

Stefano Pelaggi, PhD. Sapienza University of Rome
stefano.pelaggi@uniroma1.it

Stefano Pelaggi received a MA in Sociology and a Ph.D. in History both from Sapienza University of Rome. He is currently an aggregate professor in “Sociology of Made in Italy” at Sapienza University and in the past years he has been teaching “Development and Processes of Colonization and Decolonization” and “Nationalism and national minorities in Europe”. He is a Research Fellow at Geopolitica.info Study Centre and in 2017 he has been awarded the MOFA Taiwan Fellowship. His research field is mainly focused around the concept of soft power and public diplomacy. He has conducted several studies on the Italian colonial projection through migration flows, on the history of the promotion of Italian culture abroad and various analyses of soft power models used by the different European states. He has published several books including “Il colonialismo popolare. L'emigrazione e la tentazione espansionistica italiana in America latina” and “L'altra Italia”, numerous articles in scientific journals and contributions in collective volumes. He is the director of the column “Taiwan Spotlight” for Geopolitica.info Study Centre and is an editor for “Affari Internazionali” for the Asia Pacific region.

Keywords: Taiwan Soft Power; Nation Branding; Taiwan Public Diplomacy, Taiwanese cultural promotion

Abstract

The research aims to deepen the theoretical dimension of Soft Power and Nation Branding concepts applied to the Taiwanese political and cultural context, with particular reference to the ability of these categories to communicate effectively in Europe. The different interpretations of the concepts of Nation Branding and Soft Power are analysed as well as the different implementations of cultural promotion from the democratic turn of the Country until the end of the second presidential term of Ma Jing-yeou. The communicational strategies adopted over the years by Taiwanese institutional actors and how they conformed to peculiar and specific identity instances are mainly linked to internal political dynamics. The shaping of Taiwanese national identity seemed to be the main target in most of the practices adopted in the last decades, a dynamic that occasionally fails while dealing with the syncretism of contemporary global communication. The extraordinary vivacity of the Taiwanese artists and the vibrant cultural scene of the country sometimes appears constrained

within the strict limits imposed by the international community and Taiwan Soft Power fails to convey a message suited to the polysemy of post-modern society. The research hypothesis focuses on the impact of Taiwanese soft power in Europe, in particular on the inability of the structures dedicated to the Taiwanese cultural promotion in Europe to create a real impact. As Nye stressed “actions speak louder than words, and Public Diplomacy that appears to be mere window dressing for Hard Power projection is unlikely to succeed.” Taiwanese structure for promoting his image in the Western countries it is too focused on an approach incapable of adequately rendering the country's cultural vitality and the energy of the democratic process generated in Taiwan in the last few decades.

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Evolution and Dimensions of Taiwanese Soft Power and its Effectiveness in Europe

“In diplomacy, you can’t buy friends, you only rent them.” Free China Review (1998)

The Republic of China (hereinafter ROC or Taiwan) “status discrepancy”, as the unbalance between the power of the Taiwanese economy and the weak international projection, has been described and analysed by many scholars. The participation of the country in international activities and its foreign relations are severely restricted and often threatened due to the pressure from People’s Republic of China (hereinafter PRC or China). The criticalities of the external projection of the Republic of China concerning Soft Power can be summarized in the absence of official relations with China and with the major powers, the omission from the main international organizations, a strict dependence from the United States as the main ally, and a disputed and indefinite national identity both inside and outside the Country. Western public opinion has been mentioning Taiwan exclusively in relation with the geopolitical tensions with Beijing and occasionally due to exceptional events, mostly natural disasters. For Taiwan, development aid represents an enormous opportunity to address the issues in foreign policy and to try to establish some kind of Soft Power, but the effectiveness of this type of action is exclusively limited to the nations of South East Asia, the islands of the Pacific region and some Central and Southern states of the American continent. The peculiar condition of Taiwan and the effectiveness of a Soft Power

policy for a small nation with a rival of enormous political and economic dimensions will be analyzed. A strategic approach focused on development aid which is designed specifically for both diplomatic allies and the countries of South East Asia has produced excellent results, while no comprehensive strategy has ever been adopted for Public Diplomacy in Europe. The research aims to analyze the impact of Taiwanese Soft Power in Europe, through the reconstruction of the different policies adopted over decades with particular reference to the significant and substantial changes implemented both in the content and in the modalities to be conveyed. The need to reformulate the content to be conveyed through Public Diplomacy, following the different interpretation of the concept of Taiwanese national identity, but also the need to implement strategies linked to different contexts, has so far rewarded the modalities adopted both in the Asia Pacific region and in United States of America. In addition to the aforementioned activities linked to development aid implemented in the South East Asia region and with the diplomatic allies of Taiwan in the Pacific and Latin America, the Republic of China exerts considerable influence through a constant action of Public Diplomacy in the United States. It is an activity mostly practiced through institutional lobbying. The Taiwanese needs in Europe, in terms of projection, are closely linked to a Soft Power dynamic focused on cultural promotion, a familiarization with the distinctive features of Taiwan, and the success of the process of democratization. The geostrategic reasons that indissoluble link the United States and Taiwan are not applicable to the European context and the strictly economic reasons cannot compete with the great attraction of the Chinese economy for the European market.

Soft Power, Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy in Taiwan

Soft Power

The idea of power is defined by Robert Gilpin, as “one of the most troublesome in the field of international relations¹ or as Steven Lukes said the idea

of power is primitive in the specific sense that its meaning cannot be elucidated by

¹ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 13.

reference to other notions whose meaning is less controversial than its own”².

The quote from John Locke on having power as the ability to “make or able to receive, any change”³ is particularly relevant, due to Taiwan's unique international situation. His inability to generate or receive change is obviously heavily conditioned, disproportionately higher than most other state actors. Joseph Nye defines power as the ability to influence the behaviour of others in order to get the desired and argues that there are three primary ways to do that: coerce with threats; induce behavioural change with payments; or attract and co-opt. It is clearly evident how the first two dynamics of power are very difficult to implement for Taiwan, because of the Chinese pressure and the impossibility of competing with Beijing in the eventual search to induce changes through economic compensation. The latter dimension of power is Soft Power, getting others to appreciate you to the extent that they change their behaviour to your liking. In his book *Soft Power* Nye describe the concept as: “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment”⁴ while some years later, Nye extended his definition into

the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes”⁵.

This extension of the concept is suitable for describing the Taiwanese attempts for international projection. Taiwan successes in this field were far remarkable and were gained not only through development aid but also through a real cultural diplomacy promoted in Taipei: the ability to express a strong cultural influence particularly in the Asian region through the hits of pop music, in television shows and in movies with acclaimed authors such as Ang Lee and Tsai Ming-Liang, in addition to the extraordinary success of brand recognized around the world as HTC, Acer, Asus and Giant among others. The successes in the field of the promotion of Taiwanese culture have had significant effects among the countries of the region, despite the absence of proper dedicated policies at least until recent times. While in the Western countries, and especially in Europe, the results have not been satisfactory. The projection of an effective communication of Taiwan in Europe has suffered substantially from the lack of a single guideline and the multiple changes and modifications of the

2 Steven Lukes, “Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds,” *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 33 (2005): 477, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298050330031201>.

3 John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Civil Government and a Letter concerning Toleration* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946), 111.

4 Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), X.

5 Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 20-21.

fundamental values to be promoted. In the first part, the various phases of Taiwanese international projection will be analysed, in particular the different representation of the country implemented by governments that succeeded one another from the democratization. Both the Kuomintang (KMT) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) during their respective governments have applied the formula of Soft Power, in search of an international attention. Taiwan's scholar Lin Bi-jaw, stated how the country consider Soft Power as a much broader concept than the one outlined by Nye, a concept that:

*includes power elements other than military strength and punitive sanctions, which enhance a country's attractiveness. These elements comprise culture, political system, openness of the information society, education, ideology, economic models, economic competitiveness, IT innovation, foreign investment and international aid.*⁶

The Taiwanese peculiar situation in the international arena require a distinction between global and diplomatic recognition. The latter is an exclusively state practice by which states recognize one another's equal sovereign status abroad. It requires formal written agreement among states. Although Taiwan has solid internal sovereignty (territory, people, and central authority), it has weak external sovereignty (diplomatic recognition) because Beijing includes Taiwan in its "one China stance"⁷. The interconnection between culture and national identity has been analysed by many scholars and it is evident that culture itself is an element of international affairs⁸. The difficulty of

6 Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, "The Conception of Soft Power and its Policy Implications: a comparative study of China and Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 17-56 (2008): 425-447, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560802000191>.

7 Young Chul Cho and Mun Suk Ahn, "Taiwan's international visibility in the twenty-first century: A suggestive note," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 72-1 (2017): 86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702017692608>.

8 Among the others: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1983); John Matthew Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986). More specifically on the construction of Taiwanese identity through cultural processes: A-Chin Hsiau, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge, 2003); Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Jean-Francois Duprae, *Culture Politics and Linguistic Recognition in Taiwan: Ethnicity, National Identity, and the Party System* (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge 2017); Mark Harrison, *Legitimacy, Meaning and Knowledge in the Making of Taiwanese Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Shale Horowitz, Uk Heo, and Alexander C. Tan, eds., *Identity and change in East Asian conflicts: the cases of China, Taiwan, and the Koreas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); John Makeham and A-chin Hsiau, eds., *Cultural, Ethnic and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan: Bentuhua* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Shelley Rigger, *Taiwan's Rising Rationalism: Generations, Politics, and Taiwanese Nationalism Policy studies* (Washington: East-West Center, 2006); Jung Shaw-wu, "Building Civil Society on Rubble. Citizenship and the Politics of Culture in Taiwan," *Critique of Anthropology* 32-1, (2016): 20-42; Wang Horng-luen, "Rethinking the Global and the National: Reflections on National Imaginations in Taiwan," *Theory, Culture & Society* 17 (2000): 93-117, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760022051338>; Yang Zhong, "Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25-99 (2016): 336-352, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1104866>.

the small countries to exercise some sort of Soft Power has been discussed in depth by scholars⁹, in particular with reference to the states born immediately after the fall of the Soviet empire¹⁰ but the Taiwanese peculiarities, both due to the Chinese pressures and to the evolution of the process of national identity in the last decades, outline a totally distinct and unique framework.

Public Diplomacy

Any international projection it cannot be put into practice without a prior conceptualization of the internal cultural policy, so any reference on Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in Taiwan, where the national identity has been interpreted and rebuilt several times during the last decades, becomes a complex operation. The issues connected with Public Diplomacy are closely linked to the constructs of national identity both with regards to those generated from self-perception processes and those artificially constructed by the state apparatus¹¹. The Taiwanese identity has been described as “an open-ended discursive process”¹² and as “a multitude of politically constitutive, partial and negotiated narratives”¹³. While Public Diplomacy and Soft Power have many common points in most countries, on this regard the Taiwanese case differs. In Taipei, it is good practice to consider the lack of news dedicated to Taiwan as a positive all-round element. Any reference to politics and the Taiwanese international projection inevitably raises repercussions and exacerbates relations with Beijing. In the case of actions aimed at reconciliation with the People's Republic of China, internal reactions are strong. The caution and attention that constitute the norm in the diplomatic communication of any country become exponential in the Taiwanese case, each of the officials interviewed for this research has explicitly mentioned how the chain of command of communication is absolutely rigid and meticulously structured. The constant feature of the communication to the outside of the ROC has always been a careful weighting, a way that was

9 Among the others: Jozef Batora, “Public Diplomacy in Small and Medium-Sized States: Norway and Canada,” *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2005), https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20050300_cli_paper_dip_issue97.pdf; Alan Chong, “Small state soft power strategies: virtual enlargement in the cases of the Vatican City State and Singapore,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23-3 (2010): 383-405, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2010.484048>.

10 Toms Rostoks and Andris Sprūds, eds., *The Different Faces of “Soft Power”: The Baltic States and Eastern Neighbourhood between Russia and the EU* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2015).

11 Jan Melissen, “Concluding reflections on soft power and public diplomacy in East Asia” in Sook Jong Lee and Jan Melissen, eds., *Public diplomacy and soft power in East Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 247-262.

12 Mark Harrison, “Art, Violence and Memory: Retelling the Story of the Beautiful Island”, Keynote speech for the conference *Taiwan: The View from the South, Canberra, January 9 2015*. Canberra: <http://ciw.anu.edu.au/events/2015/taiwanconference/>.

13 Adina Simona Zemanek, “Nation branding in contemporary Taiwan: a grassroots perspective, Culture, Theory and Critique” (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2018.1431949>.

accomplished through a series of approvals and vetoes for each single initiative or communication. A model that obviously is not very suitable for contemporary global communication, especially that conveyed by new media. Even initiatives exclusively focused to the cultural level are subject to protests and boycotts by the People's Republic of China. A significant example is Beijing's request in 2003 to keep the Taiwan Pavilion out of the official program of the Venice Biennial¹⁴. Since then the Taiwanese Pavilion has been listed among the "Collateral Events".

The cultural diplomacy's role in presenting a national image and its contribution to national domestic objectives is the subject of many studies in the field of international relations. The case of the Taiwan with its peculiarities due to the relationship with PRC and the difficulty of presenting a unique and distinct image for the European public represent a very interesting research field. The emphasis on national image within cultural diplomacy could be designed around specific points of interest, directed to different subjects. Experts of cultural diplomacy have recently made a proposal to structure images and distinct national projections for various stakeholders, a solution that could be the most suitable for a Taiwanese projection in Europe. A custom approach which could focus on Taiwan's cultural distinctiveness and vitality, but also on its economic and technological achievements describing the country as a pathway to the Chinese culture and a blend of ancient and modern.

Nation Branding

The international dynamics have created an increasingly pronounced competition between the different states to gain the greatest possible visibility. This is obviously not an unprecedented situation, since the birth of nation states there has been a dynamic of building national identity through different categories such as a shared culture, a common history and a unique symbolism. However, this was a process of internal standardization, aimed mainly at its own citizens. While in

14 For a complete and exhaustive analysis of the communication strategies adopted by the curators for the Taiwanese Pavilion in Venice: We Chu-Chiun, "From National Art to Critical Globalism. The Politics and Curatorial Strategies of the Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale," *Third Text* 27- 4 (2013): 470– 484, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2013.814444>.

the contemporary world the national identities are already shaped and the process is directed towards foreign publics and corporations. The concept of Nation Branding has been strongly criticized in recent years by various scholars, in particular for the excessive use of marketing practices related to a complex dimension such as that of national identity. The very definition of the concept presents obvious controversies¹⁵. For the purposes of this work it is possible to rely on a very essential definition of Nation Branding as a dynamic that has its goal in enhancing the general perception of a country in the foreign audience or, as Peter van Ham stressed: “Nation Branding is the conscious effort of state officials to define/redefine peoples understanding and view of their country”¹⁶. Gyorgy Szondi in his *Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences* traces the differences between Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding very effectively¹⁷, underlining the depoliticized context and the objective centred mainly on the economic interests of Nation Branding, as opposed to the purely political nature extraneously linked to an identity discourse of Public Diplomacy. A de-politicization of the international projection action of Taiwan clearly appears as a favourable dimension in light of the peculiar situation of the country's international relations. The majority of the “new nations” suffer a great deal of difficulty in the international projection because of both the existence of previous narratives strongly rooted in the public opinion and the discourses transmitted by the media. A trend that mainly concerned those countries born in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet bloc but which is nonetheless directly attributable to the Taiwanese case given the substantial difference between the country before and after the democratic reforms. Unlike other countries in the region, such as South Korea, the process of democratization has involved a total redefinition of its cultural identity together with process of De-Sinicization. An interesting perspective has been proposed by Adina Simona Zemanek, which presented an elaboration of the concept of Nation Branding connected to the dynamics of the grassroots agents¹⁸. The methodological approach adopted by Zemanek can be useful for a real involvement of all the social actors in a dynamic of Nation Branding that goes beyond a strategy

15 Melissa Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Andrew Graan, “The Nation Brand Regime: Nation Branding and the Semiotic Regimentation of Public Communication,” *Contemporary Macedonia. Signs and Society* 4 (2016); Sue Curry Jansen, “Designer nations: Neo-liberal nation branding – Brand Estonia,” *Social Identities* 14-1 (2008): 121-142, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630701848721>; Nadia Kaneva, “Simulation nations: Nation brands and Baudrillard’s theory of media”, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, (January 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417751149>.
16 Peter van Ham, “Branding Territory: Inside the Wonderful Worlds of PR and IR Theory,” *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 31, (2002): 251, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298020310020101>
17 Gyorgy Szondi, *Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences*, (The Hague: Netherlands institute of international relations Clingendael, 2008) <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/public-diplomacy-and-nation-branding-conceptual-similarities-and-differences>: 17.
18 Adina Simona Zemanek, *Nation branding in contemporary Taiwan*.

excessively linked to government stimuli. However, it should be remembered that a marketing-based approach to diplomacy can be a double-edged sword for Taiwan, despite being an attractive option. As Jan Melissen stressed Nation Branding: “it is looked upon favourably in a number of transition countries and also among the very small and invisible nations”¹⁹. Critical approaches to the concept of Nation Branding and in particular to the use made by the practitioners, can easily be found in many essays and studies that clearly expose the limits and the unknowns of these operative strategies and the limited possibility of empirical verification of the implemented actions. However, the operational capacity of the concept outside of the rigid patterns of Public Diplomacy, and in this way away from the continued tension with the People's Republic of China, can constitute a viable mode of action for the Taiwanese projection outside the national borders. At least some elements of the operational strategies can constitute an effective practical methodology.

Goal of Taiwanese international projection

Mark Leonard listed all the possible achievements for Public Diplomacy in a hierarchical order:

A) Increasing people’s familiarity with one’s country (making them think about it, updating their images, turning around unfavourable opinions). B) Increasing people’s appreciation of one’s country (creating positive perceptions, getting others to see issues of global importance from the same perspective). C) Engaging people with one’s country (strengthening ties – from education reform to scientific co-operation; D) encouraging people to see us as an attractive destination for tourism, study, distance learning; E) getting them to buy our products; F) getting to understand and subscribe to our values. G) Influencing people (getting companies to invest, publics to back our positions or politicians to turn to us as a favoured partner)²⁰.

Clearly the objectives A, B, C and D, are crucial for the Taiwanese government, in its attempt to

¹⁹ Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 20.

²⁰ Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy* (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2000): 9-10.

circumvent the Chinese pressure. The need to promote products or establish new business relationships is a secondary need, given the liveliness of the industrial sectors of the country. According to Jens Nielsen Sigsgaard:

Public Diplomacy activities can roughly be divided in to three dimensions depending on the specific needs in different scenarios. These three dimensions are reactive, proactive and relationship building – and can be directed towards the political/military, economic or societal/cultural areas or any combination of these”.²¹

The Taiwanese government has never explicitly shown willingness to generate variations with respect to short-term reactions. Rather, efforts have always been made both with the proactive approach, linked to the medium-term objective, and with the building relationship approach, particularly aimed at the countries of South East Asia. The scenarios in which the Taiwanese Soft Power has been exercised are the political ones, but mainly through the social and cultural areas. Attempts to influence political choices in the military and political fields have taken place through dynamics not linked to Soft Power or Public Diplomacy but directly related to lobbying action in Washington.

Evolution of Taiwanese international projection

The Regime

During the first decades of the existence of the Republic of China, particularly in the years following the Korean War, anti-communism and the political and cultural opposition to the People's Republic of China, perceived by many observers as the only possible resistance, constituted the main Soft Power weapon for Taiwan. The anti-communism was the main dimension that fuelled relations between Taiwan and the United States and allowed Washington's logistical, political and economic support to the Chiang Kai-shek regime. The strongly authoritarian policy, the constant violations of human rights and the poor respect both of the indigenous cultures and the civil liberties of the Taiwanese population did not leave much room for other political options to gain consensus through a dynamic of Soft Power. The first action taken in an area linked to cultural promotion was a reaction

²¹ Jens Nielsen Sigsgaard, *The New Era of Diplomacy*.

to the events of the Cultural Revolution in China. In May 1966, the regime launched the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement, which was a political attempt to demonstrate to the international community that the “true” Chinese culture was on the island of Formosa²². The action of the Taiwanese government was aimed at preserving and maintaining the traditions that the communist regime in Beijing was systematically destroying. It was an opportunity to revivify the image of the ROC globally and at the same time the first time the Taiwanese regime differed culturally from the Chinese one²³. A situation that slowly began to change in 1972 with the first US opening towards China and which will be radically changed by the diplomatic recognition of Beijing in 1979. Since the early 70s Taiwan has been mentioned among the examples of the Asian economic miracle, along with South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong. Thus acquiring an unprecedented source of Soft Power, the “Made in Taiwan” brand begins to be known initially only as a synonym for low-cost products and later gaining a solid reputation in the Western world. However, it was a model mostly dedicated to supply to large companies, a dynamic linked to a business-to-business model rather than directly oriented to the consumer. The country is not among the producers of high-quality goods, both in terms of product and customer service capability²⁴. The beginning of a cultural policy directed, also, towards the foreign countries can be dated in 1981, with the institution of the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA). Most of the scholars place temporally in 1986 the actual beginning of the democratization process of the country, with the formation of the DPP and the presentations of some candidates in the 1986 Legislative election and the subsequent removal of the martial law in the following year²⁵. However, since the beginning of the 80s, significant changes were gradually taking place in the Taiwanese society²⁶. The departments in charge of the administration for cultural

22 For some contemporary reflections on both the first attempt to promote the Taiwanese image and on the role of intellectuals in the regime phase: Mei Wen-li “The Intellectuals on Formosa,” *The China Quarterly* 15 (July–September 1963); Wang Shou-Nan, “Chiang Kai-Shek and the Promotion of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement,” *Chinese Studies in History* 21- 2 (2014): 66-90, DOI: 10.2753/CSH0009-4633210266; Kenneth Starr, “Cultural Problems on Nationalist Taiwan,” *France-Asie/Asia* V. XVIII (September–December 1962); Warren Tozer, “Taiwan’s Cultural Renaissance: A Preliminary View,” *The China Quarterly* 43 (September 1970): 81-99;

23 Wang Fu-chang, “Why bother about school textbooks? An analysis of the origin of the disputes over Renshi Taiwan textbooks in John Makeham, ed., *Cultural, ethnic, and political nationalism in contemporary Taiwan Bentuhua*, (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

24 Simon Anholt, *Places: Identity, image and reputation* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

25 J. Bruce Jacobs, *Democratizing Taiwan* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Yun-han Chu, *Crafting Democracy in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1992); Hung-mao Tien, ed., *Taiwan’s Electoral Politics and Democratic Transition: Riding the Third Wave* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1995); Howard Feldman and Andrew J. Nathan, *Constitutional Reform and the Future of the Republic of China. Taiwan in the Modern World* (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge, 1992); Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, “The First Chinese Democracy: Political Development of the Republic of China on Taiwan, 1986-1994,” *Asian Survey* 34-3 (March 1994): 213-230; Shao-chuan Leng and Cheng-yi Lin, “Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?,” *The China Quarterly* 136 (December 1993): 805-839.

26 With regards to the transition of authoritarianism: Tun-Jen Cheng and Stephan Haggard, *Political Change in Taiwan*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991).

diplomacy had transitioned through several departments which

included the Ministry of Education (MOE), Government Information Office (GIO, 1947-2012), Bureau of Cultural Affairs (under the MOE, 1967-1973) and the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement Committee (established in 1966); none of them was in charge of the formulation of cultural policies”²⁷.

Until the creation of the CCA, all sorts of cultural policies were under the direct control of the KMT but as Chun-Ying Wei clearly points out in his research dedicated to the Taiwanese cultural promotion, only in 1990 with the organization of the National Cultural Conference and the openings of two cultural centres in the following years, the foundations of a true politics dedicated to cultural projection is finally built²⁸. The concept of national sovereignty in Taiwan has been “affected by political transformation, alternations of the party in power and open partisan divides that do not occur in PRC politics”²⁹, until the 1990s, the semantic compromises, tacitly endorsed by Washington, Beijing and Taipei, were surprisingly able to survive a state-centric world order.

The democratic path

Lee Teng-hui's presidency radically changed this approach in several ways: the many references in public talks to the Taiwanese possession of those attributes that define sovereignty (such as a delimited territory and a population, an autonomous government with full control over its territory and a series of international relations with the other countries), the opening to eventual recognition both by the PRC and by the ROC and above all the definition of the Cross Strait relations as State to State relations, or at least to state to State “special” relations³⁰. Together with the political scenario, even the cultural one underwent very strong changes, a process of cultural reconstruction began that determined a revitalization of the cultural landscape of the country. All stimuli that

27 Chun-Ying Wei, “Taiwan’s Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Policy: A Case Study Focusing on Performing Arts (1990-2014)”, (PhD. dissertation, Goldsmiths, University of London), available at <http://research.gold.ac.uk/22358/>, p.10.

28 Ibidem.

29 Jacques de Lisle, “Soft Power in a Hard Place: China, Taiwan, Cross-Strait. Relations, and U.S. Policy,” *Orbis* 54-4 (Fall 2010): 514.

30 For detailed resources on Lee Teng-hui's policy with particular attention to the processes of national identity construction, consult among others: Lee Teng-Hui, *The Road to Democracy. Taiwan's Pursuit of Identity* (Tokyo: PHP Institute, 1999); Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *Lee Teng-hui and Taiwan's Quest for Identity* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

concluded to a revision of the concept of national identity, a process of detachment from Chinese culture and a re-appropriation of the indigenous culture³¹. During his presidency, in 1998, the first real programmatic document regarding cultural promotion was produced, *The White Paper for Culture*³² focused on Taiwanese cultural planning but even on the use of culture as an instrument of international projection. The main idea of the document was to “nourish new culture, establish the new Central Plain, re-construct new society”, the concept of Central Plain refers to the lower areas of the Yellow River, which is considered the cradle of Chinese civilization³³. An interpretation that puts Chinese culture at the centre of the scene, despite the attempts to fuel and promote a distinct Taiwanese identity. Although the term Soft Power is never explicitly mentioned in the document, culture is repeatedly referred to as a crucial international competition tool for Taiwan. Chen Shui-bian, the first president of the DPP in charge from 2000 to 2008, organized his electoral agenda focusing on Taiwanese multiculturalism and on the need to consider the different ethnicities of the country. The idea of “multicultural Taiwan”, composed of the four main ethnic groups, the Taiwanese indigenous people, the Mainlanders, the Hakka and the Hoklo, that coexist harmoniously within a democratic society is an epoch-making change that strongly diverge from the idea implemented by the previous KMT governments³⁴. Chen Shui-bian referred to Soft Power directly several times during his presidency, often citing democracy and civil right as the primary tool for Taiwanese Soft Power³⁵. At the end of his first mandate in 2004 *The White Paper for Culture* was published and it represents both the programmatic document on the themes of the culture of the DPP and the electoral propaganda platform for the upcoming elections. The central idea is the use of

31 Hsiao Hsin-Huang Michael, “Coexistence and synthesis: Cultural globalization and localization in contemporary Taiwan” in Peter. L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Many globalizations: Cultural diversity in the contemporary world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 48-67; Gunter Schubert and Jens Damm, eds., *Taiwanese identity in the twenty-first century: domestic, regional and global perspectives* (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge, 2011); Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?*; Hsin-I Sydney Yueh, *Identity Politics and Popular Culture in Taiwan. A Sajian Generation* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).

32 Council for Cultural Affairs. Taiwan. ROC, *The 1998 White Paper for Culture* [1998 文化白皮書]. (Taipei: Council for Cultural Affairs. Taiwan. ROC, 1998)

33 Chun-Ying Wei, “*Taiwan’s Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Policy: A Case Study Focusing on Performing Arts (1990-2014)*”, (PdD diss., University of London, 2017), <http://research.gold.ac.uk/22358/>: 91.

34 For detailed work on the process initiated by Chen Shui-bian: Lams Lutgard and Liao Xavier Li-wen, “Tracing Taiwanization Processes in Taiwanese Presidential Statements in Times of Cross-Strait Rapprochement,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 40-1 (2011): 63-98; Fiorella Allio, “Ethnic and National Identities in Taiwan: The Dynamics of the Identity Issue in Taiwan,” *China Perspectives* 28 (March-April 2000): 43-50; Chang Hui-Ching and Rich Holt, “Taiwan and ROC: A Critical Analysis of President Chen Shui-bien’s Construction of Taiwan Identity in National Speeches,” *National Identities* 11-3 (2009): 301-330, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608940903082885>; Andreas Fulda “Re-evaluating the Taiwanese Democracy Movement,” *Critical Asian Studies* 34-3 (2002): 357-394. For a critical perspective of the aforementioned changes in Taiwanese society: John F. Cooper, *Taiwan's Democracy on Trial: Political Change During the Chen Shui-bian Era and Beyond*, University (Lanham: Press of America, 2010).

35 Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, “The Conception of Soft Power and its Policy Implications: a comparative study of China and Taiwan,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 17-56 (August 2008): 432, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560802000191>.

Taiwan culture as a tool for international projection. The reference dedicated to Europe are minor and the paper seems more as having been thought of as a tool to nurture and generate a renewed Taiwanese national identity. The focal point remains the relationship with the People's Republic of China, the other countries of the region and the United States of America. Culture is considered not only as a means to increase the visibility of the country abroad but also as a real economic resource in itself and as an important basis for all the Taiwanese creative industries, in particular for the many companies operating in New Media and IT. Chun-Ying Wei in her research highlights the role of Ms Tchen Yu-chiou³⁶, the first CCA Chairperson in the DPP government (2000-2004), in the programming of Taiwanese cultural industry. In particular, a series of researches dedicated to Taiwanese theatre, literature and music³⁷ were made under his direction. The main objective of these studies, hitherto unpublished, was above all linked to a process of De-Sinicization of the country's cultural industry. The research led to the discovery and elaboration of a complex interweaving of the main ethnic groups that inhabited the country and the various forms of cultural expression and provided an important starting point for the development of a new national identity.

Ma Ying-jeou: a mature role for Soft Power

Even before his election as president Ma Ying-jeou stressed the crucial role of democratic values for Taiwanese Soft Power. During his trip to Europe in 2006 as Chairman of the KMT he highlighted the possibility of using Taiwanese Soft Power to improve Cross Strait Relations³⁸. Ma Ying-jeou presidential mandates (2008-2016) were strongly focused on economic development and on the need to establish a new course of relations with the People's Republic of China. During his mandate he repeatedly stressed the adherence to the “One China Policy” principle and refused any reference to processes of separatism or the request for the implied sovereignty. Taiwanese culture in the interpretation of Ma is “Chinese culture with Taiwanese characteristics” with a clear shifting in the discourse of cultural identity. In Ma interpretation of pragmatic diplomacy culture is not only

36 Chun-Ying Wei, “Taiwan’s Cultural Diplomacy”: 93.

37 The research was later published: Tchen Yu-chiou, Lin, Huicheng Fang and Chiung-Yao. *Magnificent creative industries – the first lesson for cultural and creative industries in Taiwan* [文創大觀 1 台灣文創的第一堂課], (Taipei: The Eurasian Publishing Group, 2013), cited in Chun-Ying Wei, “Taiwan’s Cultural Diplomacy”.

38 Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, “The Conception of Soft Power”: 432.

a primary and essential instrument, but is the main international projection tool for Taiwan³⁹. Under Ma's presidency there is a crucial change in the organizational structure for state agencies dedicated to communication abroad. The Government Information Office (GIO) is abolished and a new Ministry of Culture is established, as Gary Rawnsley in his study on Public Diplomacy policies during Ma's mandates highlight this change "reflected a renewed emphasis on culture as the defining theme of Taiwan's external communications and engagement"⁴⁰. The creation of the Public Diplomacy Coordination Council within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is closely linked to a new conception of Soft Power, much more oriented towards cultural rather than political dynamics. But also a direct consequence of the new approach in Cross Strait relations and a depoliticization of the international profile of Taiwan. GIO and MOFA merged on 20 May 2012⁴¹, the activities implemented by the GIO will be carried out from October 2012 by two different units, a Department of International Communication and a Coordination Council for Public Diplomacy. The Department of International Communication is a formal unit of MOFA while the Coordination Council for Public Diplomacy was intended to be under direct control of Executive Yuan, but ended to be hosted at MOFA. Broadcasting, publishing, music, cinema and in general everything related to cultural consumption was given direct control by the Ministry of Culture. The International Information Service (IIS) was thought and structured for an era in which Public Diplomacy was mostly focused on a univocal dynamic, where the communicative flows represented the official thought of the government and took place through official communiqués and audio-visual products. The description of the GIO activity in 1995 mentioned by Rawnsley in his study are significant of this approach:

The GIO disseminates to the international community the Republic of China's goals and the fruits of its hard work, emphasizing that the ROC is marching toward political democratization, economic liberalization, and social openness. The GIO also stresses that the ROC is participating in the activities of the international community, performing its duties as a member of that community. The GIO maintains and enhances friendly relations with the mass media abroad, providing them with a variety of materials at all

39 Liao Jane, "Competition and cooperation of Cross-Strait sinology promotions: Confucius Institute and Taiwan Academy" [兩岸海外漢學推廣的競與合: 以「孔子學院」及「臺灣書院」為例], *National Central Library Bulletin* 101-2: 113-138.

40 Gary Rawnsley, "Soft Power Rich, Public Diplomacy Poor: An Assessment of Taiwan's External Communications," *The China Quarterly* 232 (December 2017): 1-20, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741017001084>.

41 Hsieh Chia-chen and Bear Lee, "65-year-old GIO to disappear", *Focus Taiwan*, February 27, 2012, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/atps/201202270019>.

times so as to make the international community speedily and fully understand the ROC government's policies and achievements (...) The GIO cooperates with and assists our overseas organizations in strengthening and expanding the use of audio-visual materials through such channels as the news media, scholarly circles, the world of education, the overseas Chinese community, student groups abroad, etc.⁴²

The tasks of the GIO were then assigned to the MOFA, with the exception of the management of publications, audio visuals and in particular of the cinema that were entrusted to the Ministry of Culture while the domestic information department became a duty of the Executive Yuan's spokesperson. According to Rawnsley:

few democracies have such a separate institution tasked with designing and coordinating external communications, but few democracies face the political challenges in the international system that Taiwan confronts on an almost daily basis⁴³.

In particular, the unprecedented structure dedicated to communication to the outside seems to be directly linked to the need to establish good relations with Beijing. Hence the beginning of a promotion of Taiwan as a place of "traditional" Chinese culture, that has not been transformed by the cultural revolution. As a place to find all those elements that have now disappeared in the People's Republic of China. Ma proposed and presented the project for a "Cultural Diplomacy Endowment" which was supposed to promote and coordinate all cultural and artistic promotion activities and to create links both at the academic level and at the level of international organizations⁴⁴. The actual start of the structure was first postponed for economic reasons and was never realized during his presidency. The plan for the "Global Outreach Action Plan", initially conceived as a four-year plan, was implemented from 2013 to 2016 and was dedicated to the development of Taiwanese Soft Power. The crucial point was to use the cultural strength of the country to counterbalance the weakness of traditional diplomacy⁴⁵. Another initiative launched by President Ma Ying-jeou during the electoral campaign prior to the first election and actually implemented in 2011 was the Taiwan Academy. The first three Taiwan Academies were set up in 2011 in New York, Houston and Los Angeles; those are structures with a wide spectrum of

42 GIO (Government Information Office of the Republic of China), *The Republic of China Handbook*. (Taipei: GIO, 1995): 11-13, cited in Gary Rawnsley, "Soft Power Rich".

43 Gary Rawnsley, "Soft Power Rich": 11.

44 Chun-Ying Wei, "Taiwan's Cultural Diplomacy": 93.

45 Ibidem: 100.

objectives, mostly related to both to the cultural promotion of Taiwan and to the teaching of the Chinese language. During the presentation of the three academies it was announced the opening of other offices, called “contact points” in 64 countries⁴⁶. These countries included the main European countries, but in some interviews with MOFA officials who followed the Taiwanese cultural promotion in Europe the interviews explicitly stated that it is the overwhelming majority of cases of a “plaque affixed to the existing offices of the Taiwanese representation”⁴⁷. While in some cases the implementation of these offices was not realized. In all official communiqués there is always a distinction, on the part of the Taiwanese institutions, regarding the supposed difference between the Taiwan Academy and the Confucius Institutes. A distinction that can be easily connected to Ma's policy of reconciliation with Beijing. During Ma's presidency, the first lady Chow Mei-ching played an important role in the promotion of Taiwanese culture, first of all by facing numerous trips abroad. Several Taiwanese companies touring abroad such as the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, the Ju Percussion Group and the Contemporary Legend Theatre, named Ms Chow as their honorary president. A dynamic that allowed an official projection of the country, without the controversies that would have been generated by a direct support of the Taiwanese premier.

Consequences of new structure

Both *White Papers for Cultures* (1998 and 2004) highlighted the importance of a Ministry of Culture, an institution that was established only in 2012. The Ministry guidelines were not formulated in a specific program document but focused on four objectives outlined in the 2012 on the institutional website⁴⁸:

1. To ensure that every village and township in this nation, regardless of its geographic

46 Taiwan. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Foreign Policy Report 8th Congress of the Legislative Yuan 4th Session*, Taipei, Taiwan: MOFA Foreign Policy Reports.
https://www.mofa.gov.tw/en/News_Content3.aspx?n=4BAF9BD5400A05D9&sms=BA5E856472F10901&s=AD2C0693F4D93654.

47 Interviews with MOFA officials made between March and July 2017 in Taipei.

48 Cited in Chun-Ying Wei, “Taiwan’s Cultural Diplomacy”, p. 95.

remoteness, has an equal chance to achieve its full cultural potential.

2. To contribute to the nation's soft power by promoting Taiwan's unique blend of modern and traditional cultures on the international stage.
3. To enhance the overall output and value of the nation's cultural and creative sectors.
4. To offer the nation's citizens equal accessibility to cultural resources by harnessing the power of cloud computing.

The guidelines are quite vague on the real interpretations of each of the points, it remains clear how the Taiwanese culture is considered a brand to be exported, but the contents to be promoted are not specified as well as clear guidelines are not drawn. The Ministry in its first years of existence operated principally as an implementer of existing practices and strategies, rather than promoting its own line on cultural policy or on how to support various projects. The reorganization of GIO has led to a weakening of the Taiwanese international projection, first of all the bureaucratic and centralized structure of the Ministry has not been able to interpret the multiple challenges of Soft Power in the 21st century⁴⁹. The "relations with the outside" of the Republic of China are still managed by the MOFA which must interface with multiple structures such as Ministry of Culture, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission and even with the former Mainland Affairs Commission, now called Mainland Affairs Council. The latter is a cabinet-level administrative agency under the Executive Yuan of the Republic of China which has the responsibility of planning, developing and carrying on the policies between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China⁵⁰. According to the sources interviewed by Rawnsley in his research⁵¹ the new structure dedicated to external projection has shown over the years its many flaws, in particular the lack of a figure, comparable to the former director of GIO, who has decision-making power at the top of the various agencies is the real weak spot. The policy of Taipei in those years can also be read through the lens of the framework of Cross Strait relations. The interpretation of the Taiwanese culture as the "true" Chinese culture, not affected by the cultural revolution and the social transformations of communism, has been criticized by numerous analysts for its effectiveness. The primary requirement was to approach the People's

49 Ian Hall and Frank Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition", *Asian Security* 9-1 (2013): 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2013.760926>; Gary Rawnsley, "Soft Power Rich", p. 12.

50 "Mainland Affairs Council", <https://www.mac.gov.tw/en/>.

51 Gary Rawnsley, "Soft Power Rich": 13.

Republic of China, to attract tourists from China and to represent Taiwan as a specificity within a deep bond with Chinese culture. Goals that can be considered achieved, but which are outweighed by political upheavals determined both by the Sunflower Movement and by the 2016 DPP's electoral triumph. The institutional changes described above were accompanied by the birth of the Ministry of Culture, an unprecedented structure for the Taiwanese state organization that had the task of coordinating and promoting Taiwanese culture with the explicit aim of increasing the country's international profile. The strong adherence to the values of Chinese culture is present from the beginning, with the usual differentiation with the People's Republic of China and the alleged greater adherence to the original values of the millennial legacy of the Middle Kingdom. Ms Lung Ying-tai has been the first Minister of Culture of Taiwan from 2012 to 2014, during his tenure she clearly stressed the definite separation of cultural diplomacy from the political space, both with regard to the role of the Taiwanese Academies as opposed to the Confucius Institutes⁵² and to the renewed Taiwanese projection as preservation of the original Chinese culture. In the conclusions of his essay Rawnsley lists the critical aspects of the GIO⁵³ in the years preceding its abolition and its substantial inability to comply with the functions it was supposed to perform. While understanding the reasons for Ma's choices, the British scholar of Public Diplomacy emphasizes the failure of using only cultural tools to project an image of the country⁵⁴ to the international level and emphasizes the need for a common strategy that is able to use values and democratic ideas that Taiwan has been able to express so decisively in the last decades. The policy of Taiwanese cultural projection adopted by Ma during his two presidential terms marked some successes and showed some weaknesses, especially in the conception of the structures assigned to the task. Probably the critical point was the continuous opposition with the People's Republic of China, both in terms of representation of Taiwan as holder of the "true" Chinese culture and in the establishment of structures very similar to the Confucius Institutes. It is evident the impossibility of comparison between the two countries and the obvious Chinese superiority both for investments and for the ability to attract international attention. The uniqueness of Taiwan is very clear to any external observer, but an eventual comparison in terms of image projection between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China represents an impossible challenge for Taipei.

52 Chiu Chong-Ping, "Lung Ying-tai: Taiwan Academy serves pure cultural diplomacy," *United Daily News*, 5 December 2014, <http://udn.com/NEWS/WORLD/WOR6/9111525.shtml>, cited in Chun-Ying Wei, "Taiwan's Cultural Diplomacy".

53 Gary Rawnsley, "Soft Power Rich": 16-17.

54 Idem.

A brief look on the other side of the Strait

The process of democratization of the country has determined a new dimension of Soft Power, a dynamic that has created many contrasts with the People's Republic of China. Beijing has always stressed the idea that the Chinese tradition couldn't fit with "the Western idea of democracy"⁵⁵, therefore the existence of an economically developed nation, with a consolidated democratic system, made up mostly of ethnic Chinese citizens, represents a constant challenge to the assumption promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)⁵⁶. The existence of Taiwan, that the constitution of the People's Republic of China points to be in "the sacred territory of China"⁵⁷, it represents not only a provocation but above all a denial of the ideological assumption of the foundations of the CCP and an alternative model of development for people of Chinese ancestry. According to some analysts, the Chinese attention to the concept of soft power was originated in the early 90s after several articles in Taiwan had emphasized the Chinese approach to "comprehensive national power" correlating the phenomenon to the theory of Nye. The evolution and the dimensions of Chinese soft power have been analyzed by many scholars⁵⁸, it is one of the most frequent and popular topics both in the debate among Western analysts and among Chinese scholars. The concept of Soft Power has attracted both the institutions and the Chinese academic world in an almost epidemic way, in particular, the element of culture has attracted a great amount of attention. Chinese academics and policy analysts agree with Nye that culture is a major aspect of soft power. As one of the major civilizations in the world, they argue, Chinese civilization has unique characteristics.

55 Li Chenyang, "Confucian value and democratic value," *e Journal of Value Inquiry* 31, (1997): 186–189, cited in Steve Tsang, "The Importance of Taiwan to China", *Taiwan's Impact on China, Why Soft Power Matters More than Economic or Political Inputs* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

56 For a depth study regarding the links between Taiwan democratization and national identity: Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin, "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity", *The China Quarterly* 165, (2001): 102-129, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009443901000067>.

57 China. The National People's Congress of PRC. *Constitution of PRC*, Beijing, China. http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2825.htm.

58 Among the others: Jean Marc Blanchard; Fujia Lu, "Thinking hard about soft power: a review and critique of the literature on China and soft power," *Asian Perspective*, 36-4 (2012): 565-589; Bates Gill & Yanzhong Huang (2006) Sources and limits of Chinese soft power, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 48-2 (2018): 17-36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330600765377>; Guozuo Zhang. *Research Outline for China's Cultural Soft Power*, (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2017); Nigel Inkster, "Chinese Culture and Soft Power," *Survival*, 60:3 (2018): 65-70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1470759>; Wu You, "The Rise of China with Cultural Soft Power in the Age of Globalization," *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, 8-5,(2018): 763-778, <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5836/2018.05.006>.

The emphasis on harmony, rooted in Confucianism and other schools of thoughts of ancient China, makes Chinese culture widely appealing according to the perspective of the majority of scholars from China. It promises to counter-balance the self-centered value system of the West and offers an attractive alternative to the confrontational approach to the world that has come to characterize Western, especially American, diplomacy. The extraordinary Chinese economic growth and a harmonious foreign policy, in direct contraposition to the aggressive politics of Washington, constitute the main points of attraction of the Chinese Soft Power in the interpretation accepted and promoted by the CCP. The impossibility of competing with the success of American Pop culture is balanced, in the official interpretation of Beijing, by a thousand-year capacity of Chinese culture to weave diplomatic relations. Zhou Enlai's approach during communism is frequently cited in this regard. Which is also seen in technological development not only as a source of Hard Power, but also as a model of development and social advancement. In this sense the continuous references to the peculiar relationship between a harmonious society and technological advances during the presentations of the 2025 China Plan are explanatory. In their research Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu stress how Chinese practitioners have overcome the very concept of Nye, going beyond a country's ability to influence other countries through its attractiveness to include, for example, the ability to generate compliance in a society by persuasion⁵⁹. Soft Power has become an intangible and non-quantifiable element, while interpreting the concept as "the ability to persuade others with reason and to convince others with moral principles"⁶⁰ fits perfectly with the reinterpretation of Confucianism promoted by the Chinese government. A dynamic that can reconnect to what the ancient Chinese philosopher, Mencius, called the kingly way rather than the bully's way, where the first require moral example while the latter ruling with force⁶¹. Or with the famous water metaphor expressed by Lao-tzu, which is singularly soft and weak, is unsurpassed in attacking things that are firm and strong and that the sage did not resort to violent measures to achieve his ends⁶². Chinese Soft Power is identified in three major sources — Chinese culture, China's development model, and China's independent and peaceful foreign policy⁶³. Such a model can have a major impact in many countries, but not as tangible in Taiwan. Only the second dimension, the purely economic one, has been an attractor for the Taiwanese population, while a harmonious foreign policy is not evidently perceived in Taiwan. The actions taken by the Taiwan Affairs Office, an agency directed by the

59 Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, "The Conception of Soft Power".

60 Idem: 427.

61 Qi Qianjin, "US soft power declines rapidly" [Meiguo Ruanshili Jiju Hualuo], *Liaowang Xinwen Zhoukan* (19 July 2004): 46–48.

62 Jacques de Lisle, "Soft Power in a Hard Place": 496.

63 Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, "The Conception of Soft Power": 436.

Chinese State Council, which operates with the CCP Central Propaganda Department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs among the others⁶⁴, are mostly directed at Chinese citizens. This is a structure that has the task of both monitoring the direct references to Taiwan in the public debate in the People's Republic of China and to convey within the country a vision of Taiwan congruous to the position of the CCP.

Dimension and impact of Taiwan Soft Power in Europe

Taiwan has always been an indispensable ally in the region for the United States, its strategic position in the South China Sea is a crucial asset for Washington. The very existence of Taiwan is linked to the US will to defend and protect the independence of the ROC from the years immediately following the second world conflict. The relations between the United States and Taiwan are mostly conducted on an institutional political level and Taiwan's attempts to influence orientations or beliefs have always taken place through a powerful and structured lobby that has been operating in Washington for decades. The dynamics of Taiwanese projection and interaction with the diplomatic allies and the countries of Southeast Asia are mostly characterized by an economic dimension, linked to development aid, reliefs intervention in case of natural catastrophes and infrastructure investments. Moreover, through the New Southbound Policy Taiwan is trying to generate a new perception of itself in the region, proposing the democratic system of the island as a crucial element of economic success and trying to create an interest both for the achievements in the defense of civil liberties and for the dynamic economy of the island⁶⁵. The other industrialized countries of the region, especially South Korea and Japan, have historical ties and shares continuous cultural influences with Taiwan. There is an important trade exchange, not only with Japan and South Korea but even with Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, and the Taiwanese geostrategic factor maintains a central role in the balance of the region for all those countries. Taiwan's projection needs in Europe are substantially different from those just mentioned, the ROC is not a geostrategic element essential for any of the

64 Anne-Marie Brady, "How China Frames Taiwan" in Steve Tsang, *The Importance of Taiwan to China*.

65 Among others on the New Southbound Policy: Matthew Funaiole, Bonnie S. Glaser, Scotto Kennedy, Derek Mitchell, "The New Southbound Policy: Deepening Taiwan's regional integration". (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies 2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-southbound-policy>; Alan H. Yang, "Strategic appraisal of Taiwan's New People-Centered Southbound Policy: The 4Rs approach," *Prospect Journal* 18 (2017): 1-34; Rachel Sun, "Assessing Taiwan's New Southbound Policy and the China Factor," *International Journal of Management and Applied Science* 3-11 (2017): 84-90.

European countries and the economic interchange of the individual nations with China is an inescapable dimension. The priority of Taiwan is linked to the familiarization of the European public with the peculiarities of the country, for a target mainly composed of cultural and academic elites. As for the perception of Taiwanese Soft Power in Europe, Taipei's achievements look weaker compared to the great successes obtained in the aforementioned areas and seems frequently overshadowed by the action of Beijing which, on the contrary, has attracted much attention in Europe. During various interviews with MOFA officials who have dealt with various aspects of cultural promotion in Europe, many of the interviewees mentioned how the organizational structure fails to cover the territory in a homogenous way. European cultural promotion is coordinated by the The Taiwan Cultural Centre in Paris which was established in January 1994 as Taiwan's second-ever overseas cultural centre following the 1990 launch of the Taipei Cultural Centre in New York. The Centre is located in the same building of The Taipei Representative Office in France, which is the de facto Taiwanese embassy in France. The Cultural Centre of Taiwan in France

aims to promote, on the basis of universal values that express themselves through the culture and Taiwanese arts, exchange programs and artistic and cultural cooperation between Taiwan and France, as well as with other European countries. This action aimed at artists and professionals of culture and arts, but also the general public, aims on the one hand to give more visibility to the Taiwanese culture, but also to promote the development of the cultural economy, among others through new media and the Internet⁶⁶.

In May 2012 it has been established the Cultural Division of Taipei Representative Office in the UK, as well as a similar division in Madrid and Berlin, but the activities are similar to those carried out by the other representative offices and the offices does not have an organizational capacity and an autonomous budget. The Paris office is essentially the main one dedicated to the cultural promotion of Taiwan in Europe since 2005, the Centre is part of the Forum of foreign cultural institutes in Paris (FICEP), while the other cultural promotion divisions doesn't have such an affiliation with similar institutions in other European countries. According to Chun-Ying Wei the strong links established in Paris by Cultural Centre of Taiwan in France are due to the personal ties of former Minister of Culture, Tchen Yu-chiou⁶⁷. She received her training as a classical pianist in Paris and was able to

66 "Présentation," Centre Culturel de Taïwan à Paris, accessed September 2017, <http://www.ccacctp.org/fr/cctp/>.

67 Chun-Ying Wei, "Taiwan's Cultural Diplomacy": 118.

use the connections developed during her long stay in the French capital. The same strategies adopted by the Centre are very different from those of the cultural offices within de facto Taiwanese embassies in the world, and from the Taipei Cultural Centre of New York, which however enjoys a similar autonomy. In his work, Chun-Ying Wei interviewed Mr. Chen Chih-cheng, who:

stated its vision to create a three-tier of excellence platform for international exchange. On the first platform, he focused on some spotlights, namely, cultural institutions in France and the European Union. On the second platform, he highlighted the arts festivals and biennials. These events are not affiliated to a certain institution. Finally, the director suggested creating a third platform for schools, artistic residencies and young artists. In summary, the three platforms link industry and enable the centre to understand and arrange their works accordingly⁶⁸.

In his interview Dr Chen Chih-cheng recalls the importance of a constant presence to help the Taiwanese artists to support and encourage their participation in the Avignon OFF Festival. Another point stressed in the interview, which was emphasized in the talks with other Taiwanese officials, is the fundamental role of cultural attachés in the different countries. A modality that the MOFA has so far considered not feasible for various reasons. A significant constriction in cultural exchanges with European countries lays in the difficulty of drafting framework agreements. The international status of Taiwan in many cases is an obstacle to the creation of official reports, every time there is a need to use new formulas to get around these problems. On this regard in 2015 the British Council was nominated to implement the Agreement on Educational and Cultural Matters between the British Trade and Cultural office in Taipei and the Taipei Representative Office in the United Kingdom⁶⁹, in order to have an easier official communication between the two countries. The difficulties encountered in the promotion of Taiwanese culture in Europe, but also the successes on the French territory thanks to the Parisian office, demonstrate the need to think of a more agile structure for the spread of Taiwanese Soft Power in the Old Continent. A non-departmental public body based on the arm's length principle⁷⁰, which can resemble the institution structure of the British Council, is the conclusion reached by Chun-Ying Wei in his thesis, whose work was crucial for the

68 Chun-Ying Wei, "Taiwan's Cultural Diplomacy": 118.

69 For a full coverage on the UK-Taiwan relations both on a cultural and commercial level: United Kingdom, UK Parliament. *UK Relations with Taiwan*, London, United Kingdom, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-10-24/debates/C35392B3-7225-4928-9E29-04161D5DB90E/UKRelationsWithTaiwan>, consulted 11-10-2017.

70 Stephen Hetherington, "Arm's length funding of the arts as an expression of laissez-faire," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 23-4 (2017): 482-494; cited in Chun-Ying Wei, "Taiwan's Cultural Diplomacy": 97.

realization of this research. Also the example of the Cervantes Institutes or the Goethe-Institute can be useful to outline a possible path of the promotion of the Taiwanese culture abroad. With the due differences between the various institutions, they are all dedicated to the promotion of language and culture abroad. They all receive a good part of the funds from the country of origin but remain politically and economically independent. In this way the aforementioned institutions can avoid, or at least minimize, the possible problems related to the particular international situation of Taiwan. A possible impediment could be originated from the coexistence between a body promoting Taiwanese culture and the Confucius Institutes. Already in many cases universities and institutions in Europe have encountered resistance and restrictions by the Confucius Institutes⁷¹ and a strong opposition in the case of cooperation of local actors with an institution for the promotion of Taiwanese culture is highly probable.

The success of the French office is due to the exchange and continuous communication both with the homologous institutions of the other countries and with the French cultural scene. The bureaucratic structure of MOFA can determine a number of inefficiencies, length and inflexibility in daily practice. The administrative structure then makes it almost impossible to recruit cultural workers to the site, further complicating the situation. In the words of an interviewed official, “diplomats find themselves doing things for which they do not have specific training and for which they often do not even have a particular interest”⁷². The policy of Taiwanese cultural promotion abroad is formally entrusted to the Ministry of Culture (MOC) while the exchange with the university institutions is entrusted to the Ministry of Education (MOE), but in the de facto embassies of the ROC the ambassador is often found to have a strong power decision. Each of the Taiwanese citizens sent abroad by the various departments is overseen by the Ambassador. This new rule was promulgated in 2012 to overcome the misunderstandings and communication difficulties that had occurred, documented in most of the interviews conducted. As reported by Chun-Ying Wei in the small-sized representations, diplomats have to play the role of cultural attaché while in the larger structures the staff sent by the MOE must report both to the Ministry and to the Ambassador⁷³. She

71 Within the vast bibliography dedicated to the Confucius Institutes and to the problems related to incidents of censorship and management of the contents conveyed, among others: Diego Torres, “China’s soft power offensive,” *Politico*, 26-12-2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/china-soft-power-offensive-confucius-institute-education/>; Zhenjie Yuan, Junwanguo Guo and Hong Zhu “The Debate Over Confucius Institutes. Confucius Institutes and the limitations of China’s global cultural network,” *China Information*, 30-3 (October 2016): 334 – 356; Christopher R. Hughes, “Confucius Institutes and the university: distinguishing the political mission from the cultural,” *Issues and Studies* 50-4 (2014): 45-83.

72 MOFA Official interviewed April 2017 in Taipei.

73 Chun-Ying Wei, “Taiwan’s Cultural Diplomacy”: 130.

also stresses the knowledge of the local language as a mandatory requirement, while for the diplomatic this obstacle can easily be overcome the ability to communicate is a determining factor when dealing with local artists, galleries and the press of each nation. Taiwanese personnel who speak Spanish, German or Italian are very limited and this greatly restricts the possible number of candidates⁷⁴. Obviously the recruitment of Taiwanese citizens operating on site could solve the problem, and the existence of stable and lasting ties with the cultural institutions of the individual countries and the various artistic scenes would generate a positive effect.

Furthermore, the Taiwanese cultural promotion operated by the MOFA and the MOC posed unprecedented and controversial issues. The cultural capital and artistic production can't be considered as a neutral and spurious element, but should be considered as the product of a personal interpretation that is not subject to the rules and norms of international relations or the needs of individual administrations. The most striking example of this dynamic took place during Ma's last presidential term. The curator of the Taiwanese Pavilion at the Venice Biennial Esther Lu used the ambiguous international status of Taiwan as a central theme. Showing the contradictions inherent in the impossibility for the Taiwanese artists to compete in the same way as those of other countries and coming to compare the limitations imposed by the organizers of the Biennale to those of the international order. For the first time The Pavilion showcased non-Taiwanese artists fuelling comments and controversy, in particular many Taiwanese newspapers mentioned the economic effort of the Republic of China to be able to exhibit at the Biennale, linking it to the need to be able to derive the greatest possible advantage from media exposure⁷⁵. It is an example of the conflict between a structure like that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accustomed to maintaining a low profile and avoiding delicate controversies and the needs of artists linked to a conceptualization of the problems of society. This dynamic also recalls the need to differentiate the need for overseas projection of a country and the aims that both the art world and the artists themselves apply to artistic expression. The then Minister of Culture Hung Meng-chi reported an observation by the Director of the Festival d'Avignon, Olivier Py⁷⁶, who mentioned an excessive emphasis by Taiwanese artists on both the concept of national identity and the country's unique international status.

74 Idem: 131.

75 We Chu-Chiun, "From National Art to Critical Globalism".

76 Yang Ming-yi "Focus on arts vs. presenting Taiwan: Minister Hung Meng-chi talks about the dilemma of performing arts showcases," *The Liberty Time* (20 July 2015), cited in Chun-Ying Wei, "Taiwan's Cultural Diplomacy".

Conclusions

Soft Power it is difficult to use as a foreign policy instrument and above all the measure of its effectiveness transcends a possible empirical verification⁷⁷. The main weakness of the concept of Soft Power comes from two processes, quite common among practitioners, that is the abuse of the term that has changed significantly in recent decades, and now include a wide range of new elements, and the use of Soft Power by the institutions before understanding their real conceptual dimensions⁷⁸. Most of the scholars have emphasized this last problem as the most frequent in the analysis of the Taiwanese Soft Power action. Finally, it should be noted that more attraction or familiarity does not necessarily translate into more influence. Even if the discourse of familiarity does not immediately translate into influence or a benevolent attitude, it is evident that any relation linked to the idea of “attraction without coercion” must necessarily pass through the knowledge of the basic and essential elements of the country. Taiwan's confusion with Thailand or the perception of the ROC's belonging to the People's Republic of China are the two misunderstandings in Western public opinion that all Taiwanese officials have mentioned as the cornerstone of the failure of their country's Soft Power. The phone call between the newly elected president Trump and the president of Taiwan Tsai Ing-wen has sparked much controversy in the world public opinion and especially in China. The overwhelming majority of analysts said that the gesture did not benefit Taiwanese politics⁷⁹, highlighting Taiwan's need to stay as far away from the spotlight as possible. All Taiwanese officials and ambassadors interviewed in this research have expressed openly the concept that excessive exposure but very often even simple exposure is a double-edged sword for Taiwan. The controversies and tensions that may arise from cultural initiatives, disconnected from any political objective, are innumerable. The growing tension with the People's Republic of China and the increasingly strict control that Beijing is imposing on any initiative linked to Taiwan

77 Amongst the others: Fei Jiang, “A critical discourse analysis of soft power,” in Naren Chitty, Li Ji, Gary D. Rawnsley and Craig Hayden, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power* (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge, 2017); Inderjeet Parmar and Michael Cox, eds., *Soft power and US foreign policy: theoretical, historical and contemporary perspectives* (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge, 2010).

78 Craig Hayden, *The rhetoric of soft power: Public diplomacy in global contexts* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012).

79 Evan Osnos, “The Real Risk Behind Trump’s Taiwan Call,” *The New Yorker*, 3 December, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-real-risk-behind-trumps-taiwan-call>; J. Michael Cole, “The Tsai-Trump Call: The Dynamics in Taiwan,” *The Diplomat*, 9 December, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/the-tsai-trump-call-the-dynamics-in-taiwan/>, accessed on 7 November 2017; J. Michael Cole, “Taiwan, not the US, will likely pay the price for the Trump-Tsai call,” *Lowy Institute*, 7 December, 2016, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/taiwan-not-us-will-likely-pay-price-trump-tsai-call>.

determine the impossibility of thinking of a cultural policy fed exclusively by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Substantially Taiwan is trying to promote its Soft Power with a structure, in many ways identical to the one in force before the democratic turnaround, which was created for the propaganda. The transition to the need for polysemic communication, capable of adapting to the real cultural contexts and the daily needs, shows how the appointed officials are sometimes unprepared while sometimes are reluctant in putting Taiwan on the spotlight for the aforementioned reasons. However, it is clear that projection through cultural promotion can generate an excellent response, and as in many cases outlined it has done so. Cultural production, especially that conveyed outside the national borders, was above all a moment of national identity building. The different approaches and directions that the tortuous path of creation of a Taiwanese identity has taken over the last few decades did influence the effectiveness of Soft Power. The need to structure a Soft Power policy more focused on possible users, rather than on the message and on the issuer seems urgent. The discrepancy between the real needs of Taiwanese culture and what individual governments have tried to communicate is evident. This type of conflict has generated confusion and has not brought any objective advantage, neither in terms of acceleration of the process of building national identity nor in terms of successes in the international projection of the country. According to Rawnsley:

The international system (structure) has locked Taiwan into a set of challenging arrangements over which it has little control or influence, while Taiwan's Public Diplomacy architecture and the activities organised and undertaken by its government agencies in Taipei and its representatives abroad (agency) reveal, at best, a misunderstanding of how Taiwan's soft power might be exercised more effectively⁸⁰.

The results of Taiwanese Soft Power should not be considered exclusively with a negative judgment, the dynamics of cultural promotion and Soft Power in general always have an internal goal, connected to the idea of building or shaping the national identity. In the Taiwanese case, as repeatedly stressed, this dimension is much more pronounced. It is not just a process of building national identity but also a sort of resistance to Beijing's Soft Power. The election of Tsai Ing-wen, the events of the Sunflower Movement and in general the clear separation of the overwhelming majority of the Taiwanese population with respect to a feeling of cultural belonging to China have

80 Gary D Rawnsley, "Taiwan's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 43-3 (2014): 161-174.

been a great shock for the People's Republic of China. A unification process with China requires the conquest of the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese population⁸¹, a mode that is far from happening according to the main surveys conducted in Taiwan⁸². In this particular field, essential and primary for the needs of Taipei, the Soft Power dynamics have achieved the objectives, even if they are results not contemplated in the original concept developed by Nye. While the pressure on Taiwan seems to be stronger than ever, a de-ideologized approach to Public Diplomacy, a shift from the assumption of Soft Power as a form of national power generated by institutional actors⁸³ seems inevitable. Placing Taiwan inside a Westphalian state-system thinking is just one of the possible framing for interpreting the country. As Young Chul Cho and Mun Suk Ahn stressed in their analysis:

The Taiwanese people must use their creativity and energy to produce and promote diverse Taiwans that can be respected globally. Rather than being a passive norm-follower as a small country in international relations, Taiwan can be a norm-maker or norm-organizer by offering its shared values—such as openness, respect, compassion, willingness to work hard, and international development cooperation—to protect humans and the environment and to search for equality and justice, by way of less-state-centric actors and methods in international relations⁸⁴.

In order to exploit the decentralization of information power, the Taiwanese Public Diplomacy structure appears to be too tied to an approach based on the dynamics of the Republic of China in pre-democratic times. A game where the roles and responsibilities of actors in international relations are clearly defined cannot bring benefits for the international projection of Taiwan. The definitive abandonment to the legacy of the past, the support to independence, the referendum projects or the adoption of a new denomination billed by the activists in Taiwan seems all to be totally out of a realistic interpretative framework. The consequences of reckless actions could be fatal or at least unpredictable. On the other hand, the adoption of a different structure for the promotion of the image

81 Sun Xiaoying, “Build up soft power, grasp every opportunity of peaceful unification” [‘Dazao Ruanshili, Bawo Heping Tongyi de Mei Yige Jihui’], *Dongnanya Zongheng* 12 (2004): 77–81.

82 Fang-Yu Chen, Wei-ting Yen, Austin Horng-en Wang and Brian Hioe, “The Taiwanese see themselves as Taiwanese, not as Chinese,” *The Washington Post*, 2 January, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/01/02/yes-taiwan-wants-one-china-but-which-china-does-it-want/?>; Yu Hsiao-han and Lilian Wu, “Over half of Taiwanese favor independence: poll”, *Focus Taiwan*, 27 May, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/afav/201605270005.aspx>.

83 Lee describes Taiwanese Soft Power as “a form of national power that is based on ideational and cultural attractiveness, which is intentionally or unintentionally realized by actors in international relations to achieve strategic imperatives”; Lee, Shin-wha, “The Theory and Reality of Soft Power: Practical Approaches in East Asia”, in Sook Jong Lee and Jan Melissen, *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia*: 11.

84 Young Chul Cho and Mun Suk Ahn, “Taiwan’s international visibility in the twenty-first century”: 87.

abroad, untied by the constraints that strongly delimit the international politics of the country, can be adopted. None of the Taiwanese embassies in Europe have an official Twitter or Facebook account, the MOFA itself did not have a Twitter channel until February 2018, although several officials expressed the certainty that a dedicated channel of the Taiwanese foreign ministry will be activated by first half of 2018. Only the promotion office in Paris has a Facebook account. In this contradiction the contrast between the needs of an underground and invisible diplomacy of Taipei and the necessity of a full global visibility for the cultural initiatives in the era of global communication is evident. While a network that rely on the numerous Taiwanese artists living abroad who have a network of contacts on site can be a vehicle to better promote the image of Taiwan. The syncretism of today's communication must necessarily be managed by actors who can transmit in an innovative and immediate way. In order to better communicate those economically viable creative activities that Maurizio Lazzarato calls “immaterial labour”, a term which expands beyond knowledge and information transfer to encompass:

the kinds of activities involved in defining and creating cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and more strategically, public opinion⁸⁵.

Creative activities are constrained within the strict limits imposed by the international community and fail to convey a message suited to the polysemy of post-modern society. As Nye stressed “actions speak louder than words, and Public Diplomacy that appears to be mere window dressing for Hard Power projection is unlikely to succeed”⁸⁶, Taiwanese structure for promoting his image in the Western countries it is too focused on an approach incapable of adequately rendering the country's extraordinary cultural vitality and the energy of the democratic process generated in Taiwan in the last few decades.

85 Maurizio Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labor”, in Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno, eds., *Radical Thought in Italy, a Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996): 2.

86 Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616-1 (2008): 102.

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