



# China's Soft Power Diplomacy

By Dost Muhammad Barrech

**T**he term 'soft power' for the very first time was coined in 1990s by Joseph Nye who described it as 'the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion'.

Though Nye is widely regarded as the pioneer of soft power, he replicated the ideas of soft power from Chinese sixth century BC strategist Sun Tzu from his book 'Art of War' in which he while describing the skillfulness of war said that the statecraft to win a war was without waging the war. Another Chinese renowned philosopher Confucius also followed the same principle in his leadership and said that 'ruler is expected to demonstrate moral excellence, taking wise decisions on behalf of his subjects to keep the state secure and prosperous'.

By reviewing the Chinese foreign policy, one might reach the conclusion that China gives a great deal of importance to soft power implementing the doctrines of Sun Tzu and Confucius accordingly. China through soft power demonstrates that it is a benign and responsible international actor. In this regard, William A. Callahan rightly refers to China's three global spectacles such as Shanghai's World Expo in 2010, the People's Republic of China sixteenth anniversary celebrations in 2009 and Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. The objective of organizing such international events in China is attributed to demonstrate itself as a hub of ancient wisdom and high technology that will pave the way for an alternative mode of progress for the world.

China, unlike the US has a peculiar soft power strategy in its peripheries particularly in South Asia trying to promote economic assistance, cultural diplomacy, trade and development. It has helped establish universities and Confucius Institutes in many countries to promote Chinese language and culture.

China's soft power has been increasing by leaps and bounds across the world supporting cultural exchanges, sending its teachers and doctors abroad,

accommodating and welcoming students from other countries to study in China. China in South Asian region helped and aided smaller states such as Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka to accelerate their economic growth. China has also been assisting South Asian states in catastrophic scenarios, like food and relief aids. Resultantly, it has been able to create better image within South Asian states. David Schambaugh says, China has made a remarkable headway in using economy as soft power, granted \$ 50 billion for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) \$40 billion for the Silk Road Economic Belt, \$ 41 billion for the New Development Bank and \$ 25 billion for the Maritime Silk Road. Above all, Beijing has pledged to invest approximately \$ 4.8 trillion across the world in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Schambaugh further says that during the cold war two arch-rivals the US and USSR did not spend such great amount across the world as China alone is spending today.

Presumably, China in the foreseeable future will leave no stone unturned in winning hearts and minds of the people by projecting its glorious past, great civilization and culture that is based on peace and harmony. China will certainly disseminate Confucian philosophy of peace, love and harmony. Some Sinologists are of the view that China's harmonious world order would be a spectacular model for the world's harmony. Its soft power would be based on attraction and persuasion rather than force and coercion. China's inclusive approach and BRI generate a win-win situation for its trade partners, project its soft power image and provide opportunities for other states to join China and benefit from its success model ■



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