

# China, the Dalai Lama and the Question of Soft Power

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## **Abstract**

Nowadays, China is far from being a major source of international political power and authority, mainly due to the lack of soft power. This thesis demonstrates China's deficit of soft power with the example of the inability of the Chinese government to persuade Western leaders not to meet with the Dalai Lama. This thesis argues that lack of attractiveness of China's political values does not let the country affect some political choices and preferences of other political actors. While the Dalai Lama promotes values that appear legitimate and that are consistent with those of the Western democracies, as a result, in order to enhance its own soft power the West willingly follows the course of the Tibetan spiritual leader. This thesis concludes that despite the fact that in recent years China has paid more attention to its soft power, it needs to improve the country's human rights to make its national image more attractive to the global audience. And a compromise with the Dalai Lama might be the clue to the rise of China's soft power.

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## Introduction

In 1999 Gerald Segal wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled “Does China Matter?” Segal argues that economically China “matters relatively little to the world, especially outside Asia”, militarily China “does not matter so much that it cannot be constrained”, and finally, “China is in no position to matter much as a source of international political power”,<sup>1</sup> since in his view it has minor influence and authority in the world.

Since 1999 China has dramatically improved its economic strengths and its military capabilities. In 2009 China stood as the third largest economy in the world, after the European Union and the United States, measured on a GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) basis.<sup>2</sup> In 2009 China’s government was the largest creditor of the United States,<sup>3</sup> and also China overtook Germany as the biggest export country in the world.<sup>4</sup> China demonstrates a sustained increase in its defense budget, and in 2008 for the first time was ranked the second country with the highest military expenditure after the United States.<sup>5</sup> The enormous growth of China’s economic power and rapid modernization of national defense create the potential for posing a challenge to the world, contradicting Segal’s first two assumptions.

Yet, the third assumption made by Segal seems to be controversial and his question “Does China matter politically” remains central to world politics. On the one hand, as the world’s most populous country, as a nuclear power, as one of the world’s largest economies,

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Segal, “Does China Matter?” *Foreign Affairs*, 78, no. 5 (1999): 25-33.

<sup>2</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook, East & Southeast Asia: China,” May 12, 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html> (accessed May 21, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> The Washington Post, “China Worried About U.S. Debt,” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/13/AR2009031300703.html> (accessed May 21, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Phillip Inman, “China becomes world’s biggest exporter,” *Guardian.co.uk*, January 10, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/jan/10/china-tops-germany-exports> (accessed May 21, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> In 2008 China’s defense spending was US\$ 57.22 billion, in 2009 - US\$ 70.27 billion, and in 2010 US\$ - 77.9 billion. “China’s defense Budget,” *GlobalSecurity.org*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/budget.htm> (accessed May 21, 2010).

as one of the five veto-wielding permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, China matters and its voice cannot be ignored, since many of today's global problems require cooperation with China. But what China possesses are capabilities and resources of hard power that do not always guarantee obtaining the desired outcomes in contemporary world politics.

The increased political and social costs of using military force make it more difficult to ensure popular support and to find moral justification for the use of force. Nowadays, to get the outcomes one wants and to influence the behavior of others, politicians have to use something more than instruments of hard power. In the global information age with diverse channels of communication, it is becoming crucially important to win "hearts and minds" of the world audience. And here China has problems.

Up to now, China has mostly used "command power" or "hard power" that rests on coercion and "carrot and stick" policy to induce favorable behavior of other political actors. China's image and influence on the international arena are mainly based on the country's growing economic might. But China's political system does not have sufficient moral authority in the world; in other words, it lacks "co-optive power" or "soft power", which Joseph Nye defines as the power that comes from attraction to shared values.<sup>6</sup> In the West, perceptions of China's political matters and values are usually negative, because in the eyes of the Western democracies China's authoritarian regime lacks credibility and legitimacy. The West rejects an approach of the Chinese government to the Tibet issue and to the situation with human rights in the country in general, that makes it more difficult for China to sell its

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<sup>6</sup> Nye Joseph, *Soft power: the means to success in world politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 7.

positive image abroad. As Gerald Segal underlines “the human-rights question best illustrates the extent to which China is a political pariah”.<sup>7</sup>

Since nowadays attractiveness becomes a significant source of power, I tend to agree with Segal on his third assumption that today China is far from being a major source of international political power and authority, and I argue that it is mainly due to China’s lack of soft power. This thesis demonstrates China’s deficit of soft power on the example of controversy over Tibet and over the meetings of the Western leaders with the Dalai Lama. The main research questions of this thesis are: *Why do the Western leaders meet with the Dalai Lama ignoring China’s deep dissatisfaction?* How do such actions influence the relations between China and the West? *Why in recent years have the attempts of the Chinese government to persuade the Western leaders not to meet with the Dalai Lama failed?* My main hypotheses are that lack of attractiveness of China’s political values does not let the country affect some political choices and preferences of other political actors. The Dalai Lama promotes values that appear legitimate and that are consistent with those of the Western democracies, as a result, in order to enhance its own soft power the West willingly follows the course of the Tibetan spiritual leader, and in addition, uses the Tibet issue to press China for a promotion of human rights.

The methodology of this thesis relies on qualitative research methods, namely content analysis and process tracing. The hypotheses are tested by analyzing the content of communication, such as newspapers, recent publications, media reports and recorded interviews, and by investigating causal processes and the outcomes of the decisions regarding the Tibet issue and the meetings with the Dalai Lama.

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<sup>7</sup> Gerald Segal, “Does China Matter?” *Foreign Affairs*, 78, no. 5 (1999): 34.

My theoretical framework mainly builds on Joseph Nye's theory of soft power, which says that one actor can affect behavior of another actor without commanding it and without using threats or inducements. One can be attracted to support someone's actions because of an attraction to shared values and respect for someone's authority or because one believes in the legitimacy of someone's objectives. Nowadays China has resources of hard power that may produce the preferred outcomes or may get others to change their position, but it still lack what Nye calls "attractive power"<sup>8</sup>. The Chinese government is not always able to obtain the outcomes it wishes, due to its insufficient authority, negative reputation in the West and the lack of soft power that prevents the government from obtaining particular goals.

The scholarly level analysis and research on the topic has been limited and I contribute to already existing literature by showing China's lack of soft power on the example of its inability to persuade the Western leaders not to meet with the Dalai Lama. The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter explores the historical background of the Tibet issue, analyzes the existing literature and outlines the theoretical framework. The second chapter focuses on the meetings of the leaders of Germany, France, Great Britain and the United States with the Dalai Lama in recent years. It examines controversy over these meetings, the consequences, and shows how different political actors try to balance their diverse interests. It illustrates that today China mainly uses coercion to influence the behavior of others and this strategy can be considered unsuccessful. The third chapter is devoted to analysis, and proposes that despite the fact that in recent years China has paid more attention to its soft power, it needs to improve the country's human rights to make its national image more attractive to the global audience. And the compromise with the Dalai Lama might be the clue to the rise of China's soft power.

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<sup>8</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 6.



## Chapter 1 – Overview

This chapter provides historical background to the topic, reviews different approaches to the study of the Tibet issue and China's soft power, and describes theoretical framework.

### 1.1 *Historical background*

In 1949, the local Tibetan government, seizing the moment of political instability on the mainland, once again<sup>9</sup> proclaimed Tibet's independence and expelled all Chinese from Tibet. The Lhasa authorities sent several official foreign missions, but no serious efforts were made to establish contacts with the outside world and to settle Tibet's status. Shortly thereafter the Communists came to power and denounced the 1949 declaration of Tibet's independence as "an illegal gesture fomented by foreign imperialist forces". In 1950, the Central Government sent People's Liberation Army troops to Tibet to put an end to "oppressive colonialism and reactionary exploitation", and "to rejoin the fraternal family of China's nationalities".<sup>10</sup> Ernst Benz notes that the Chinese officials portrayed the occupation of Tibet "as a measure undertaken for the reformation of Tibetan Buddhism", in order to eliminate the feudal system of slavery imposed by the Tibetan upper class and to restore the "original purity" of lama monasteries. The Tibetans attempted to appeal to the United Nations in order to stop the Chinese aggression, but without success. Other Buddhist countries did not react to the Chinese military intervention in Tibet for several reasons, namely due to extensive Chinese propaganda and inadequate information on the events; due to political reasons, since

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<sup>9</sup> In 1913 the Tibetans also claimed independence and stated: "Tibet and China have never been under each other and will never associate with each other in future. It is decided that Tibet is an independent state and that the precious Protector, the Dalai Lama, is the ruler of Tibet, in all temporal as well as spiritual affairs." Warren W. Smith, Jr., *Tibetan nation: a history of Tibetan nationalism and Sino-Tibetan relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 190.

<sup>10</sup> George Ginsburgs and Michael Mathos, *Communist China and Tibet: the first dozen years* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 195-200.

other Buddhist countries are the closest China's neighbors; and due to religious reasons, since "inaction is more natural to the Buddhist than protest or any kind of action".<sup>11</sup> Ginsburgs and Mathos point out that the outside world ignored the situation in Tibet because of its geographical remoteness and traditional isolationism, so that foreign governments did not have much knowledge about Tibet; in addition most of the countries acknowledged Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and did not have material interests there.

As a result of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, the Dalai Lama's government was forced to sign the "Seventeen-Point Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" on 27 May 1951, which ended almost forty years of Tibet's de facto independence and reimposed China's traditional suzerainty over Tibet, but for the first time formally. By the terms of the agreement:

Tibetan troops shall be reorganized by stages into the People's Liberation Army, and become a part of the national defense forces of the People's Republic of China... The Central People's Government shall conduct the centralized handling of all external affairs of the area of Tibet... [In return,] the Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government... The central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet...[and] the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama... The local government of Tibet should carry out reforms of its own accord... The religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected.<sup>12</sup>

When the Communists came to power in China, the Tibet question attained visibility on the international arena. The United States became interested in the situation there in order to encourage Tibet's pro-Western orientation and to have the Dalai Lama as an ally. However, in order to avoid deterioration of the relations with Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China on Taiwan and disputes with Indian prime minister, the U.S. only supported autonomy for Tibet

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<sup>11</sup> Ernst Benz, *Buddhism or communism: which holds the future of Asia?* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 196-198.

<sup>12</sup> Tibet Facts & Figures 2005, "The Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," <http://www.china.org.cn/english/zhuanti/tibet%20facts/163877.htm> (accessed May 21, 2010).

under China, which was not enough for the Dalai Lama's government. Therefore, the U.S. attempts to persuade the Dalai Lama to renounce the Seventeen-Point Agreement were unsuccessful, but the Central Intelligence Agency was still involved in providing training and financial support for Tibetan guerrilla forces. Melvyn Goldstein points out that "the U.S. strategic goal for Tibet was to generate "sympathy for the Tibetan people on human rights grounds" around the world". To explain the position of the United States Goldstein cites "Memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Parsons) to Secretary of State (Herter), 14 October 1959", which states:

[T]he arguments against recognition of Tibetan independence under present conditions are stronger than those in favor. I consider this conclusion valid from the standpoint of both United States national interest and from that of the Tibetans. We share with the Tibetans the objective of keeping the Tibetans' cause alive in the consciousness of the world and maintaining the Dalai Lama as an effective spokesman of the Tibetan people. I believe that United States recognition of the Dalai Lama's government as that of an independent country would serve neither purpose well. Since very few countries could be expected to follow our lead, our recognition now would make the Dalai Lama the leader of a government-in-exile obviously dependent on the United States for political support. This would almost certainly damage the prestige and influence he now enjoys as one of Asia's revered leaders and would hamper his activities on behalf of the Tibetan people.<sup>13</sup>

The growing anti-Chinese sentiments among the Tibetans flared up into widespread opposition, and then into national uprising in 1959 that led to the flight of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Government and the refugees into exile to India. Warren Smith considers that "the period from the 1951 17-Point Agreement to the revolt in 1959 was one of transition for Tibet from a de facto independent state to a part of the People's Republic of China".<sup>14</sup> After the uprising, the Chinese government renounced the Seventeen-Point Agreement and adopted a hard-line policy in Tibet.

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<sup>13</sup> Melvyn C. Goldstein, "Tibet and China in the Twentieth Century," in *Governing China's multiethnic frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (University of Washington Press, 2004), 220-222.

<sup>14</sup> Warren W. Smith, Jr., *Tibetan nation: a history of Tibetan nationalism and Sino-Tibetan relations* (Westview Press, 1996), 447.

In early 1960s experts stated that in the future there would be total assimilation of Tibet into the Chinese state. Peking with no toleration would make Tibet an integral part of the Chinese nation perhaps with some “paper autonomy”, but in reality treated as within China’s exclusive jurisdiction and control. Some even considered that the 1959 Tibetan uprising was deliberately provoked by the Chinese authorities in order to excuse the liquidation of “the tradition-oriented local government of Tibet”.<sup>15</sup> In order to undermine Tibetan claims to independence, the Chinese government divided the eastern lands that had traditionally constituted Tibet into four different Chinese provinces. The remaining area was designated the Tibet Autonomous Region, which was formally founded in September 1965 that marked the establishment of the permanent system of Chinese control in Tibet.

In 1987, after a series of unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with Beijing, the Dalai Lama launched an international campaign to gain political support in the United States and Europe. This was the first time when the Dalai Lama traveled and spoke not as a religious leader, but as a political leader arguing for democratic and self-governing Tibet.<sup>16</sup> In 1987 and in 1988 the Dalai Lama delivered speeches to the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus and to the members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, respectively, where he suggested the so called “middle way”, which stipulated a high-level of autonomy for Tibet under the People’s Republic of China.

Melvyn Goldstein thinks that on the one hand, the Dalai Lama’s international campaign had failed and did not achieve its goals for political and ethnic autonomy, but on the other hand, China’s hard-line policy had failed as well, since it alienated many Tibetans and stimulated more Tibetan nationalism.<sup>17</sup> China violates human rights and freedoms

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<sup>15</sup> Ginsburgs, Mathos, 206-210.

<sup>16</sup> Melvyn C. Goldstein, “The Dalai Lama’s Dilemma,” *Foreign Affairs*, 77, no. 1 (1998): 87.

<sup>17</sup> Goldstein, 2004, 211.

through policies of censorship, surveillance and punishment. For example, it is illegal for Tibetans to carry pictures of the Dalai Lama, there are restrictions on the number of monks allowed in monasteries and “sanctions placed on Tibetan monks, including prohibitions on prayers and religious worship”, and the Chinese government bans books by the Dalai Lama and “blocks access to television and radio stations with Tibetan language news services operating outside Tibet and China such as Radio Free Asia, Voice of America and Voice of Tibet.” In addition, the intense immigration of Han Chinese into Tibet threatens the survival of Tibetan language and culture, since the Chinese occupation makes Tibetans a minority in their own land; as the Dalai Lama says, “this policy of ‘demographic aggression’ has led to ‘cultural genocide’ in Tibet.”<sup>18</sup>

## ***1.2 Literature review***

### **1.2.1 Strategic importance of Tibet**

Many scholars explain the situation in Tibet from the point of view of its strategic importance to the People’s Republic of China. It is considered that the Tibetan plateau is an arena of struggle between Peking and New Delhi for political domination and influence in their common Himalayan periphery. Ginsburgs and Mathos defined three reasons why the Tibetan issue is of major importance to the Chinese government. Firstly, the People’s Republic of China shows “ability to maintain its rule effectively in an area which historically has resisted”. Secondly, Tibet “represents the main stumbling-block in the way of the smooth operation of the system...of regional autonomy within the constitutional structure” of China. Thirdly, “Tibet furnishes the outside world with an opportunity to study the record of

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<sup>18</sup> Free Tibet. The first part of the quotation is from “Torture” <http://www.freetibet.org/about/torture>, the second part is from “Freedom of information” <http://www.freetibet.org/about/freedom-information>, and the third part of the quotation is from “Migration into Tibet” <http://www.freetibet.org/about/migration> (accessed May 31, 2010).

Communist Chinese willingness to abide by the terms of a solemnly signed document, namely, the Sino-Tibetan pact of 1951.” In addition, the authors underline that at the international level, Tibet’s role is equally crucial, since it supplies China with the base for further expansion into South Asia and gives the opportunity to wage “a war of nerves” in the region. They underline the importance of Tibet by paraphrasing a famous proposition: “He who holds Tibet dominates the Himalayan piedmont; he who dominates the Himalayan piedmont threatens the Indian subcontinent; and he who threatens the Indian subcontinent may well have all of South Asia within his reach and, with it, all of Asia”.<sup>19</sup> Thierry Mathou agrees that Tibet is very important for China from the point of view of its strategic position in the Himalayan region, since it is “a bridge between China and South Asia”.<sup>20</sup>

### **1.2.2 China’s strategy towards Tibet**

Melvyn Goldstein claims that in order to strengthen its position in Tibet, China used rapid economic development strategy, which attracted many non-Tibetan Chinese to Tibet and changed the demographic composition there. In Goldstein’s view such integrationist policy and the absence of threat of international sanctions put China in a favorable position, allowing the Chinese officials to refuse negotiations with the Dalai Lama and to continue the hard-line policy, which likely will result in increasing alienation of Tibetans.<sup>21</sup> Regarding this policy, Secretary of State Colin Powell said in 2001:

It’s a very difficult situation right now with the Chinese sending more and more Han Chinese in to settle Tibet. What seems to be a policy that might well destroy that society. I think we have to reenergize our discussions with the Chinese to let them know that this is another example of the kind of behavior that will effect our entire

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<sup>19</sup> Ginsburgs, Mathos, 1-2; 206-210.

<sup>20</sup> Thierry Mathou, “Tibet and Its Neighbors: Moving toward a New Chinese Strategy in the Himalayan Region,” *Asian Survey*, 45, no. 4 (2005): 504.

<sup>21</sup> Goldstein, 1998.

relationship. And show our interest in solidarity with the Dalai Lama and the people of Tibet.<sup>22</sup>

Thierry Mathou also views active development of transportation and other aspects of Tibet's modernization "as elements of China's strategy in the Himalayan region". Mathou underlines that the "Go West" policy launched by the Chinese government to attract capital to the backward regions, triggered Tibet's infrastructure development, and this development is likely to have an impact on China's relations with the neighbors. Because China's investments in highway-building in the border territories might make some areas more accessible to China's forces than to the neighbors' troops. This might lead to China's expansion in the region.

On the one hand, the West criticizes China's attempts to integrate Tibet into the Chinese state, because economic reforms have negative consequences and undermine the interests of the Tibetan people. On the other hand, the Chinese government argues that Tibet is a part of China and therefore its modernization is inevitable. Mathou argues that the improvement of infrastructure will facilitate the tourism and mining industries in Tibet, will further accelerate population integration between Tibet and China, will enhance China's border defense capacity, will improve communication with other Himalayan states that can help to transform Tibet into an important trading center in the region. He emphasizes that the development of trans-Himalayan trade to boost Chinese export to South Asia is one of the China's goals in the region. For this reason, China is trying to normalize the relationships and to secure cooperation with all of the Tibet's neighbors, by increasing a transborder links and economic development of the region, in order to shift the controversy on the Tibet issue from politics to economics that will help to integrate Tibet further into the mainland China.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Goldstein, 2004, 226-227.

<sup>23</sup> Mathou. 2005, 503-521.

### 1.2.3 Solutions of the conflict

Experts agree that the Tibet conflict is very hard to settle. Melvyn Goldstein states that the Tibetan question is very difficult to resolve due to its nationalistic controversy and absence of international consensus about how to solve such disputes. On the one hand, Tibetans have the right to independence and self-determination, but on the other hand, China as a multiethnic state has the right to maintain its territorial integrity.<sup>24</sup> Any external intervention by international actors to settle such question as Tibet would not be effective and may result in even more serious conflict on the international level. International Organizations, as Milton Esman describes them, “remain political bodies in which member states... pursue their own interests”. Therefore, some conflicts, such as Tibet, are excluded from the agenda of International Organizations due to great power interests.<sup>25</sup> Sautman agrees that the Tibet question is “one of the world’s most intractable conflicts”, due to several reasons, such as the religious and ethnic aspects of the conflict, due to sovereignty dispute and China’s fear that concessions offered to the Tibetan government in exile will increase separatist movements in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia.<sup>26</sup>

Goldstein claims that in order to resolve this conflict it is necessary to come to “a compromise that will ensure the preservation of a Tibetan homeland where ethnic Tibetans predominate and Tibetan language, culture, and religion flourish”, but such a compromise is possible only with an external assistance and only if both sides agree to a number of concessions and the Dalai Lama is the central figure in achieving any compromise, because only he can change the Tibetans attitude toward China. Goldstein defines several options for the Dalai Lama, the first is to come to a dramatic compromise with Beijing, which is unlikely

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<sup>24</sup> Goldstein, 1998, 83.

<sup>25</sup> Milton Esman and Shibley Telhami, *International Organizations and Ethnic Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 43.

<sup>26</sup> Barry Sautman, “The Tibet Issue in Post-Summit Sino-American Relations,” *Pacific Affairs* 72, no.1 (1999): 11-12.

to happen in the author's view, since it may divide the exile community, discourage pro-Tibet supporters in the West and finally result in political and financial chaos. In Goldstein's opinion, the second option for the Dalai Lama is to continue his international campaign, to encourage violent opposition in Tibet to prevent China from doing business there, to try to convince the West to pressure China for concessions or wait until foreign forces destroy China. Interestingly, Goldstein believes that the Dalai Lama has a direct interest in violence in Tibet in order to destabilize China or at least threaten the security in the region and attract international attention. However, the Dalai Lama's commitment to nonviolence makes it difficult for him to approve openly such strategy. But his failure to change China's hard-line policy could lead to violent demonstrations by angry nationalistic Tibetans and the Dalai Lama may fail to prevent such situation. In other words, in Goldstein's view, the Dalai Lama either will accept a compromise or will implicitly support violence in Tibet.<sup>27</sup>

#### **1.2.4 The Dalai Lama**

The Tibet question is closely related to the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, who was awarded the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize for his "constructive and forward-looking proposals for the solution of international conflicts, human rights issues, and global environmental problems". The Nobel Committee emphasized that the Dalai Lama in his struggle for the liberation of Tibet consistently advocated peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect.<sup>28</sup>

China views the Dalai Lama not as a religious figure, but as a politician engaged in separatist activities. Former secretary of state Henry Kissinger once said, "The nightmare of all the leaders has been that China might fly apart again". Therefore, the Chinese government

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<sup>27</sup> Goldstein, 1998, 83-97.

<sup>28</sup> International resolutions and recognitions on Tibet, 1959 to 1997 (Dharamsala: The Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, 1997), 1.

fears that the Dalai Lama might threaten the territorial integrity of the country.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, the Chinese officials always ask foreign leaders not to see the Dalai Lama in order not to threaten trust and cooperation with Beijing, since Beijing considers such action as interference in China's internal affairs. However, despite China's pressure and strong dissatisfaction, the Dalai Lama remains a very popular figure in the West. This may be due to his moral image as a person who represents peace or may be due to some political motivations. Many leaders say that they meet the Dalai Lama not as a political leader, but as "an internationally respected religious leader"; however all of these meetings receive worldwide political resonance.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama himself denies all China's accusations of separatism. In one of the interviews he declared that he is a simple Buddhist monk and he is not seeking separation from China. On the contrary, it is in the interest of Tibetans to remain within the People's Republic of China, but only if China accepts the Tibetan unique cultural heritage. He said that harmony and unity must come from heart and be based on trust and mutual respect, only then it will become possible to build a harmonious society.<sup>30</sup>

### **1.2.5 China's soft power**

Nye argues "In international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles its relations with others"<sup>31</sup>. Denise E. Zheng defines five tools of China's soft power. First is China's

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<sup>29</sup> Charlie Rose, "A discussion on China with Henry Kissinger," Charlie Rose Web site, October 18, 2007, <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/8740> (accessed May 21, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> The Aspen Institute, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Aspen Institute," July 26, 2008, [http://fora.tv/2008/07/26/His\\_Holiness\\_the\\_Dalai\\_Lama\\_at\\_The\\_Aspen\\_Institute#fullprogram](http://fora.tv/2008/07/26/His_Holiness_the_Dalai_Lama_at_The_Aspen_Institute#fullprogram) (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 8.

investment strategy, which is influenced by the need to acquire stable supply flows of energy and raw materials. The author underlines that Chinese money is attractive to developing countries since it does not come with the human rights and other conditions that are tied to money from the West. The only condition for Chinese investment is the acceptance of the “one-China” policy. Second tool of China’s soft power is peacekeeping and humanitarian aid. China is a major troop contributor to the U.N. peacekeepers that promotes a positive image and represents China as a responsible international actor. Third are exchange programs that are central to Beijing’s public diplomacy strategy. China significantly increased the number of exchange programs with the goal of promoting Chinese language and culture. Fourth is diplomacy; Beijing more frequently hosts leaders of smaller countries showing its attention and China’s hospitality that positively affects bilateral relations. Fifth tool is participation in multilateral institutions in order to boost China’s international legitimacy and expand its international influence.<sup>32</sup>

Joel Wuthnow suggests China’s three non-coercive strategies to enhance its soft power. First is the transmission of traditional Chinese culture to foreign actors, by means of Confucius Institutes, academic exchanges, artistic exhibitions and other activities. He underlines that culture lays a foundation of respect and tolerance by foreign actors. Second are the attempts to expand its leadership in the developing world, especially by using economic incentives to develop diplomatic goodwill. Wuthnow mentions that China’s diplomatic strategy in the “Third World” also focuses on winning friends through the appeal of noninterference in states’ internal affairs and mutual respect of state sovereignty. And third is reassurance to states that perceive China’s rise as a threat and the projection of

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<sup>32</sup> Denise E. Zheng, “China’s use of soft power in the developing world: strategic intentions and implications for the United States,” in *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2009), 1-9.

responsibility, by engaging in multilateral diplomatic activities and international agreements. As a part of this strategy China employs passive and benign-sounding diplomatic language. Wuthnow also underlines that some domestic problems, such as the situation in Tibet can easily degrade China's image as a responsible power, therefore there is the need for domestic programs to enhance social justice.<sup>33</sup>

Wang Yiwei, as well as other scholars,<sup>34</sup> agrees with Wuthnow and also points out that one of the challenges for China is that the West promotes the perception of the "China threat", because it is afraid of rising China and does not want to let the China's Communist regime achieve legitimacy and to improve its international image, since it may mean achieve hegemony. Wang in his article cites Terril Lautz, who says, "When China is weak and split, American's China image usually is quite positive; when China gets strong and begins to have the potential to develop externally, American's China image tends to be negative". Wang claims that for this reason China should change the perception of international community that the strong is necessarily threatening, but to gain trust China has to take on all the responsibilities. In addition, he concludes, "China should express itself in its own way but at the same time in the way that the world can understand and likes to hear."<sup>35</sup> So, many authors point out that in the short run, China's soft power policy will likely concentrate at combating the China-threat theory and on promoting cultural soft power. While in the long term, as Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy suggest, it might be possible that Beijing will promote Chinese socialist values as an alternative to Western values.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Joel Wuthnow, "The Concept of Soft Power in China's Strategic Discourse," *Issues & Studies* 44, no. 2 (June 2008): 1-28.

<sup>34</sup> Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy.

<sup>35</sup> Yiwei Wang, "Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2008, 257-273.

<sup>36</sup> Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy, "Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: the ongoing debate," in *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2009), 10-26.

The situation in Tibet clearly reflects the political values the Chinese government espouses and the lack of credibility of its policies. China's inability to build consensus on the Tibet issue does not let China improve its image in the international community, creates worldwide criticism, weakens its soft power and undermines China persuasion power at the transnational level. This prevents the Chinese authorities from expanding their influences; for instance they cannot persuade the Western leaders not to meet with the Dalai Lama. Therefore, in order to change the West's negative perception and to be perceived as attractive and credible, the Chinese government has to increase its soft power by adopting human rights policy to earn respect of the global audience and to break down a wall of misunderstanding which stands between China and the West.

### ***1.3 Theoretical framework***

In an attempt to explain what are the goals of Western leaders' meetings with the Dalai Lama, I apply the "Soft Power" theory as suitable theoretical framework, which is usually associated with the name of Joseph Nye. Nye defines soft power as the ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion<sup>37</sup>. However, some scholars argue that soft power is not so soft in reality; despite that it is more appealing than the power politics of war, but still soft power is constructed through representational force, which is also a form of coercive power, and operates on the level of subjectivity. Therefore, soft power should be seen as a continuation of hard power by different means, and one must still question its moral logic<sup>38</sup>. Nye defines three major resources of the soft power, namely, a country's culture, its political values, and its foreign policies. As Nye underlines "The values a government champions in its behavior at home (for example, democracy), in international

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<sup>37</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, (2005), 596.

institutions (working with others), and in foreign policy (promoting peace and human rights) strongly affect the preferences of others.”<sup>39</sup>

In modern world of politics, an actor’s ideological and cultural appeal to others helps to achieve influence and to convince others to follow one’s course. China is aware of the importance of foreign perceptions of China, and it wants to create its positive image around the globe. As Joshua Cooper Ramo says “China’s greatest strategic threat today is its national image.”<sup>40</sup> How the country is perceived abroad determines its future in the global politics, therefore it is a great strategic challenge for the Chinese government to convince the global audience of its legitimacy, to strengthen its image, in order to enjoy international respect and become a more trusted nation. In recent years, the Chinese government has attached a great importance to promotion of its soft power. In 2007 during the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Hu Jintao said:

In the present era, culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength...We must...enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people’s basic cultural rights and interests, enrich the cultural life in Chinese society and inspire the enthusiasm of the people for progress.<sup>41</sup>

China has a potential for improving its image in the world, and its soft power is likely to increase in the future. However, today the Chinese authorities mainly use China’s traditional culture as the resource for building soft power, and not its political values. Nowadays, the Chinese government has the ability to get the outcomes wanted by coercing others, rather than attracting. David Bandurski argues that in China the project of “soft power” “has become something of an obsession”. Nye defines soft power as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion and payment”, but the Chinese

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<sup>39</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Joshua Cooper Ramo, *Brand China* (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2007), 12.

<sup>41</sup> People's Daily Online, “Full text of Hu Jintao's report at 17th Party Congress,” 7, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6290144.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

Communist Party views soft power more like “attractive coercion”, says Bandurski. He underlines that the Chinese government understands Nye’s concept in authoritarian terms and its primary concern is about how to make Communist propaganda more attractive to global audiences.<sup>42</sup>

So, for China it is about “re-packaging” propaganda rather than adopting the Western political values and changing the approach to the situation with human rights in the country. Nye mentions, “Soft power rests on some shared values.”<sup>43</sup> There is a gap between Western and Chinese values, and in the eyes of the Western democracies Communist ideology lacks legitimacy. According to David Beetham, a power is legitimate if it is legally acquired and is exercised within the law.<sup>44</sup> Charles Beitz underlines that human rights are necessary conditions of minimal legitimacy and he cites Rawls who conceives human rights as normative standard and says that they “cannot be rejected as peculiarly liberal or special to the Western tradition. They are not parochial.”<sup>45</sup> Today China is an authoritarian party-state with tight government control and with lack of political and civil freedoms; therefore the Chinese authoritarian government cannot persuade democratic countries of its legitimacy. The West disapproves Chinese political regime generally, and its policy towards Tibet particularly; this produces resistance to China’s wishes, reluctance to follow its course and does not let China to create its positive image in the West. In other words, some of the Chinese government’s policies do not contribute to the growth of the country’s soft power.

Nye underlines that “The information age has been marked by an increasingly important role of nonstate actors on the international stage”. The Dalai Lama is a prominent

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<sup>42</sup> David Bandurski, “Is China's new communications worldview coming of age?” *China Media Project*, November 12, 2009, <http://cmp.hku.hk/2009/11/12/2926/comment-page-1/#comment-1092> (accessed May 21, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 111.

<sup>44</sup> David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 4.

<sup>45</sup> Charles R. Beitz, “Human Rights as a Common Concern,” in *Contemporary Political Philosophy: an anthology*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 356.

and recognizable figure around the globe. His ideas and values attract many followers who adhere to his teachings. As Nye mentions, soft power depends “upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers.”<sup>46</sup> In the democracies leaders cannot be indifferent to the views of the people in the country, public opinion matters, therefore, due to the Dalai Lama’s popularity, the Western leaders might use the meetings with him to enhance their own soft power.

In this thesis, to answer the research questions, I also apply “Concept of Interdependence” developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. They say that in world politics interdependence “refers to situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries. These effects often result from international transactions – flows of money, goods, people, and messages across international boundaries.”<sup>47</sup> The effects of such transactions depend on the costs associated with them, and costly effects are those that people care about. These effects generate concern – and politics. Since the actions of states, and significant nonstate actors impose costs on other members, these affected actors respond politically in order to avoid the burdens of adjustment forced on them.<sup>48</sup> Nye mentions that interdependence “cut[s] across the traditional distinction between domestic and foreign policy.”<sup>49</sup> China considers everything connected with Tibet as an internal affair and views the meetings with the Dalai Lama as interference, which contradicts a respect for state sovereignty. However, Western leaders in order to set a good domestic example and to show their commitment to human rights intervene in what China considers a domestic affair, by supporting the Dalai Lama. Beijing believes that by meeting with the Dalai Lama the world leaders give him political credibility, which is intolerable. Such actions

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<sup>46</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*. The first quotation is from page 90, the second quotation is from page 16.

<sup>47</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (New York: Longman, 2001), 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 270.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Power in the Global Information Age: from realism to globalization* (Routledge, 2004), 157.

by the Western leaders impose costs on the Chinese government since they could damage China's national unity. As a result, China has to respond politically to those meetings, because if Beijing does not protest, more leaders will meet the Dalai Lama and support his struggle for greater autonomy for Tibet, and force China to pursue the values of democracy, human rights and rule of law; in Nye's words, the Chinese government shows its deep dissatisfaction in order to avoid "the heaviest costs of adjustment to change."<sup>50</sup> Rising economic and political interdependence between the West and China creates fear and makes the choices harder for both sides, because there might be the high costs to states own growth. The West needs China's cooperation on very important economic, diplomatic, and military issues; since the Tibet question is at top of the most sensitive issues of the Chinese authorities, the Western democracies try to balance their preferences, namely their commitment to human rights (which are violated in China) with other essential interests in China in order to minimize costs. For instance they meet with the Dalai Lama only after their first official visit to Beijing and usually receive him privately.

The theory of soft power and the concept of interdependence help to answer my research questions on why the Western leaders meet with the Dalai Lama and why the Chinese government fails to persuade them not to meet the Tibetan spiritual leader. In the following chapters I contribute to the existing literature by illustrating China's lack of soft power on the example of the government's inability to influence the decision of other political actors on a very sensitive for China topic – Tibet.

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<sup>50</sup> Nye, *Power in the Global Information Age*, 164.

## Chapter 2 – Meetings

As Robert Keohane argues, “Even a state that is overwhelmingly powerful on many dimensions can be highly vulnerable on others.”<sup>51</sup> China is becoming very powerful on many dimensions, but it has its weak places, one of them the extremely sensitive question of Tibet. The Chinese Government traditionally considers Tibet as an integral part of China, and therefore views the problems in Tibet as the entirely domestic problems.

On the one hand, no country recognizes Tibet as a sovereign state; all countries officially acknowledge the Chinese position that Tibet is part of China and refuse Tibet’s claim to independence. But on the other hand, some Western countries and international organizations accuse China of systematic violation of basic human rights in Tibet and that Tibet’s religious culture is being undermined. The leadership of some countries, namely the United States, France, Germany and other, tries to have Tibetans and the Tibet spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, as a friend. This strategy poses political dilemma for the West’s leaders. They try to balance economic and other interests in China with the commitment to human rights principles, since people around the world admire the Dalai Lama as a man of peace. So, the meetings with the Dalai Lama show that official policies of the countries are consistent with democracy, human rights and respect for the opinions of others. Therefore, the leaders of many Western countries knowing well that the meetings with the Dalai Lama would infuriate Beijing still receive him. This chapter is mainly descriptive and dedicated to the meetings of the Western leaders with the Dalai Lama in the past several years.

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<sup>51</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 277.

## 2.1 Germany

In September 2007, four weeks after visiting Beijing, German Chancellor Angela Merkel became the first chancellor who met the Dalai Lama at her office. The meeting was described as private and informal, but sparked a diplomatic crisis between Berlin and Beijing. The Chinese authorities criticized and objected to Merkel's decision, and claimed that the meeting "hurts the feelings of the Chinese people and seriously undermines China-Germany relations."<sup>52</sup> After the meeting Merkel's spokesman Ulrich Wilhelm said that Angela Merkel assured the Dalai Lama of "her support in his efforts to maintain the cultural identity of Tibet and in his policy of non-violent striving toward religious and cultural autonomy."<sup>53</sup> As a sign of the discontent, the Chinese government cancelled several rounds of talks with German officials, since China views all the meetings with the Dalai Lama as support for Tibetan independence, threat to China's territorial integrity and as interference in China's internal affairs. Beijing called off a meeting with Germany's minister of justice, talks between China's foreign minister and his German counterpart at the U.N. General Assembly in New York,<sup>54</sup> as well as an annual dialogue on human rights between Germany and China. As deputy in the Foreign Ministry, Gernot Erler said: "The Chinese are letting us feel their anger at almost every level."<sup>55</sup>

Merkel's position in foreign policy divided the ruling Grand Coalition over the issue of how much confrontation with China is acceptable. In response to criticism within the government, Merkel declared: "as chancellor, I decide with whom I meet and where I meet

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<sup>52</sup> Spiegel, "China Cancels Human Rights Talks With Germany," *Spiegel Online International*, October 15, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,511473,00.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>53</sup> Siobhan Dowling, "China's Neurotic Petulance over Tibet," *Spiegel Online International*, September 24, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,507471,00.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>54</sup> Madeline Chambers, "China stops more Germany talks after Dalai Lama visit," *Reuters*, September 24, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL2473192520070924> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> Ralf Beste, Ralf Neukirch, and Matthias Schepp, "Merkel Foreign Policy Is Bad for Business," *Spiegel Online International*, October 23, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,513067-2,00.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

them. I would like to see everyone within the government standing squarely behind this position, otherwise China's respect for us can hardly be expected to grow."<sup>56</sup> In 2008 Merkel indicated: "First of all, my reception of the Dalai Lama and my dealings with China are two different things, but both are related to how we deal with whether or not human rights are being observed or disregarded, and Germany's position here is clear, and receiving the Dalai Lama also belongs to that."<sup>57</sup> Some officials strongly supported Merkel's approach, as for instance, a Christian Democrat, Germany's commissioner for human rights, Gunter Nooke. He argued: "We East Germans happen to have personal experience with dictatorships, unlike most Western politicians. We know how important public criticism is...It is a good sign that we do not let others dictate to us whom we meet with."<sup>58</sup>

## 2.2 France

Despite the opposition and warnings from the Chinese government, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, while holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, met the Tibetan spiritual leader in December 2008 at a meeting marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the awarding Nobel Peace Prize to Lech Walesa in Poland. The Chinese government accused Sarkozy of threatening China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and of damaging Sino-French relations. China's foreign ministry statement said:

Despite the strong opposition of China's masses and the Chinese government's stern representations, President Sarkozy persisted in meeting the Dalai Lama in the dual capacities as French and EU president...This erroneous French action grossly

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<sup>56</sup> Ralf Beste et al., "Pressure Growing on Merkel to Fix Squabble with China," *Spiegel Online International*, November 27, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,519976,00.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>57</sup> Spiegel, "Merkel Defies China, Says She Would Meet Dalai Lama Again," *Spiegel Online International*, April 12, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,547029,00.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> Ralf Beste et al., "Merkel Foreign Policy Is Bad for Business," *Spiegel Online International*, October 23, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,513067-2,00.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

interferes in China's internal affairs and seriously hurts the feelings of China's people. The Chinese government expresses its resolute opposition and strong dissatisfaction.<sup>59</sup>

In protest against Sarkozy's decision, China for the first time in eleven years cancelled its summit with the EU, claiming that Sarkozy deprived the summit of a good atmosphere. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang announced: "the summit cannot be held in a sound atmosphere, nor can it achieve expected goals."<sup>60</sup> To the critique in his address Sarkozy replied: "I am free as the French president and the EU president, I have values and convictions. Let's not make things tense. The world doesn't need it and it doesn't correspond to reality."<sup>61</sup> He also added: "One must approach this calmly...the world needs an open China that participates in global governance. China needs a powerful Europe that gives work to Chinese enterprise."<sup>62</sup> Bernard Kouchner, the foreign minister of France, said: "We cannot have France's conduct dictated to, even by our friends." The Dalai Lama's reaction on whether EU-China relations and trade could suffer over this meeting was: "China also needs Europe...The original initiative of some pressure, sometimes is not followed by action...When China becomes more democratic, with freedom of speech, with rule of law and particularly with freedom of the press...once China becomes an open, modern society, then the Tibet issue, I think within a few days, can be solved."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> France 24, "China vents its anger after Sarkozy meets Dalai Lama," *France 24 International News*, December 7, 2008, <http://www.france24.com/en/20081207-china-government-angry-sarkozy-diplomatic-dalai-lama-tibet-poland> (accessed May 25, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> Time, "Why China Keeps Picking on Sarkozy," December 2, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1863013,00.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Elitsa Vucheva, "Beijing scolds Sarkozy over Dalai Lama meeting," *EUobserver.com*, December 8, 2008, <http://euobserver.com/9/27249> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> The China Post, "Sarkozy meets Dalai Lama as China fumes," December 7, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/international/europe/2008/12/07/186515/Sarkozy-meets.htm> (accessed May 25, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> Aljazeera, "Dalai Lama talks risk EU trade," *Aljazeera.net*, December 7, 2008, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2008/12/2008126134857840567.html> (accessed May 25, 2010).

## 2.3 Great Britain

The Prime Minister Gordon Brown did a “diplomatic balancing act” to minimize the offence caused to the Chinese and met the Dalai Lama as a religious leader by welcoming him in May 2008 not at 10 Downing Street, but in a religious environment at the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the Anglican Church. “Free Tibet” activists accused Brown of being scared of offending the Chinese. Matt Whitticase, a representative of the London-based Free Tibet Campaign declared:

It is vital that the British government treat the Dalai Lama not just as a religious leader but also as a political figure...Gordon Brown is refusing to meet him in a political setting, underplaying his importance as a political leader especially at a time when his importance has been emphasized by the Tibetan people and people across the world...There is a deep-seated political problem in Tibet and the Dalai Lama holds the key, and he should therefore be met in a political setting.<sup>64</sup>

In response, Brown said: "I believe that tens of thousands of jobs in Britain for British workers can be created from the increased co-operation between our two countries." Gordon Brown became the only head of state that has not been somehow penalized for his meeting with the Dalai Lama by China, but has been severely criticized in British political circles and by human rights activists. The Dalai Lama was asked if he would have gone if invited to 10 Downing Street, he declared: “No reason to refuse.”<sup>65</sup> He also mentioned: “The economy is important, but human values are more important...While you are making close relationship in the business field, there is no point in forgetting about principles.”<sup>66</sup>

Nowadays the United Kingdom prefers to take a soft approach on the Tibet issue, in

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<sup>64</sup> The New York Times, “Dalai Lama’s Britain Visit Raises Questions of Protocol,” May 21, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/21/world/europe/21tibet.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/21/world/europe/21tibet.html?_r=1) (accessed May 25, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> Robin Oakley, “Dalai dilemma for West’s leaders,” *CNN.com/europe*, May 23, 2008, <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/05/23/dalailama.visit/index.html#cnnSTCText> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>66</sup> BBC, “Dalai Lama urges Olympics respect,” *BBC News*, May 21, 2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/7411939.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7411939.stm), (accessed May 25, 2010).

order not to threaten profitable trade with China. In October 2008 British Foreign Secretary David Miliband announced that the UK's position on Tibet has changed and UK recognizes Beijing's direct rule over Tibet for the first time. He stated, "Like every other EU member state, and the United States, we regard Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China."<sup>67</sup> However, in 1995 the UK position on Tibet was different; one of the statements from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said, "Successive British Governments have consistently regarded Tibet as autonomous, although we recognise the special position of the Chinese there. This remains our view. We have stressed to the Chinese authorities the need for fuller autonomy in Tibet. However, we do not regard independence for Tibet as a realistic option as Tibet has never been internationally recognised as an independent State, and no member of the UN regards Tibet as independent."<sup>68</sup>

## ***2.4 The United States***

The Dalai Lama has met every serving US president since 1991.<sup>69</sup> In October 2007 President George Bush presented the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award given to civilians, to the Dalai Lama at the White House. George W. Bush became the first sitting U.S. president to appear in public with the Dalai Lama and presenting the award.<sup>70</sup> Henry Kissinger in 2007 interview underlined that "when the Congress of the United States and the presence of the president honors a leader of a separatist... it must have foreign political consequences." Especially when the U.S. government do this during the National Congress of the Communist Party of China, "where Hu Jintao has to explain his leadership to 2000

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<sup>67</sup> Richard Spencer, "UK recognizes China's direct rule over Tibet," *Telegraph.co.uk*, November 5, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/tibet/3385803/UK-recognises-Chinas-direct-rule-over-Tibet.html> (accessed June 2, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Free Tibet, UK relations with Tibet, <http://www.freetibet.org/about/uk-relations-tibet> (accessed June 2, 2010).

<sup>69</sup> BBC, "China anger at Dalai Lama-Obama meeting," *BBC News*, February 19, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8523319.stm> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>70</sup> Allen T. Cheng, "China Summons U.S. Envoy to protest Dalai Lama Medal," *Bloomberg.com*, October 18, 2007, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601080&sid=alxgKCevbfgE&refer=asia> (accessed May 29, 2010).

assembled members of the Communist Party and he therefore had very little flexibility of showing understanding of our necessity, why it [honoring the Dalai Lama] had to be this week and not two weeks later or two weeks earlier, preferably two weeks later.”<sup>71</sup> China’s foreign ministry spokesman said that the decision to honor the Dalai Lama would have an “extremely serious impact” on bilateral relations, and in protest, China pulled out of an international strategy session on Iran.<sup>72</sup>

In February 2010 President Barack Obama hosted a low-profile “closed press” meeting with the Dalai Lama at the White House’s Map Room instead of the Oval Office in order to avoid inflaming tensions with China. Before the meeting the Chinese officials made a remark:

We urge the U.S. to fully recognize the high sensitivity of Tibet-related issues, strictly abide by its commitment of recognizing Tibet as part of China and opposing "Tibet independence", cancel immediately the wrong decision of arranging a meeting between President Obama and Dalai... not to undermine the stability of Tibet and not to interfere in China's internal affairs so as to protect China-US relations from being further undermined.<sup>73</sup>

In response, White House Deputy Press Secretary Bill Burton announced:

[T]he U.S. considers Tibet to be a part of China. We have human rights concerns about the treatment of Tibetans. We urge the government of China to protect the unique cultural and religious traditions of Tibet...we expect that our relationship with China is mature enough where we can work on issues of mutual concern, such as climate, the global economy, and nonproliferation, and discuss frankly and candidly those issues where we disagree.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Charlie Rose, “A discussion on China with Henry Kissinger,” <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/8740> (accessed May 21, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> Matt Spetalnick and Paul Eckert, “Bush hosts Dalai Lama amid Chinese outrage,” *Reuters*, October 16, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSPEK23054420071016> (accessed May 29, 2010).

<sup>73</sup> Consulate-General of the PRC in New York, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu's Remarks on Obama to Meet with Dalai,” <http://www.nyconsulate.prchina.org/eng/xw/t661087.htm> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>74</sup> Lynn Sweet, “Behind Obama’s Meeting With the Dalai Lama, Valerie Jarrett’s Trip to India,” *Politics Daily*, February 15, 2010, <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/02/15/behind-obamas-meeting-with-the-dalai-lama-valerie-jarretts-tr/> (accessed May 25, 2010).

After the Dalai Lama-Obama meeting White House press secretary Robert Gibbs released a statement: “The president stated his strong support for the preservation of Tibet’s unique religious, cultural and linguistic identity and the protection of human rights for Tibetans in the People’s Republic of China”<sup>75</sup>, underlining that the U.S. does not call for greater autonomy for Tibet.

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<sup>75</sup> Rebecca Novick, “Obama and the Dalai Lama: Image vs. Reality,” *The Huffington Post*, February 22, 2010, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rebecca-novick/obama-and-the-dalai-lama\\_b\\_471229.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rebecca-novick/obama-and-the-dalai-lama_b_471229.html) (accessed May 25, 2010).

## Chapter 3 – Analysis

China's influence in the world has increased dramatically over the past decade, but its present international significance mainly relies on its rapidly growing economic and military power, while China's political influence is still limited. China is searching for a greater voice in the global politics and is trying to get the outside world to accept its rising power. However, hard power resources alone would be insufficient to achieve and maintain great power status, because one of the components of a great power is soft power. Chinese ideology has limited international appeal, because a lack of democracy, human rights and rule of law do not make the Chinese government's power legitimate in the eyes of the Western democracies and do not let China to change its negative image in the West. China's material capabilities cannot be ignored, but only through soft power China can earn the understanding of the international community that will facilitate China's further development.

The situation with human rights and democratic values in China creates problems in building comprehensive cooperation between China and the Western democracies. Some scholars argue that the growing interdependence between China and the West will finally outweigh the differences over norms and values and create more leverage on both sides that will result in more pragmatic relationship.<sup>76</sup> However, nowadays the differences over norms and values appear frequently, since human rights are a central element in foreign policy of many democratic countries. Human rights have become a principal component and objective of the EU foreign policy; the European Union has used its economic and diplomatic powers to foster the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic principles in third

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<sup>76</sup> Taneja, Pradeep, "China-Europe relations: The limits of strategic partnership," *International Politics*, (Macmillan Publishers, 2010), 1-17.

countries.<sup>77</sup> While for China the concerns for human rights are “certainly not the issue of utmost priority.”<sup>78</sup> According to Freedom House, China is “Not Free” country. The political rights score of the People’s Republic of China is seven, which means that there are few or no political rights because of severe government oppression. Civil liberties score is six, which indicates that there are very restricted civil liberties and the rights of expression and association are strongly limited. Freedom House mentions that despite expectations that there would be some human rights improvements during the year of the Beijing Olympic Games, the Chinese government increased restrictions, tighten control over the media coverage and gestures toward improved human rights were not founded. Interestingly, Freedom House analyzes Tibet separately from China and ranks it with the lowest level of freedom. In addition, Tibet receives a downward trend indicating “deterioration in freedom of movement caused by the increased military presence, roadblocks, and greater bureaucratic restrictions that followed antigovernment protests.”<sup>79</sup>

This chapter discusses possible reasons of the meetings with the Dalai Lama described in the previous chapter; applies Nye’s theory of soft power and Keohane and Nye’ theory of complex interdependence to explain China’s inability to persuade the Western leaders not to meet with the Dalai Lama.

### ***3.1 Germany***

Merkel’s decision to meet the Dalai Lama, ignoring China’s pressure and endangering friendly relations with the Chinese government, shows her political choice of a values-based

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<sup>77</sup> Ruby Gropas, *Human Rights & Foreign Policy: The Case of the European Union* (Athens: Ant. N. Sakkoulas, Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2006), 95.

<sup>78</sup> Rein Mullerson, *Human Rights Diplomacy*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 39.

<sup>79</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World – China* (2009), [http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc\\_country\\_detail.cfm?year=2009&country=7586&pf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2009&country=7586&pf) (accessed May 26, 2010).

Freedom House, *Freedom in the World – Tibet [China]* (2009), [http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc\\_country\\_detail.cfm?year=2009&country=7743&pf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2009&country=7743&pf) (accessed May 26, 2010).

foreign policy, shaped by social norms of appropriate behavior shared within the international and domestic society. Rittberger defines this approach as “norm-consistent foreign policy.” Constructivism explains such logic as “a logic of appropriateness rather than a logic of consequentiality.”<sup>80</sup> Merkel showed her support for human and civil rights, despite the risk of damaging German economic interests in China. Peter Baehr underlines that human rights differ from other objectives of foreign policy in that they are not based on direct material interest. Therefore, governments that want to promote human rights abroad have to face difficult choices of policies and priorities,<sup>81</sup> which mean that governments have to decide whether to give a priority to human rights over other foreign policy considerations.

After World War II, support of human rights became a fundamental component of German foreign policy, because after Germany’s Nazi past, when the largest scale crimes against humanity were committed, and after the experience of living in the dictatorship of communist East Germany, the country can only be on the side of human rights. Article 1 of the German Constitution says: “Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority. The German people therefore acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community, of peace and of justice in the world.”<sup>82</sup>

Baehr underlines that “Human rights is a policy area where domestic factors play an important role.”<sup>83</sup> As mentioned above the German Constitution regards human dignity as unassailable and universally applicable, therefore Merkel could not sacrifice her respect for human rights to the preferences of the Chinese government. As the Dalai Lama said “What I

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<sup>80</sup> Volker Rittberger, *German foreign policy since unification: theories and case studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). The first quotation is from page 132, the second is from page 105.

<sup>81</sup> Peter R. Baehr, *The Role of Human Rights in Foreign Policy*, (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>82</sup> German Law Archive, “Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (Grundgesetz, GG),” <http://www.iuscomp.org/gla/statutes/GG.htm#1> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>83</sup> Baehr, 124.

appreciate about Mrs Merkel, is her steady engagement on human rights and religious freedom...Perhaps that is why she wants to see me, in spite of all the pressure from China.”<sup>84</sup>

In addition, according to a study carried out for the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, Germans like the Dalai Lama more than they do their native-born Pope Benedict XVI. A survey showed that 44 percent of the respondents saw the Tibetan spiritual leader as a role model, while only 42 percent attributed the same qualities to the pope.<sup>85</sup> So, domestic public opinion and popularity of the Dalai Lama also influenced Merkel’s decision to meet him, and her moral line with China probably would gain popular support of German people.

The decision to meet the Dalai Lama in 2007 could also be connected with the role Germany played in the European Union that year. From January till June 2007 Germany hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which means Germany was “face and voice” of the European Union for six months, speaking on behalf of all Member States.<sup>86</sup> In addition, in 2007 Germany assumed the G8 Presidency, the presidency of the eight leading industrialized nations, under the motto “Growth and Responsibility”. Therefore, Angela Merkel could use the meeting with the Dalai Lama as an instrument for promotion of human rights, to show that the German government against violations of human rights in Tibet and works for the improvement of human rights around the world, enhancing by this Germany’s soft power.

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<sup>84</sup> BBC, “Merkel angers China on Dalai Lama,” *BBC News*, September 23, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7008931.stm> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>85</sup> Deutsche Welle, “Germans Prefer Dalai Lama to Pope Benedict, Says Study,” *DW-World.De Deutsche Welle*, July 14, 2007, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,2682475,00.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>86</sup> Germany 2007 – Presidency of the European Union. “What is the Presidency?” *EU2007.de*, [http://www.eu2007.de/en/The\\_Council\\_Presidency/What\\_is\\_the\\_Presidency/index.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/The_Council_Presidency/What_is_the_Presidency/index.html) (accessed May 26, 2010).

### ***3.2 France and Great Britain***

The leaders of France and Great Britain followed Merkel's example and met the Dalai Lama in December and May 2008 respectively, making the voice of several European states regarding situation in Tibet more prominent.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama has three main commitments in life. First is his commitment to “the promotion of human values such as compassion, forgiveness, [and] tolerance.” Second is the commitment to “the promotion of religious harmony and understanding among the world's major religious traditions”. Third is his commitment to the Tibetan issue, “to act as the free spokesperson of the Tibetans in their struggle for justice.”<sup>87</sup> The Dalai Lama promotes the principles of democracy, human dignity, universal responsibility, non-violence, peace and disarmament, which are consistent with that of the European Union, therefore the EU member states are attracted to the Dalai Lama's values and respect his moral authority. As a result, the EU leaders wish to meet with him and support his course in order to promote their own soft power. The soft power of the European Union comes from its principles of democracy, the common values, the rule of law and the commitment to human rights. Respect for human rights lies at the foundation of the European Union, it promotes and defends them both within its borders and in its relations with outside countries. All agreements on trade or cooperation with third countries contain a clause stipulating that human rights are an essential element in the relations between the parties.<sup>88</sup> The enlargement of the European Union demonstrates that the EU possesses extensive soft power and its ideas of peace and prosperity attracts new member states.

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<sup>87</sup> His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, “Three Main Commitments,” *His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet Web site*, <http://www.dalailama.com/biography/three-main-commitments> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>88</sup> Europa: Gateway to the European Union, Human Rights, [http://europa.eu/pol/rights/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/rights/index_en.htm) (accessed May 29, 2010).

The Dalai Lama does not need to use threats or inducements, he shapes the preferences of others by his attractive personality and moral authority, in other words by his soft power. Whereas because of unattractive Communist ideology and the deficit of the moral authority, the Chinese government have to command and threaten with negative consequences other political actors to influence their preferences. As a result, China encounter resistance to its wishes, namely it cannot persuade the Western democracies not to meet the Dalai Lama. As the Dalai Lama underlines: “One important factor is moral authority and that is lacking. Because of its very poor record on human rights and religious freedom and freedom of expression and freedom of the press – too much censorship – the image of China in the field of moral authority is very, very poor.” Hans-Gert Pottering, the President of the European Parliament once declared: “It is our duty to help his holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama so that his people have a good future.”<sup>89</sup>

The Western leaders do not share values of the Chinese authorities and want to abstract themselves from the country where human rights are disregarded. Nye underlines that soft power depends on the existence of interpreters and receivers. According to the recent poll conducted in six countries for *France24*, President Barack Obama and the Dalai Lama are the world’s two most popular leaders, while Chinese President Hu Jintao is among the most unpopular leaders.<sup>90</sup> In democracies public opinion matters, therefore the EU leaders have to be on the “good side”, promoting democracy and human rights in order to remain their popularity and to maintain their positive image.

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<sup>89</sup> David Charter, “Dalai Lama goads China as Beijing threatens Sarkozy over meeting,” *Timesonline*, December 5, 2008, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5289443.ece> (accessed May 25, 2010).

<sup>90</sup> France 24, “Poll says Obama, Dalai Lama world’s most popular,” *France 24 International News*, April 23, 2010, <http://www.france24.com/en/20100423-poll-says-obama-dalai-lama-worlds-most-popular> (accessed May 26, 2010).

### *3.3 The Unites States*

The Tibet question is becoming more visible on the international arena and in the Sino-American relations. A growing number of the U.S. produced films about Tibet, which portray the Chinese government in the unfavorable light, active media coverage of demonstrations demanding Tibet independence, and pro-Dalai Lama broadcasts illustrate that there is a public interest and support for the Dalai Lama and the Free Tibet movements in the United States. Barry Sautman believes that the changing political balance (from the West towards Asia) alters the U.S. cautious position toward the Tibet disputes and makes the U.S. more interested and involved in this issue, focusing on cultural, religious, human rights and democracy issues. He argues that increasing public interest and support of the Tibetan government in exile has a political effect. In his view, “Tibetan exiles and Western supporters devised a strategy to boost separatism in Tibet by showing that it had worldwide support.” This strategy encouraging civil disobedience in Tibet is connected with internationalization of the Tibet issue and increasing interest of the West in human rights in the developing countries.<sup>91</sup>

Goldstein underlines that officially the U.S. do not have strategic interest in Tibet. The only important issue for the U.S is the situation with human rights in Tibet. But he suggests that if the conflict results in bloodshed, then there would be serious domestic pressure in the U.S. to support the Tibetans. While China would interpret any support of the Tibetans as intervention in internal affairs and that would worsen the relations between China and the U.S. The stable relations with China have a priority importance for the United States, therefore, Goldstein emphasizes that although the United States very much interested in

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<sup>91</sup> Barry Sautman, “The Tibet Issue in Post-Summit Sino-American Relations,” *Pacific Affairs*, 72, no. 1 (1999): 10.

preventing any violent conflict in Tibet, in fact the U.S do not do much to facilitate a resolution of the conflict.<sup>92</sup>

Like other U.S. Presidents, Obama denied the symbolism of his 2010 meeting with the Dalai Lama. On the one hand, it is considered that this meeting will escalate existing tensions over U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan, China's undervalued currency and Internet censorship. In addition, it will "complicate Obama's efforts to secure China's help on key issues such as imposing tougher sanctions on Iran" etc. On the other hand, many experts think that the U.S and Chinese economies are deeply intertwined; therefore it is unlikely that tensions would escalate into confrontation.<sup>93</sup> To describe how the two countries are dependent on one another and closely joined, Niall Ferguson suggested the term "Chimerica" to show that China and America are becoming one economy, where China is saving, exporting and lending, and America is spending, importing and borrowing<sup>94</sup>.

However, others think that the meeting is "the latest evidence of the more muscular posture that the Obama administration has been adopting with China."<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth C. Economy, a China expert at the Council on Foreign Relations stated: "We are merely witnessing the reality of the U.S.-China relationship, which is marked by almost no trust, a weak foundation of real cooperation, and a lack of shared values and commitment to true compromise."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Goldstein, 1998, 83-97.

<sup>93</sup> Matt Spetalnick, "Obama meets Dalai Lama, angering China," *Reuters*, February 18, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN1116932520100218> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>94</sup> Niall Ferguson, "Chimerica' is Headed for Divorce," *Newsweek*, August 15, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/212143> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>95</sup> The New York Times, "Obama Meets Dalai Lama, and China is Quick to Protest," February 18, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/19/world/asia/19prexy.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>96</sup> The Washington Post, "Obama meeting with Dalai Lama complicates U.S. ties with China," February 19, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/18/AR2010021801412.html> (accessed May 25, 2010).

According to a national poll, 56 percent of Americans hold a favorable view of the Dalai Lama and 18 percent have an unfavorable impression. “The poll also indicates that 53 percent say it’s more important for the United States to take a strong stand on human rights in China than to maintain good relations with Beijing, with 44 percent saying good relations are more important”.<sup>97</sup> From its very beginning the foreign policy of the United States was a combination of ethical principles and national interests. Americans often claim to know what is good for the world and want to set an example.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, it was important for President Obama to meet with the Dalai Lama to show that official policies are consistent with democracy, human rights, openness, and respect for the opinions of others. As Nye points out, in the global information age those countries are likely to gain soft power whose “dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy); those with the most access to multiple channels of communication and thus more influence over how issues are framed; and those whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performance.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> CNN, “Poll: Most Americans say Tibet should be independent,” *CNN International*, February 18, 2010, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/02/18/tibet.poll/index.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

<sup>98</sup> Baehr, 83.

<sup>99</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Power in the Global Information Age: from realism to globalization*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 90.

## Concluding remarks

Gerald Segal defines China as a “theoretical power” that “has mastered the art of diplomatic theater”<sup>100</sup> and argues that China “matters far less than it and most of the West think” and it matters for the West only because “it can make mischief, either by threatening its neighbors or assisting anti-Western forces further afield.”<sup>101</sup> In other words, China’s influence on the world arena exaggerated and it can be said that China matters only as a threat to international rules and norms.

I agree with Segal that today the Chinese government has insufficient authority on the international arena and a deficit of soft power. As Nye underlines, nowadays under current conditions in world politics, power is becoming less coercive, because use of force, threats and manipulation of interdependence can produce enormous costs; as a result, soft power resources increasingly attain attractiveness and importance.<sup>102</sup> The Chinese government understands the growing significance of soft power and tries to increase it, but still the authoritarian party-state and Communist ideology lack legitimacy and cannot attract democratic states to support its course, and therefore instead China uses coercion to influence the behavior of others. While the Dalai Lama possesses extensive soft power, his message of peace and tolerance attracts the others and seems legitimate. As Robert Keohane underlines, legitimacy is important partly because “people will voluntarily support a legitimate policy, without requiring material inducements.”<sup>103</sup> In other words, attraction is cheaper than coercion; so if the leaders follow the course which public accept as legitimate, they will benefit politically from supporting such course. The Dalai Lama is a very popular figure in the West; people are sympathetic to him, and consider his claims as legitimate, so the Western

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<sup>100</sup> Gerald Segal, “Does China Matter?” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 5 (1999), 24.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>102</sup> Nye, *Power in the Global Information Age*, 77.

<sup>103</sup> Keohane, 2002, 279.

leaders benefit more politically from supporting the Dalai Lama than from supporting the course of the Chinese Communist government, which seems illegitimate in the eyes of others and inconsistent with international norms. As a result, the Western leaders in order to enhance their own soft power, and to improve their reputation and positive image domestically and internationally, agree to meet with the Dalai Lama, despite China's threats.

Since nowadays attractiveness becomes a significant source of power, China needs to develop the principles of liberty, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms to make its national image more attractive to the global audience; and the compromise with the Dalai Lama might become a powerful source of soft power for China that can finally change the perception that China is just a "theoretical power" which poses a threat to international rules and norms.

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