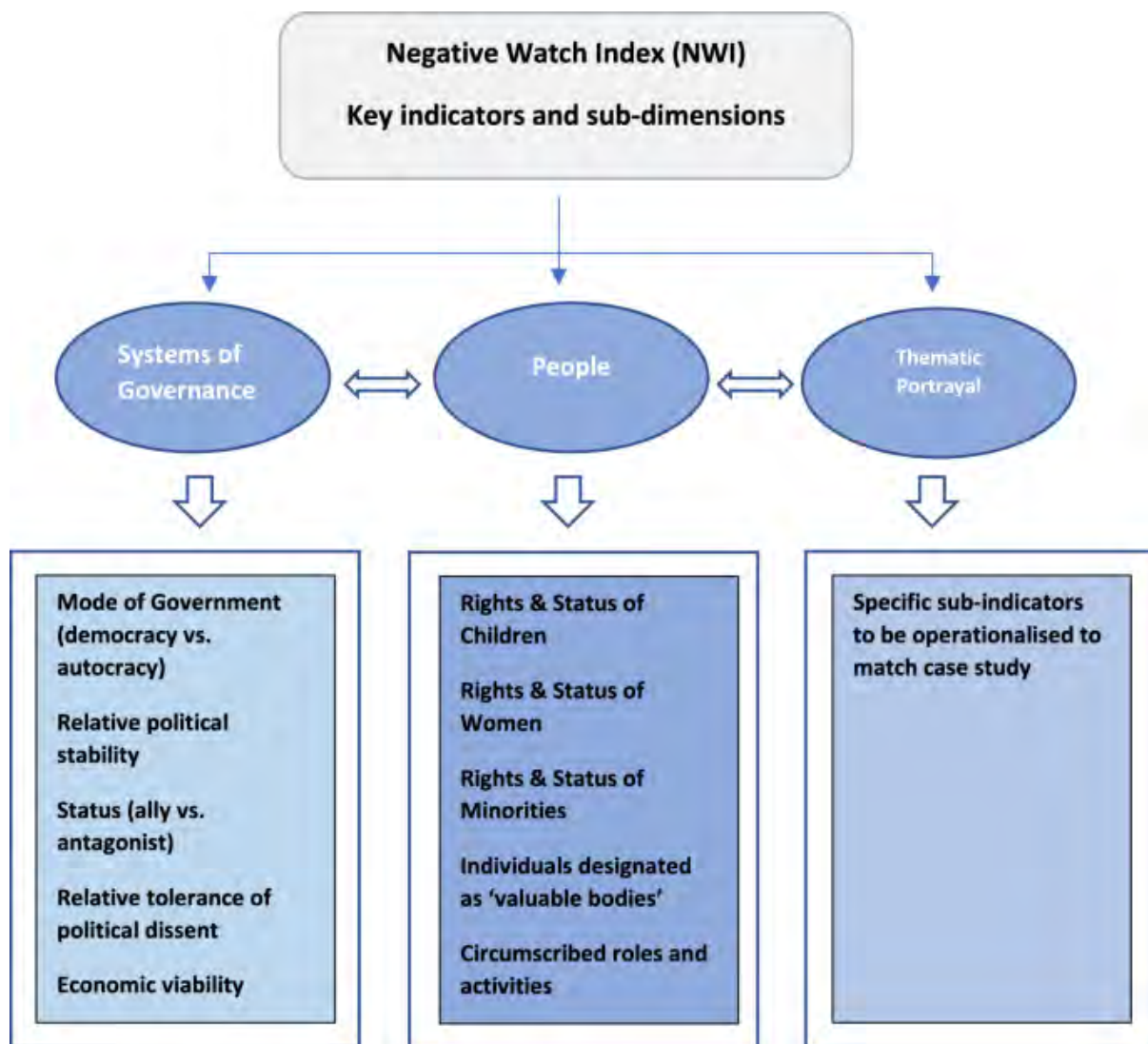
4.2 Conceptualizing Soft Power in the Context of China and Thailand Relations

The concept of soft power is defined by Joseph Nye, refers to a country's ability to influence others without using forces or coercion. Soft power on the other hand, is built on a country's culture, belief, and policies that attract persuade and appeal to others. China's use soft power in foreign policy is a response to the country's expanding economic and military power as well. While hard power economic and military force remains an important aspect of China's worldwide strategy, soft power is increasingly dictating its diplomatic contacts particularly with neighboring nation such as Thailand. China's soft power strategy toward Thailand is complex encompassing cultural diplomacy, economic involvement, educational exchanges, and media influence. These measures aim to strengthen bilateral connections while also improving China's image and influence in Thailand, fostering positive opinion of China's emergence as superpower.



Source: Nikkei Asia

Diagram 4.1: Negative Watch Index (NWI) with Key indicators and sub-dimensions



Source: Nikei Asia

What happens when a country loses its soft power? They significantly lose their ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion, result in a decline in their international reputation making it more difficult to achieve foreign policy goals potentially facing increased resistance from other nations and experiencing a decrease in cooperation and support on the global stage; in essence they are becoming less respected and less able to sway others without resorting to hard power tactics (Durrani, 2023).

In recent years, China's soft power has become a matter of much discussion as a crucial component of Chinese foreign policy. In Thailand, Chinese influences are increasingly evident. This can be seen from the large number of Confucius Institutes established in Thailand, the

growing number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand, Thai students studying in China, the inauguration of the China Cultural Centre in Bangkok and the introduction of Chinese media into Thailand (Tungkeunkunt, 2016). The growing influence of China on a global arena was focused on the presence of Chinese soft power in Thailand. The increasing Chinese influence in Thailand was largely driven by the historical background of Sino-Thai relations, by political, economic and socio-cultural interests, as well as by the role of ethnic Chinese communities in Thailand.

The sixteen Confucius Institutes have successfully established and promoted the Chinese language and culture in Thailand. The implementation of Confucius Institutes in Thailand consists of Chinese language teaching, cultural activities, International Chinese language scholarship, Chinese Language Proficiency Tests, and Chinese volunteer teachers. The Confucius Institutes in Thailand become the first largest Confucius Institutes in Southeast Asia based on the number of Confucius Institutes. From 2006-2021 more than 2,000 cultural activities were organized by Confucius Institutes (Klaitabtim, 2024). As a result, the Confucius Institutes are the China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand in accordance with Joseph S. Nye's concept of "soft power". The Confucius Institutes in Thailand have been regarded as an instrument for promoting and disseminating Chinese culture and values. Chinese soft power portrayed by Confucius Institutes has operated through cultural cooperation at all levels; government, educational institutes, and individual levels. The Chinese language has increasingly influenced in Thailand. China successfully uses Confucius Institutes as an instrument to cultivate its soft power in Thailand. Consequently, Chinese soft power under the implementation of Confucius Institutes has played a vital role in enhancing friendship and collaboration between Thailand and China. Moreover, the Confucius Institutes help to promote mutual understanding and friendship between people of the two countries.

4.3 The Development of Diplomatic Relations between China and Thailand

China and Thailand have had a generally amicable relationship since diplomatic relations were established in 1975 although soft power diplomacy has gained prominence in the 21st century. With China's quick ascension to economic powerhouse status, Thailand has become a key area for China's diplomatic outreach in Southeast Asia. Cultural similarities geographical proximity and economic collaboration have all contributed to the two countries' long standing friendship. As China's economic and political influence grew it attempted to develop connection with Thailand through various forms of soft power. These include promoting Chinese culture,

forming educational connections, and encouraging people-to-people exchange. Thailand, as a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) strategically important to China's soft power diplomacy is viewed as a crucial strategy for strengthening these connections.

The power struggle between the United States and China may be occurring because of the escalating presence of both in Thailand. Thailand, however, does not view China as a threat in the same way the United States. It also has no territorial disputes with China, unlike with many other countries in Southeast Asian region. China remains as an important ally to Thailand, partly because of its influence and prominence in the region (Ramsey, 2017). The relationship between China and Thailand has been both long and complicated during and after the periods of conflict associated with the cold war. In recent years, and especially following the Asian Economic Crisis, there has been a blossoming of the relationship, built on careful diplomacy, a renewal of interest in ethnicity and expanding business dealings and rising bilateral investment. In the contemporary period, the relationship has reached a new high. Since Thailand's military junta came to power in 2014, China has been a significant diplomatic, economic and strategic partner. Part of the explanation for this has to do with the junta's inability to deal with the United States following the coup (Hewison, 2018). The turn to China has much to do with Thailand's turbulent domestic politics. The Sino-Thai relations were strengthening issues related to infrastructure, transports and logistics, trade and business, military cooperation and cultural relations.

4.4 The Mechanisms of China's Soft Power Diplomacy in Thailand

1) Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is the prominent feature of the China's soft power strategy. The Chinese government made concerted attempts to promote Chinese culture in Thailand launching Confucius Institutions, cultural exchange programs, Chinese language training and creative exhibitions. These cultural contacts have contributed to mutual understanding and respect between the peoples of China and Thailand as well as building goodwill and reducing any possible opposition to China's growing power. The Confucius Institutes for example, have played an important role in spreading Chinese language and culture among Thai individuals notably students and scholars. China has established a platform for the cultural conversation and educational exchanges by making Mandarin learning resources available and promoting Chinese literature and philosophy. In 2012, China has established a cultural center in Bangkok, Thailand. It is the largest cultural center established by China in Southeast Asia.

2) Economic Diplomacy

In terms of economic connections, China has emerged as a key commercial partner for Thailand greatly increasing Thai exports and investments. The Belt and Road Initiative introduced by China in 2013 has had a special resonance in Thailand, with infrastructure projects like the high-speed rail connecting China and Thailand serving as a symbol of increased cooperation. China has grown its economic space in Thailand while creating a dependency that reinforces its power. China's role as a major investor in Thailand's infrastructure and manufacturing sectors has created growth opportunities for the Thai economy as a result in positive perceptions of China's role in Thailand's development. These economic exchanges are an important component of China's soft power diplomacy as they provided tangible benefits to Thailand while also positioning China as a regional economic development executive.

China is Thailand's top trading partner. Bilateral trade relations grow each year. Chinese-Thai bilateral trade in 1999 was worth US\$4.22 billion that reached \$25.3 billion in 2006, US\$31.07 billion in 2007, and US\$36.2 billion in 2008. The 21st-century Chinese transformation into major economic power has led to an increase of foreign investments in the bamboo network. The network of overseas Chinese businesses operating in the markets of Southeast Asia shares family and cultural ties (Quinlan, 2007). China's exports to Thailand include computer components, electrical motors, consumer electronics, machinery, metal products, chemical products, and clothing. Thailand's exports to China include computer components, rubber, refined oil, plastic pellets, chemical electronics, crude oil, wood products, and food. Moreover, Thailand was the first country able to export fresh durian to China. China is Thailand's second-largest export market. China is also Thailand's largest importer of goods into the country in 2010. China and Thailand signed a free trade agreement in 2003 that covered agricultural products. It was also known as an early harvest agreement on agricultural products. In 2011, China announced its plan to invest US\$1.51 billion to establish the China City Complex in Bangkok for trading in Chinese-made goods like garments, ornaments, and household items. China takes advantage of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area, which came into effect January 1, 2010 and will allow its goods to be exported through ASEAN countries with zero or reduced trade barriers.

3) Educational Diplomacy

Education is another important element that China's soft power strategy in Thailand. Chinese scholarships and educational exchanges have encouraged Thai students to study in

China building long-term partnership while also promote Chinese value and believes. Thai academic institutions are progressive including Chinese language and culture courses in their curricular reflecting a growing interest in China. Thailand's cooperation with China in scientific research and technical innovation also it develops educational and professional relationship. These activities not only enhance cultural understanding, but also establish a network of Thai experts that with knowledge of China, so strengthening the bilateral connections. In 2006, Thailand's Ministry of Education signed an agreement with Hanban to promote Chinese language education in Thailand. Thailand is one of the biggest promoters of Chinese language education in Southeast Asia. In 2009, China and Thailand signed an agreement on education cooperation. Thailand was one of the first countries in Southeast Asia to open a Confucius Institute. As of 2024, it has 16 Confucius Institutes, the most of any country in Asia. China built the Sirindhorn Chinese Language and Culture Center at Mae Fah Luang University in Thailand as a gift. It was named after Princess Sirindhorn in honor of her role in cultural exchange between Thailand and China. The center hosts a Confucius Institute, which is operated in partnership with Xiamen University (Han, 2024).

4) Social Media Diplomacy

China's media influence in Thailand has grown dramatically in recent years. Chinese state-run media outlets, including Xinhua News Agency and China Global Television Network (CGTN), have expanded their broadcasting and online presence in Thailand, design the narrative surrounding China's development and foreign policy. These media channels impact Thai public opinion by presenting alternative perspectives on China and the covering bilateral development. Furthermore, tourism has become an important component of people-to-people diplomacy. Chinese tourists make up a large component of Thailand tourism industry which has result in increased exposure to the Chinese culture and lifestyles among Thai people. Tourism promotes personal ties, increases intercultural understanding and strengthens the overall bilateral relationship between China and Thailand.

4.5 The Impacts of China's Soft Power Diplomacy towards Thailand

China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand has had significant impacts on Sino-Thai bilateral relations, transforming it from a purely economic and political one to a more holistic and people-to-people connection and impacts of China's soft power strategy may be seen in various areas as follows:

4.5.1 Political Alignments

Thailand's political affiliation has grown closer to China especially in a regional forum like ASEAN Community. The mutual understanding generated by soft power processes has increased Thailand's willing to collaborate with China in a variety of international context including commerce, security, and the regional stability.

4.5.2 Cultural Understandings

Growing cultural contacts have resulted in increasing mutual understanding and respect between the Thai people and Chinese people. While there are still obstacles in overcoming historical prejudices and national concerns and soft power activities have contributed to more positive perceptions of China in Thailand.

4.5.3 Social Integrations

As Thais become more familiar with Chinese culture and their interest in Chinese traditions, foods, and language has grown. This incorporation of Chinese culture into Thai society adds to the overall soft power dynamic by lowering cultural barriers and also strengthening bilateral ties. As China growing as a global power, its soft power strategy will most likely develop, with a greater emphasis on creating ties that are not only politically strategic but also mutual advantages. In the case of Thailand, this developing dynamic has the potential to deepen bilateral relation and foster deeper and more sustainable interaction between the two countries.

4.6 The Challenges and Limitations of China's Soft Power Diplomacy in Thailand

The researcher analyses and evaluated the success of China to explain the challenges and limitations of China's soft power diplomacy in Thailand as follows:

4.6.1 Soft Power Strategies of Chinese Diplomacy

The China's soft power diplomacy is based on Joseph Nye's idea of soft power theory, which is really emphasizing that "countries wield influence by seduction rather than coercion". The Chinese soft power is derived from three main pillars: **(1) Cultures:** The attractiveness of Chinese culture, values, and lifestyle; **(2) Political Ideals:** The flexible appeal of the China's political values, foreign policy and governance; **(3) Foreign Policy and Diplomacy:** How many other countries regard China's foreign policies as legitimate and moral. As a result, China

conducts the soft power diplomacy by using these pillars to attract and influence other countries notably Thailand through various mechanisms, such as the cultural exchanges, economic diplomacy, educational initiatives, and media technology outreach. In the context of Thailand, China's soft power tries to foster positive opinions and encouraging China's emergence as a global power while preserving a non-coercive appealing image.

4.6.2 Diplomatic Instruments and Soft Power Tools

China's soft power diplomacy uses a variety of the diplomatic instruments and strategies to achieve its objectives towards Thailand as follows:

1) Cultural Diplomacy: China promotes various cultural exchanges to promote mutual understanding and develop interpersonal relations and people to people diplomacy. This involves promoting Chinese language through Confucius Institutes, Chinese media such as CGTN and Xinhua, as well as promotion of tourism, cultural events, and exhibitions.

2) Economy Diplomacy

China positions itself as a major development partner of all counties around the world, especially with Thailand, by increasing its economic influences and assistances through trade, investment, and tourism in bilateral economic relations, as well as transports, logistics and infrastructure projects in the Mekong river cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiatives. An important component of this strategy is Thailand a known major ASEAN economic, trading and tourism partner.

3) Educational Diplomacy

China encourages young Thai to study in China and learn about Chinese culture and value includes student exchanges, university partnerships, and scholarships as well. Cultural resonance is the degree to which Chinese and Thai cultural values and customs are similar because of their share history as well as geography.

4.6.3 Effects of China's Soft Power Diplomacy

The effects of China's economic involvement (trade, investment, and infrastructure projects) on Thailand's economic growth and Southeast Asian economy as a whole are positive effects of economic benefits. However, Thailand has desired to maintain its national sovereignty and independence while avoiding undue dependence on any one nation, especially China, while

still reaping the benefits of the partnership. Therefore, the paradigm takes into account how China's soft power operation interact with Thailand domestic policies, public opinion, and regional security concerns, ultimately affecting the success of China's diplomatic initiative.

4.6.4 The Limitations of China's Soft Power Diplomacy in Thailand

Despite its effective success, China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand confronts a number of hurdle limitations to success, as follows:

Firstly, there are concerns over China's expanding influence in Southeast Asia with some critics worried that Thailand may become overly reliant on China economically and politically perspectives. Some parts of Thai society have expressed concern about China's objectives and a long-term ramification of such expanding ties.

Secondly, there is the issue of the balancing soft power and harsh force. While soft power is successful at fostering goodwill and cultural understanding, it must be supplemented by economic and political participation to produce long term outcome. The interplay between soft and hard power in Chinese foreign policy remain a critical problem, particularly in a geopolitically sensitive region like the Southeast Asia.

Thirdly, China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand has been successful increasing China's regional influence by creating stronger cultural, economic, and educational connections. Through strategic measures in cultural diplomacy, economic engagement, and media technology outreach, China has been able to improve its image in Thailand and cement its place as vital regional partner. However, the issues persist, and future initiatives must handle the complexity of soft power in a region that prioritizes both economic gains and political sovereignty.

Lastly, the major limitation to the success of China's soft power diplomacy in Thailand:

(1) Cultural resistances: While Thailand and China have cultural parallels, there may be some opposition to Chinese influence, particularly among those concerned about China's expanding politic and economic might; **(2) Geopolitical rivalry:** Thailand's is aiming to maintain its balance of power relations with other major powers and particularly the United States, European Union and Japan may limit its ability to fully back China's soft power diplomacy initiative. Concerns about Thailand being unduly reliant on China, either economically or politically, may spark opposition from political elites or civil society groups concerned about losing its national sovereignty and independence.

4.7 The Results of the China's Soft Power Diplomacy in Thailand

The researcher identifies numerous potential outcomes and repercussions of China's soft power diplomacy in Thailand: **1) Improved Sino-Thai bilateral relations:** China and Thailand have enormous expanded their bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, tourism, and cultural exchanges; **2) Influence on public opinion:** Positive changes in Chinese public attitudes, as seen by the increasing popularity of Chinese culture, language, and media in Thailand; **3) Policy alignment:** Thailand's foreign policy is close align with China and particularly in multilateral forums such as ASEAN and the United Nations where Thailand may increasingly support China's aspiration, and 4) In the long term, **viability of China's influence** in Thailand will be defined by the efficacy of soft power programs and how they are welcome by the Thai people and government.

In brief, the results of this independent study find out the systematic dynamics of China's soft power diplomacy in Thailand. The further expansion of China's soft power from Thailand to Southeast Asian region can be considered the interplay of cultural, economic, educational, and media and technology diplomacy. It gives a distinct prism through which to the assessment of the effectiveness, obstacle and prospects for China's soft power in defining its relationship with Thailand. The researcher can evaluate the results of the China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand in the 21st century, as shown in **Table 4.1**

Table 4.1: Summary of Key Components for China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand

Key Components	Description	Interconnections/ Mechanisms	Expected Outcomes	Challenges/ Limitations
Soft Power Theory of Joseph Nye	Soft power refers to the ability of a country to influence others through attraction and persuasion, rather than coercion or military force. Key pillars are: - Cultures - Political Ideal - Foreign Policy	Cultural Diplomacy: Promoting China culture to enhance attractiveness. Political Ideals: Promoting China's model of governance and development. Foreign Policy Legitimacy: Promoting China international policies and the moral appeal.	Improved Image of China in Thailand. Positive Perceptions of Chinese culture, values, and in the political philosophy.	Resistance from the domestic political ideologies that prefer to the Thai monarchy or Western model of governance.
Diplomatic Strategy between China and Thailand	China employs various diplomatic tools: - Cultural Diplomacy Such as :	Cultural Exchange: Chinese language programs, cultural events, and Confucius Institutes. Economic Engagement: Trade relations, investment, and infrastructure such as (Belt and	Enhanced Bilateral Cooperation in trade, education, and cultural exchange. Stronger China and Thailand Political	Risks of over-reliance on China's economic or political power leading to resistance from the other regional actors or the domestic groups.

Key Components	Description	Interconnections/ Mechanisms	Expected Outcomes	Challenges/ Limitations
	Confucius Institutes - Economic Diplomacy (trade, BRI, and investment) - Educational Diplomacy (scholarships, and exchanges) - Media Diplomacy Chinese media presence in Thailand	Road). Educational Partnerships: Scholarships and student exchanges to foster long term ties. Media Influence: Chinese state that media shaping public opinion in Thailand.	Alignment in ASEAN and international relations.	
Thailand's Domestic Response to China	Thailand's relationship with China is a influenced by cultural, economic and geopolitical issues. These include cultural resonances and economic benefits such as: - Geographical position - Political sovereignty	Cultural Receptions: Chinese culture and language are well received because of our common history and the location. Thailand's economic growth is boosted by Chinese investments, E-commerce, and infrastructure development. Political sovereignty concerns include balancing China's influence with the political autonomy.	Enhanced Thailand-China Collaboration across multiple sectors. Positive public perception of China as a result of economic and a cultural cooperation.	Geopolitical Rivalries: Tensions with other nations such as the United States or Japan that may prevent full alignment with China. National Sovereignty Concerns: Fear of becoming overly reliant on China economically or politically.
China Cultural Diplomacy	They promote Chinese culture using the Confucianism cultural festivals, and exhibitions. - Chinese learning languages as well.	Economic and the educational diplomacy is a strengthened through cultural affinity for example, Thai students studying in China.	Increases cultural awareness between Thailand and China. Cultural exchanges build long-term interpersonal relationships.	. Cultural Resistance: some organizations may oppose Chinese cultural influence or believe it undermine the Thai national identity.
China Economic Diplomacy	China uses economic links to exercise influence, such as through trade agreements, infrastructure investment (Belt and Road Initiative), and economic collaborations.	Cultural Diplomacy: Trade partnerships are mutually beneficial and can promote positive cultural exchanges. Political Ideals: Economic cooperation can reflect common development objectives and governance frameworks.	Economic reliance: Thailand benefits from Chinese investment and infrastructural development. Improved bilateral relations through trade and investment.	Concern over dependency: Thailand may become unduly reliant on China exposing weaknesses in the economic sovereignty.

Key Components	Description	Interconnections/ Mechanisms	Expected Outcomes	Challenges/ Limitations
Education Diplomacy	Encourage Thai students to study in China through scholarships and exchange programs.	Partnership between universities Cultural Diplomacy: Improves understanding of Chinese language and culture. Political ideals such as: Students are return with a better grasp of Chinese governance and development approach	Long-Term Influence: Thai students studying in China build of network of the people who have positive attitude toward China. Academic and as well as professional relationships have grown stronger.	Cultural Differences: Thai students may have difficulty assimilating to Chinese culture and political ideas.
China / Thailand Media diplomacy	Chinese media has increased its power through the news agencies like Xinhua CGTN and, as well as social media and online platform.	Cultural diplomacy: Media portrayals of China's culture, economy, and ideals improve public perception. Economic diplomacy entails positive media coverage of the Chinese investment and trade partnerships.	Increased Favorability: Chinese media creates favorable narrative about China progress and international significances.	. Media Competition: Resistance from the local Thai media or Western medias outlet promoting alternative narratives
Outcome/ Impact.	China's soft power diplomacy has led to improve bilateral relation and a positive public view of the country. - International political alignment and sustained impact of Thailand.	. Improved Relations: Economic, cultural, and political collaboration expands. Increased Soft Power: China's influence grow . Political Integration: Thailand is increasingly aligned with China in the multilateral forums	Strengthened bilateral ties in trade, education, and cultural exchange. Long term Influence: China strengthens its foothold in Southeast Asia particularly in Thailand.	Push back from Rival Powers: Countries such as the United States and Japan they may contest China's influence in Thailand. Internal Resistance: Thai domestic fears about loss of sovereignty may have stymie closer connections
Challenges and Limitations	Issues that could impede or in undermine China's soft power efficacy in Thailand: - Cultural resistance and geopolitical rivalries as well. - Overdependence on China.	The political autonomy: Thailand may have aimed to avoid being overly reliant on China by the balancing relations with other states. Regional rivalry: Southeast Asia's rivalry for influence amongst major nations may hinder of China's ambitions.	Domestic political groups and media may oppose China's expanding strategy. Regional Disputes: Thailand's relationships with other superpowers may hinder its cooperation with China itself.	Sovereignty Risks: Thai elites may be it concerned about losing control of the national policies as a result of Chinese influence.

This summary framework presented in Chapter 4 can be a useful tool for future studies of the soft power diplomacy and for analyzing how the soft power function in the context of bilateral relationships. It emphasized the necessity of understanding in the interaction between various diplomatic instruments in domestic and international contexts in which the soft power functions.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the Key Findings

Based on the prior discussions, Thailand should focus on alliances that will help it achieve its economic development and security objectives of the country. The findings of this independent study indicate that the bilateral cooperation is Thailand preferred form contact with other major powers. Furthermore, Thailand may expand the foreign policies to boost cooperation's with middle powers based on similar interests, and mutually agreed upon methods in order to attain its economic and security objectives as well. The Thailand's economic and security progress will be greater influenced by its involvement in a global forum, as well as the connections with other major countries and the medium sized powers.

Thailand has clearly announced its soft power diplomacy not a particularly in a large or powerful countries capable of successfully countering the influence of larger nations on its own. The major points are that Thailand's economy and security should not be overly reliant on its relationships with the United States and China. Thailand may avoid the becoming unduly reliant on either of these two super powers by maintaining constructive and the cordial relations with a variety of other countries.

Furthermore, Thailand has already focused more on promoting greater economic engagement with other major powerful nations, middle powers, and the multilateral institutions, particularly through the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) projects and also the existing Free Trade Area (FTA) agreements in order to diversify the foreign relations and avoid becoming entangled in the growing competition between China and the United States.

Finally, Thailand has also strengthened its relations with military threats, such as ASEAN groups. Thailand should pursue diverse foreign policies in the new phase, engaging constructive with a wide range of nations and as well as international institutions, including ASEAN and ASEAN that should led forums.

According to this independent study, Thailand's relations with Japan, Russia and India, are expects to improve in both economic and the security terms. And Australia, Malaysia, and Indonesia are examples of intermediate powers with which Thailand should seek a greater

interaction since they have the capacity to great influence in both the United State and China in the regional policies and actions.

The stronger participation in multilateral cooperation is requires for Thailand to regain international recognition and expand the significant role in multilateral institutions, and as ASEAN will continue to be recognized to Thailand's growth and security. This independent study was conducted to examine an analysis of China's soft power diplomacy toward Thailand in the 21st century in Thailand, including a new upcoming country that would like to use soft power diplomacy but should first consider China's soft power strategy before applying in another country, which means they have to learn more about soft power diplomacies.

During the course of this independent study, the researcher became aware that there were numerous areas that might be investigate to improve the future research for the benefit of countries that are willing to use soft power diplomacy as a mechanism related to this topic as well as for the academic purpose. It was anticipated that additional study will be conducted on a variety of soft power diplomacy topics. Therefore, this independent study examined China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand in the 21st century and focusing on how China employed non-coercive diplomatic approaches such as cultural exchanges, economic and trade cooperation, educational diplomacy, and media outreach to strengthen its influence in Thailand. The research arrived at many majors results based on qualitative research conducted through interview with specialists from both Chinese and Thai diplomatic circles, as well as an investigation of relevant literature and official documents. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

5.1.1 China's Soft Power in Thailand

China's soft power in Thailand mostly is relies on cultural diplomacy through projects, such as Chinese language programs, Confucius Institutes, cultural festivals, and educational exchanges. These activities have to improved impressions of Chinese culture and strengthened people to people relationship. As a key instrument, the economic diplomacy is an important tool that works alongside to the cultural diplomacy. China's growing economic influence in Thailand has been evidenced by economic cooperation, investments, trade agreements, and infrastructure projects linked to the Belt and Road Initiative that also has strengthened bilateral relations. Thailand's economic engagement with China has brought significant benefits and promoting the country's development and enhancing China's position as a key regional partner.

5.1.2 Educational Diplomacy and People to People Interaction

Student exchanges, academic collaboration, and scholarships have increased mutual understanding and established a long term relationship between the Chinese and Thai communities. By encouraging Thai students to study in China and China has generated a generation of young people with a greater understanding of Chinese language, cultures, and political ideals it boosting future cooperation.

5.1.3 Media Diplomacy and Public Opinion

In Thailand, public opinions of China have been greatly influenced by China's media diplomacy and which includes internet platforms, Xinhua and channels like CGTN. Particularly in the face of sporadic skepticism or in opposition to its expanding power, favorable media representation of China's development, economic policies, and international activities have contributed to improve the public perceptions of the nation.

5.1.4 Geopolitical Dynamics

There are major geopolitical obstacles in the spite of China's achievement in soft power diplomacy. Thailand is an ASEAN member with historical ties to Japan and the United States needs to strike a balance between its diplomatic commitments to the other world powers and its relationship with China. It can occasionally be stressful to play this balancing role particularly when Thailand is negotiating to the regional power of powerful nations.

5.2 Implication of the Study

The independent study has various effects for academic research and real diplomacy. The Increasing Importance of Soft Power this study supported the idea that soft power, particularly cultural diplomacy is becoming an increasingly essential aspect of international affairs. China's use of soft power in Thailand demonstrates how the governments can achieve their foreign policy goals without using military or economic forces.

The long term strategy utilizing soft power unlike hard power, which is often yields quick results, soft power is a long term diplomatic strategy. China's emphasis on education, culture, and media outreach illustrates its dedication to changing attitudes and building trust over time

and this long term approach, however, may it be effect by changing local or international political pressures.

Concerning to the need for equalization, while China's soft power initiatives have had results in the variety of sectors, this independent study emphasizes the significance of the balancing diplomatic outreach with respect for Thailand's sovereignty and international ties. Over dependence on China may elicit the local opposition and reaction, particularly from political forces concerned about its losing policymaking autonomy.

As for the challenges to soft power diplomacy, this independent study emphasizes that soft power diplomacy is not without its difficulties. Despite its cultural exchange, economic, and educational initiatives, China's influence is not always well received in Thailand. Thailand's full embrace of China's soft power could be the hampered by geopolitical competition particularly with the United States and Japan, as concerns about national sovereignty as well.

5.3 Theoretical Contributions

This independent study contributes to the growing body of research on soft power in the international relations by examining China's diplomatic strategies. The study applies Joseph Nye's theory to the context of China and Thailand relationship, demonstrating the role of soft power in shaping international relations. Furthermore, the study illuminates how the soft power interacts with economic, cultural, and geopolitical factors to influence the behavior of smaller state like Thailand. Finally, China's soft power diplomacy with Thailand has made significant headway in shaping the bilateral relation in the 21st century. China has successfully built a positive image in Thailand through strategies that includes cultural exchanges, economic cooperation, educational diplomacy, and media outreach as resulting in stronger links in a range of fields. However, soft power diplomacy is not without the challenges. The balance of China's influence with Thailand national interests, Southeast Asian geopolitical dynamics and internal political complexity all need to be examine.

China's soft power has proven to be an effective tool for expanding influence and its long term success in Thailand will be determined by how well its adapts to the changing regional landscape and also how effectively it engage with the Thai people and government in the ways that respect their sovereignty and strategic choices. This research emphasized the growing importance of the soft power in a global diplomacy, as well as the complex and varied nature of

the international contacts in the 21st century. The findings are serving as the foundation for future research into soft power and its roles in shaping the world most important bilateral as well as multilateral partnerships.

5.4 Recommendations from this Research

Based on the above findings from this independent study on the China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand in the 21st century, some key recommendations for this research can be made for both China and Thailand as follows:

5.4.1 China: Enhancing and Diversifying the Soft Power Diplomacy

By increasing the cultural diplomacy and interpersonal engagement, China has made significant progression in the cultural diplomacy, particularly through Confucius Institutes and educational exchanges and there is still much room to expand and deepen cultural engagement. Cultural events that highlight China and Thailand's shared historical and cultural ties could serve to increase the mutual understanding. China may also promote contemporary Chinese cultures, including art, music, film, and modern literature to appeal to the younger Thai audience.

5.4.2 Expand Media Diplomacy through the Digital Platforms

As traditional media consumption transformed, China should invest more in digital diplomacy by using social media and digital content platforms to engage Thai youths and urban communities. TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and the other local digital channels might be in used to highlight China's accomplishments, culture, and educational opportunities. Collaborating with Thai media outlet can help communicate China's story in a way that is relevant to a local situation.

5.4.3 Improve Economic Cooperation with a Focus on the Sustainable Development

Economy diplomacy, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative [BRI) must prioritize sustainable development as well as local needs. China should ensure that the infrastructural, trade, and economic investments in Thailand are mutually beneficial to environmentally sustainable. And academic exchanges on the mutually beneficial topics such as sustainable development, technology as well as regional security. This would help to improve intellectual and academic ties between both nations.

5.4.4 Promote the Chinese Development Model as the Viable Alternative

China's governance and economic models have raised global interest, particularly in the developing countries. China should continue to promote its growth model without imposing it as a viable choice for the countries that seek to modernization. And this should be accomplished through the debates, conferences, and intellectual exchanges that highlight China's success in poverty reduction, large scale population management, and rapid economic growth.

5.4.5 Strengthen the Public Diplomacy between China and Thailand

As China's soft power growth, Thailand's government and civil society must actively engage in the area of the public diplomacy to ensure that the Thai people understand the benefits and risks of stronger ties with China. This could include civic education programs on the nature of diplomacy and international relations and the impact of the foreign investment in Thai society, as well as fostering debates and discussions on Thailand's foreign policy decisions.

As for promoting transparency in the economic engagements, Thailand should ensure that its economic agreements with China are transparent, well regulated, and consistent with the country long term development goals. This would relieve concerns about the debt dependency and the economic sovereignty. In building a long term trust, it is requires ensuring that Chinese investments benefit local business, private sectors, and individuals.

5.4.6 ASEAN Community Strengthens to the Regional Soft Power

How to promote the centralization of ASEAN Community: ASEAN should urge its member countries, including Thailand, to participate in collective soft power projects promoting the cultural diversity, regional collaboration, and economic integration. By forming a cohesive voice, the region can increase its collective influence on the world arena while maintaining ties with key states such as China and the United States, as well as improving ASEAN cultural and educational exchanges. China and Thailand, as ASEAN member countries, should invest in inter-ASEAN educational programs, cultural exchanges, and one on one meeting. Strengthening the regional soft power will benefit each country, while also placing the region as a desirable partner for a global engagement.

5.5 Recommendations for the future Research

This independent study gives a detailed assessment of China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand, some issue areas requires more study and investigation in the future research as follows:

5.4.1. Comparative Studies

The future research could compare China's soft power diplomacy in Thailand with those of the other ASEAN members. This would help to uncover the regional differences and common approaches as resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of China's soft power in the Southeast Asia region.

5.4.2 Domestic Politics Impacts

Understanding Thailand's domestic politics in a relation to its response to Chinese soft power is also a significant research issue. Future studies should be investigated on how shift in political leadership or public opinion affect the reception and effectiveness of China's soft power diplomacy efforts.

5.4.3 The Long Term Impacts of Chinese Soft Power

Because soft power is a long term strategy, it is critical to examine the long term viability of China's influences in Thailand. The future research of the long term impacts shall be looking at changes in the diplomatic, economic, and cultural exchanges between the two countries could give the information on how soft power evolves and persists.

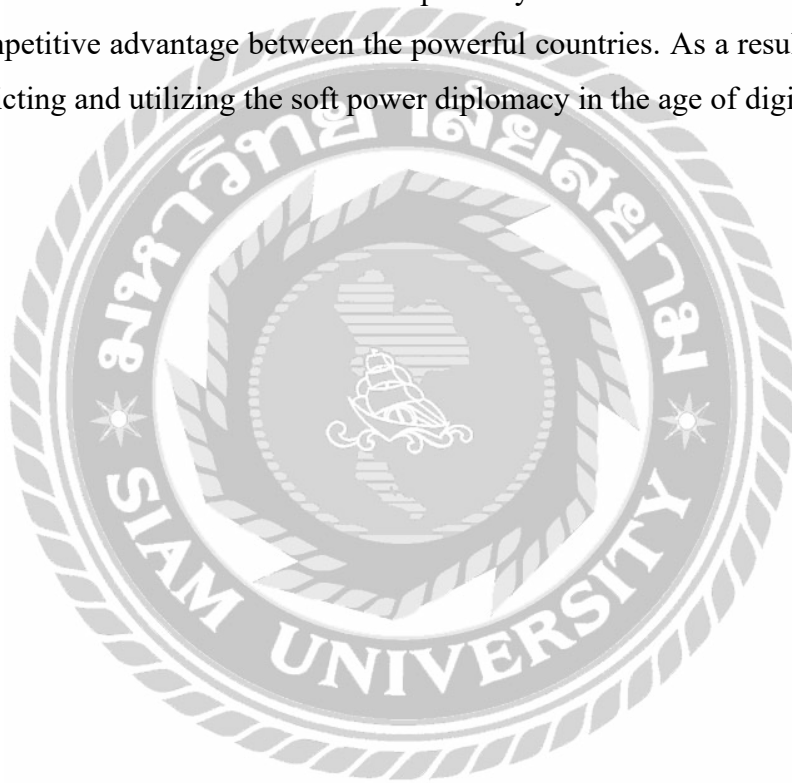
5.4.4. The Public Opinion Studies on Soft Power

Given the growing importance of the public diplomacy, the future research should focus on popular perceptions of China's soft power in Thailand. Surveys, focus groups and interviews with Thai citizens could help us understand how cultural, educational, and technology diplomacy influence opinions toward China, as well as how these impressions change over the time. Future studies could compare China's soft power efforts in Thailand to those of other Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia Vietnam, and Indonesia, this would give light on how China adapts its diplomatic techniques to the different national contexts, as well as the elements that influence the success or limitations of soft powers in each of these countries.

5.4.5 The Additional Future Research

The researcher advises the additional future research to investigate other factors and important concerns that relevant to this research finding, such as competitiveness between the United States and China through the use of the soft power diplomacy as some methods. US soft power diplomacy in Thailand is clear and is being carried out through educational exchange programs and also the Thai and Chinese soft power diplomacy in the digital age.

The researchers recommend future research on the above three topics because it will help to determine an analysis of China's soft power diplomacy towards Thailand in the 21st century, as well as to learn about the new innovative diplomacy methods for reaching the public and developing competitive advantage between the powerful countries. As a result, the future studies will aid in predicting and utilizing the soft power diplomacy in the age of digital era.



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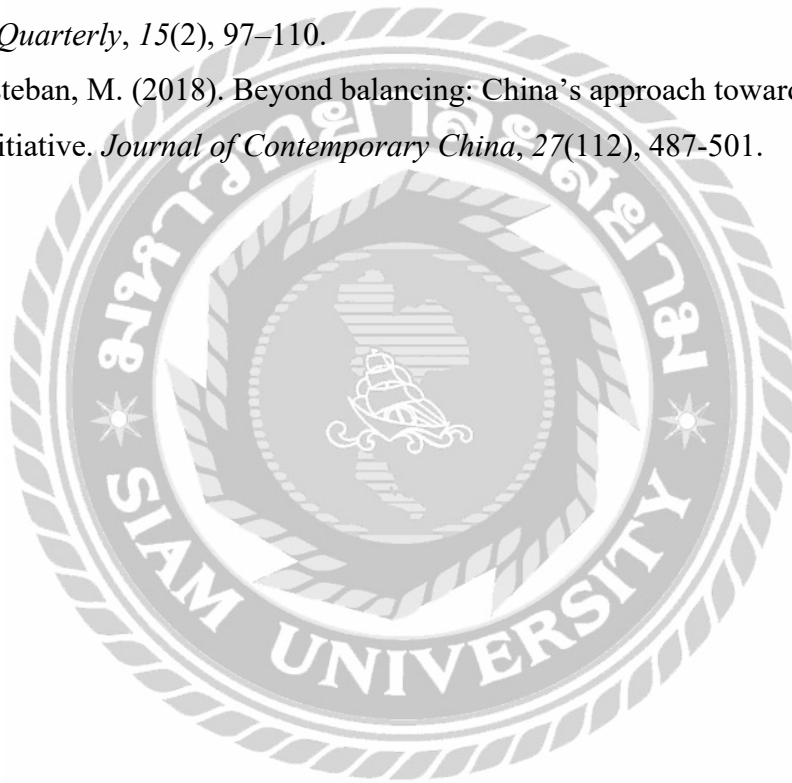
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