

# Inside the giant's mind

A discourse analytical perspective for discerning characteristics of an agent of power

# Abstract

The essay deals with how one can predict a state's behaviour through discourse analysis. It argues that while actors must have a *real* capacity for action, their respective discourse must also house a conceptualization of that capacity in order for an actor to be expected to make decisions to employ said action. Instruments of power must also be perceived as effective in order to be employed. The essay combines theories to analyze discourse from an instrumental power perspective, in order to make a characterization of an agent's likely employment of instruments of power. The author then proceeds to test the practical application of this perspective by making a discourse analysis on statements concerning peace and security made by the Chinese delegation to the Security Council. The conclusion is that while this perspective has its limitations it is an effective way to make quick assessments on a states instrumental power discourse and thus is a useful tool in predicting a state's, or other actor's, behaviour.

*Keywords:* china, discourse theory, power analysis, instrumental power discourse, foreign policy, state character

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

The original purpose of this essay was to assess what kind of power China is and the considerations that need to be made in correlation to this. Taking a discourse standpoint however I do not intend to examine Chinese power in real or ideological terms but the discourse in which China makes its policy decisions. A common definition of power is that a country is powerful if it has a large population and territory, extensive natural resources, economic strength, military force and social stability (Nye 2004, p 3). While some would argue that China does not fulfil this last characteristic, in light of Tibet, Xinjiang and its complicated relationship to Taiwan, the strength of neither of the aforementioned characteristics can be ignored. Addressing what kind of power China is becomes relevant because of China's rapid ascension to becoming a world power not just in strictly economic terms but others as well, such as in the scientific field where China has shifted the balance of power and made the triad of the US, EU and Japan, a tetrad (p. 86). It also becomes interesting in light of the current discussion on different kinds of powers, where the EU has been characterized as a normative power, stressing the particularity of the union (Sjursen 2006, p. 169), and thereby describing it as something different from what could be considered a conventional power. In light of this the possibility that China also is another kind of power presents itself. As a result of this, another problem surfaces, how does one characterize a power? In order to do this some form of reference points need to be established, as all powers could be considered unique and also the same.

The purpose as such is to try and characterize what kind of power China is, however in order to do this a framework for making characterizations of a power is necessary. Hence this essay also attempts to develop an analytical perspective for the purpose of analyzing the character of a state.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Framing of the problem

As the purpose stated I will attempt to make an assessment of what manner of power China is and what implications this brings with it. Since China is an emerging power in so many ways with new economic ties and a growing military its power can be seen in a myriad of settings and perspectives. Therefore, to make an assessment possible, one must narrow the perspective. To narrow down the perspective this essay looks to the UN, or the Security Council to be exact. However the essay will try to make a conclusion that encompasses more and try to establish a number of reference points in order to make a fruitful assessment of what kind of power China is. There are a number of ways in which this task could be undertaken, however I have chosen to analyze this problem using a discourse perspective. This is a rewarding approach since it makes it possible to study the Chinese power identity directly by looking at statements made by Chinese officials. From this, the following questions can be derived as guidance:

- How does China view power? Or. What does Chinese power discourse look like?
- What kind of power is China? Or. Through which power discourse does China act?

The question pairs are deliberately asked both in general and from a strict discourse perspective, because while discourse analysis may be a growing field it is still not without its opponents. But for the purpose of the problem this essay attempts to examine it is a powerful tool, which I also intend to both theoretically and practically show in this essay.

Moving on to the aforementioned reference points, these must be established in order for the analysis to become useful. One must be able to fit the Chinese discourse in a system in order to establish what considerations should be made in relation to China. These reference points will not be made strictly from a discourse theoretical perspective but will borrow concepts from the theoretical discourse on power and relating these to other powers. There are two interesting powers to look to at world level, the US and the EU, more players exist of course but calling these key ones hardly seems controversial. Using these two as reference points is interesting as they are two very different powers. The US is often described as a

hard power and the EU as a normative or soft power. In order to establish these reference points important questions are:

- What characterizes these different kinds of power or uses of power?
- How do these characteristics apply to different powers?

Establishing this makes it possible to then fit the Chinese notion of power into a system to help explain and predict Chinese foreign policy. In effect this essay relies on one hypothesis:

- By uncovering an agent's instrumental power discourse one can assess what instruments of policy are conceived as available to it and as a result make predictions on said agent's behaviour.

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

The essay's point of departure is a discourse perspective, where "language is constructed in a number of patterns that we follow when acting in different social domains [...] a discourse is one determined way to speak of and understand the world." (Winther & Phillips 2000, p. 7 *translated here*). The manner in which the author aims to examine the problem is that which is generally called discourse theory, as developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in which "all social phenomena can be analyzed with discourse analytical tools" (Winther & Phillips 2000, p. 31). It is possible to view the relations between states as an international society or a society of states (Scholte 1993, p 14). Indeed power itself can be viewed as insignificant without this international society since from a relational power perspective "any power instrument becomes a potential power resource only if its control is seen to be valued by other actors in the interaction, power comes out of this relation not from the power holder alone" (Guzzini, p 452-453), a view of power that resonates well with the discourse perspective that is this essay's point of departure, because while power must be valued by the others actors it must also be valued by the actor. What kind of power China values becomes an interesting variable for study since China is emerging as an agent with power capacities no matter what your perspective is on what constitutes power.

In order to characterize the previously mentioned reference points, the US and the EU, I'm going to use Joseph S. Nye Jr's (2004) distinction between hard and soft power as this is a fitting way of dividing up the two.

### 2.2.1 Discourse

Since this essay takes a discourse perspective this section attempts to, as briefly as possible, summarize the concept of discourse that is intended to be used. Dis-

course as described by Laclau and Mouffe “captures the idea that all objects and actions are meaningful” (Howarth 2000, p. 101). Depending on the discourse in which they are presented objects and actions are given different meaning, the invasion of Normandy was a victory to one side and a loss to the other, the start of European liberation and a mark of the end of a dream for Germany. This takes place in a discursive structure of articulation. The practice of articulation is characterized by the construction of nodal points which partially fixate the system. However this is always partially on account of the openness of society, society is ever changing and therefore can never be fully fixated (Howarth 2000, p. 102). This discursive structure is primarily articulated in language but Laclau and Mouffe differ from the conventional linguistic approach claiming that systems of social relations are constituted and organized through discourse, discourse is not merely a cognitive template (Howarth 2000, p. 102-103). Laclau and Mouffe make a distinction between contingent elements and necessary moments of a particular discourse. A particular discourse is a temporary partial fixation of meaning, however the contingency of meaning prevents this fixation from ever being fully realized (Howarth 2000, p 103). In other terms social relations are constituted and organized by a discursive structure (language and actions) which however is always in flux. It is therefore never fully realized but one is able to take a snapshot of this structure in order to analyze it.

Discourses are also constituted in relation to other discourses, “a discourse always requires a discursive ‘outside’ to constitute itself [...] as discourses are relational entities whose identity rely on their differentiation from other discourses” (Howarth 2000, p. 103).

A final clarification that should be made is that discourse theory does not claim that there is no *real* world outside of discourse, it simply claims that this world does not have any extra-discursive meaning and stresses the material nature of discourse itself, blurring the line between an objective world and one defined through language (Howarth 2000, p. 104)

## 2.3 Analytical variables

### 2.3.1 Floating significant

A floating significant is defined as a term that different discourses try to define in their own way (Winther & Phillips 2000, p. 35). The floating significant this essay is trying to examine in relation to China is “Power” or rather instruments of power. The use of the term “Power” when dealing with discourse theory is difficult since power in discourse theory is normally defined as the force that manifests the social (Winther & Phillips 2000, p 45). However I do not employ the term power for this purpose, instead I look at the conceptualization of instrumen-

tal power in the international sphere, what power is defined as in Chinese foreign policy discourse and how this definition fits into the academic power discourse. By looking at how power is conceived by China we also get an image of how China is likely to exercise and act as a power, first however there is a need for a definition of instruments of power to start with, a task that will be dealt with in section 3.

### 2.3.2 Antagonisms

In subscribing to Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory certain elements of discourse become valid points for study. Antagonisms in discourse theory "occur because social agents are *unable* to attain their identities... Thus the task of the discourse analyst is to describe the ways in which the identities of the agents are blocked, and to chart the different means by which these obstacles are constructed in antagonistic terms by social agents" (Howarth 2000, p. 105). These are important to uncover since they are "constitutive of social objectivity, as identity is always threatened by something that is external to it. [...] antagonisms reveal the boundaries or political frontiers of a social formation" (Howarth 2000, p. 106). By finding the antagonisms in the Chinese discourse one is able to find the boundaries of Chinese identity and how it is constituted in relation to *the other*.

### 2.3.3 Subjectivity

The second variable for analysis, subjectivity, is related to the question of agency in social interactions. A distinction is made between subject position and political subjectivity (Howarth 2000, p. 108) where subject position is the same as the subject (Winther & Phillips 2000, p. 48). Subject positions are the ways in which an agent identifies itself, for instance "Christian" or "Black". The same agent may regard itself as belonging to one or more of these identities depending on which are available in the given setting or context. The concept of political subjectivity then captures the way in which these social agents act. Simply calling it the setting for their identification is unsatisfactory since in Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse "the subject is not simply *determined* by the structure; nor, however does it *constitute* the structure" (Howarth 2000, p. 109). The ever changing nature of discourse in Laclau and Mouffe's view make any rigid discourse structures impossible, nor is it however a complete chaos making an assessment possible.

### 2.3.4 Hegemony

The concept of hegemony in discourse theory serves to illustrate (like discourse) the fixation of elements in motion, since discourses are ever changing and there may simultaneously exist different antagonizing discourses. The hegemonic inter-

vention cuts across these antagonizing discourses creating a new fixation, an intervention successful if one discourse dominates where there was previously antagonism. Such as when the discourse defining people from their nationality prevailed over that defining people from their class before World War I (Winther & Phillips 2000, p. 55). This essay however will not concern itself with finding a global discourse in hegemonic stature even though it is this setting in which the discourse analysis takes place. Such an analysis requires a wider scope but unveiling the Chinese discourse will at least help show one of the possibly antagonizing discourses. In using discourse analysis in the manner this essay intends, one must be mindful of *potentially* existing hegemonic discourses.

### 2.3.5 Logics of equivalence

Constructing logics of equivalence is a tool of discourse analysis. Specific signs (words) of a discourse are given meaning through a system of distinctions. A specific sign needs to be examined as opposed to other signs (Bergström & Boréus 2005, p 317). For instance the sign “security” receives a positive connotation to for instance “regional stability” and a negative connotation to, say, “terrorism”. Constructing these logics of equivalence we are able to better view the Chinese discourse and by examining which of these elements are key building blocks (nodal points) that fixate the discourse and around which other elements of the discourse circulate (Bergström & Boréus 2005, p. 318).

## 2.4 Empirical records

In order to examine the Chinese discourse on the subject the author looks at the Chinese permanent representatives to the UN’s statements on peace and security issues from the present and the last three years. These statements serve as sufficient documents for what the essay is trying to examine. The representatives’ statements will serve as avatars for the subject we are trying to examine. This is acceptable from a discourse perspective since “the autonomous self becomes a medium for the culture and its language” (Kvale 1992 cited in Winther & Phillips 2000, p 21 *translated here*). It is therefore reasonable to look at these statements, as they are likely to be (or necessarily so) a reflection of the Chinese peace and security discourse, a discourse closely related to the instrumental power discourse we wish to analyze. Since the statements are made in an international setting this also makes them more attractive for analysis since it is China set in an international context that is the focus of the essay. One problem with this material is of course that the setting is blurred in rhetoric, making it somewhat difficult to discern what could be considered Chinese conceptualized discourse and what is simply “politeness”. As such references to peace and security as a combined concept will be omitted from analysis, since it is a concept found in strict security council

discourse, as the UN charter confers the “Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” (UN charter, article 24).

Looking at discourse over time also gives us the possibility to discern potential changes in said discourse, and gives us an indication of the structural integrity of that discourse.

It could be argued, somewhat justified, that a more fitting empirical focus would be on the domestic debate within the upper echelons of the Chinese communist party but this is practically cumbersome for two reasons: One, China is not the most transparent society and therefore records are not always made official, the “real” nature of a state is hard to discern in a country where most of its politics are kept secret (Roskin & Berry 2005, p. 272). Two, the analyst’s knowledge of Chinese language is slim to none.

## 2.5 Definitions

- Power

Power is as already pointed out a difficult concept when dealing with discourse theory since a power theory is part of discourse theory. This essay however also concerns itself with another dimension of power.

Discourse theory adheres to Foucault’s definition of power which defines *power* not as the property of agents but as the constructive and restraining force that conditions the social. Our social world and the separation of objects is produced in power (Winther & Phillips 1999, p 20).

Another definition of *power* could be expressed as “A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests” (Lukes 1974, 2005, p 37). This definition is agent based as power is distributed among agents, and describes how different agents affect each other.

The essay primarily uses the latter definition but the first is a necessary premise of the discourse analytical perspective that will be used. One should also note how this is distinguished from the noun “a power” used to characterize the states being analyzed.

- Instrumental Power Discourse

This concept may seem elusive but can be defined as such: An *instrumental power discourse* is the discourse within which one finds the instruments conceived by an agent to be employed in order to reach desired outcomes.

- Chinese

Defining Chinese may seem superfluous, but this is to avoid confusion. In this essay *Chinese* is considered something stemming from the Chinese government. As such this essay does not concern itself with anything else and cultural and national connotations should be disregarded.

## 3 Perspectives on Power

### 3.1 Power – conscious and unconscious

There are a myriad of ways to look at power and a number of ways to analyze it. Steven Lukes (1974, 2005) in his work “Power: A Radical view” defines the concept of power as follows: “A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests” (p. 37). This definition has however been criticized since it has an ethical implication, on account of Lukes’ separation of perceived and real interests. In order to discern B’s real interest we are forced to make an ethical judgment (Hay 2002, p 182-183). Hay’s definition defines power as being context shaping, the ability to redefine the parameters of other actors (2002, p. 185). In this essay we will however leave this discussion aside since the normative aspects of power usage does not concern it. Lukes (2005), however in his later works admitted that this view was too narrow and focused merely on the exercise of power (p. 109), but the definition is useful to this essay since it is an exerciser of power it intends to examine.

For the purpose of this essay another aspect of Lukes' theory deserves to be examined. Lukes addresses this by looking at the problem of unconscious use of power. “Can A properly be said to exercise power over B where the knowledge of the effects of A on B is just not available to A?” (Lukes 1974, 2005, p. 53). Lukes answer to this is that if the lack of knowledge depends on A’s remediable failure to find out, yes. But if the lack of knowledge is because say factual evidence is out of A’s reach, then to talk of power use seems to lose all point (Lukes 1974, 2005 p. 53-54). This distinction seems to relate more to the question of culpability (Heyward 2007, p. 53), but the distinction between a conscious and unconscious use of power is what this essay focuses on.

As such A exercises conscious power over B when A is aware of the use of power, respectively A exercises unconscious power over B when A is unaware of his use of power. This further distinction is important since it gives us access to another level of agent analysis. While it may seem as though it is necessary to study an actors conscious as well as unconscious influences on other actors, one can also assume that an actor is likely to make his decisions on how to act from a conscious perspective, since making decisions unconsciously seems, and is, contradictory. Power in discourse theory was defined as the productive and restraining force through which the social was produced (Winther & Phillips 1999, p 20). We can as such define discourse as the defining parameters of that consciousness.

Another aspect of this conscious and unconscious approach is that the ends for which power usage is the means also have to be consciously conceptualized. An agent has to have a conceptualization of a desired outcome in order to formulate a strategy to reach this outcome. From this distinction between conscious and unconscious power I will look at some more factually based conceptions of power.

## 3.2 Instrumental power and discourse

How can different conceptions of instruments of power and their usage be related to and encompassed into discourse theory? Or rather what is the benefit of the discourse perspective? It is possible that this could be made in a number of ways but this essay employs a strategy which rests on the concept of “statecraft”, traditionally defined “as the art of conducting state affairs” (Baldwin 1985, p. 8). To study statecraft is to examine the “instruments used by policy makers in their attempts to exercise power” (Baldwin 1985, p. 9). “Policy making involves making decisions, and decision making involves choosing among alternative courses of action.” (Baldwin 1985, p. 15), and as part of this decision making cost-benefit calculations are necessary. Here the turn to a discourse perspective becomes interesting. Instead of simply trying to establish what instruments are available to a certain actor, using a discourse perspective this essay examines what instruments are conceived as available, what is considered a cost and what is considered a benefit. The discourse perspective implies that while discourse is always changing, agents are still in effect trapped within their respective discourse. Discerning what instruments are conceived as available within a specific discourse becomes a powerful tool for predicting foreign policy. Since any agent (rational or other) must make decisions from the choices available to that specific agent, choices that are conceptualized through discourse. Discourse is the conscious space within an agent makes his choices. It could also be expressed as: While power can be measured in *factual* capacities, mental capacities (discourse) must also be taken into account.

Laura J. Shepherd (2008) has shown how discourse can help to explain justifications in foreign policy and how international discourse can change the rules of the game. The occupation of Iraq for instance was made possible through discursive fidelity on conventional “logics of security” (pp. 294, 310). Her argument applies to a common international discourse but is applicable to this essay as well. In order for an action to be undertaken the agent of that action must be part of a discourse that houses the concept of said action.

## 4 Characterizations of power

### 4.1 Hard power – Soft power

Using a distinction between hard and soft power does not mean that this dividing up of power is all-encompassing or even the only way of looking at different uses of power, but as previously mentioned the analysis needs some reference points and this distinction is useful, as we will see, in trying to describe the differences between the two most prominent powers in the world, the US and the EU.

Joseph S Nye coined the term soft power and makes a distinction between this and hard power. Nye talks of the emerging importance of this concept as the nature of power has changed into a three-dimensional chess game, where one can win both by playing horizontally as well as vertically. Hard power is defined as power in a more traditional sense, measured in military and economic assets, the ability to use inducements and threats in order to make others change their position, coercion for short. Soft power on the other hand takes into account that a country sometimes may reach the desired outcome without the use of threats but simply because other countries admire its values and prosperity and want to follow it. Getting others to want what you want, soft power is the ability to change the preferences of others, or persuasion for short (Nye 2004, p 4-5).

Relating this to our examination of China we should be able to see whether or not Chinese power discourse has room for the concept of soft power. Is China conscious in its soft power use or does China show little concern for soft power considerations, still being a one-dimensional player in a three-dimensional game (Nye 2004, p. 5), a statement that resonates well with the previously made distinction between conscious and unconscious power usage.

Power comes from attraction, and soft power is a staple of daily democratic business (Nye 2004, p. 6). While China is not a democracy and therefore not as dependent on soft power considerations in domestic politics these considerations must be made in an international environment since the international system with the UN is a quasi-democratic system, at least in theory.

Nye states the difference between hard and soft power in degrees and the relationship between them is not perfect in the sense that some resources are applicable both from a hard power as well as a soft power perspective. He does however claim that the relationship between certain behaviours and the different power dimensions is strong enough to allow for certain shorthand references to behaviours stemming from hard and soft power employment. Nye also concludes that typical resources employed by a hard power are force, sanctions, payments and bribes

while typical resources employed by a soft power are institutions, values, culture and policies (Nye 2004, p 7-8). This division is especially useful in the analysis of instrumental power discourse.

#### 4.1.1 Instruments of hard and soft power

David A. Baldwin (1985) defines four instruments of statecraft that can also be applied to foreign policy:

1. *Propaganda* refers to influence attempts relying primarily on the deliberate manipulation of verbal symbols.
2. *Diplomacy* refers to influence attempts relying primarily on negotiation.
3. *Economic statecraft* refers to influence attempts relying primarily on resources which have a reasonable semblance of a market price in terms of money
4. *Military statecraft* refers to influence attempts relying primarily on violence, weapons, or force.

(p. 13-14)

While these categories of policy are often overlapping, Baldwin (1985) concludes that it is possible to make a reasonable judgement on which of them is the primary basis of the attempted influence (p. 14). The easiest way to divide these up between hard and soft power is by simply by dubbing Propaganda and Diplomacy soft power instruments and Economic and Military statecraft hard power instrument. While this may, *prima facie*, seem as a sufficient mode of action it is not. While it is relatively safe to say that a state relying primarily on propaganda and diplomacy could be named a soft power user the two latter categories are more ambiguous than that. In foreign policy, economic statecraft can mean both sanctions (hard power) and aid (a combination of hard and soft power). While aid can serve as a *carrot* it can also be part of public diplomacy: “Philanthropic programs are one of the means that nations have to cultivate their images.” (Zhang 2006, p. 26). Likewise participation in peacekeeping or humanitarian interventions may be employed for similar purposes. It could of course be argued that in these cases it is simply a case of what is known as public diplomacy measures, which can be accredited to propaganda (el-Nawawy 2006, p. 186). Trying however to fit ambiguous cases into a category that doesn’t fully account for the scope of the action is unsatisfactory. To compensate for this, another quality aspect is added to the two latter categories, a distinction between measures that try to influence by way of coercion and measures that try to influence by way of persuasion. This makes it easier to divide the different instruments between hard and soft power. Coercive military and economic means are hard power and persuasive military and economic means are soft power. While this gives us six categories it is still a useful and relatively simple distinction to follow. The reason for this conceptualization of different instruments is that these definitions will make it easier to detect the ar-

ticulation of different instruments of power in a governments instrumental power discourse.

#### 4.1.2 A consciously hard power: The US

The US can be characterized as a hard power in a number of ways. For one it has been argued that the US does not see the use of force or even going to war as a necessary failure of policy. The US sees the utilization of coercive diplomacy and a militarized approach to foreign policy as a whole and therefore conceptualizes foreign policy issues in military terms (Dunn 2003 p 286-287). In other terms: “When you see yourself as a hammer, everything looks like a nail” (Dunn 2003 p. 287). This reliance on hard power instruments translates into the military operations as well as, the US has approached all wars since Vietnam “with the use of overwhelming decisive force” (Dunn 2003 p. 287). This stems in part from lingering cold-war logic but its roots can be found even earlier and can be related to an American self-image birthed in a discourse of danger (Campbell 1998, p. 48-49, 171), and a perhaps simplified worldview constituted as divided between good and evil (Kagan 2003, p. 4).

This conceptualized hard power approach could be contested on a number of points of course, for instance the US has launched multimillion dollar public diplomacy campaigns in the Middle East following 9/11 (el-Nawawy 2006, p. 183), but it serves as a useful template for this essay. In line with the hypothesis outlined at the beginning of this essay the US foreign policy discourse could be characterized as a hard power discourse, limiting the conceived instruments available to the US. As a result one can predict that US policy makers will rely on hard power instruments and soft power instruments can be left out of the equation.

#### 4.1.3 A consciously soft power: The EU

In dubbing the EU a soft power this essay takes into account how the EU is often characterized as a normative power. In Nye’s own words soft power correlates to how a country may achieve its desired outcome because “other countries – admiring its value [...] want to follow it” (Nye 2004, p. 5). Normative power seems to be this applied in practice. European countries for instance spend much more resources on public diplomacy than America (Nye 2004, p. 82). Part of this policy has been credited to the lack of military means, making it a civilian power (Sjursen 2006, p. 237), with this lack of hard power means the turn to soft power comes naturally as this has become a strong interest in light of its relative weakness (Kagan 2003, p. 37). From this standpoint it can be argued that the EU, for instance, uses the insistence on Human Rights as part of furthering strategic interests (Youngs 2004, p. 421).

Previously I pointed to how the American reliance on hard power stemmed from certain characteristics of American state identity, a similar logic can be found in the case of the EU as “ethics are intrinsic to the identity of the EU.” (Ag-

gestam 2008, p. 4) “As a ‘responsible power’, the EU would then be expected to follow certain rules of action based on a concern for the well-being of others. From this it follows that strategies of persuasion, negotiation and dialogue are favoured over coercion.” (Aggestam 2008 p. 9). Whether this turn to soft power instruments stems from a lack of military means or a change in the common identity of the member states, the EU can, like the US, for the purpose of this essay serve as a template of a soft power user.

## 4.2 Smart Power

Smart power has been defined “as the capacity of an actor to combine elements of hard power and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing such that the actor’s purposes are advanced effectively and efficiently.” (Wilson 2008, p. 115). This concept does not really make the analytical framework developed for this essay less complicated, rather it complicates it further. The reason it is forwarded is that Wilson (2008) claims that China, by the strategic use of resources, has shown aptitude for the use of smart power (p. 111). As such one must re-evaluate whether the simple dividing of soft and hard power is sufficient to describe Chinese power discourse. At the outset of this essay I pointed to the possibility of China being a different kind of power. The concept of smart power does not render the previously forwarded theories void, however a qualitative aspect must be added. The definition outlining smart power is the dual use of soft and hard power, however simply using them both does not automatically make it smart power. They have to be applied in such a manner that they are mutually reinforcing. This application aspect makes it unsuitable for the linguistics discourse analysis that this essay undertakes, since one cannot know how the application of power *actually* is made. One could however conclude the existence of a potential smart power, should elements of both soft power and hard power discourses be uncovered. The purpose of the current discourse approach is rather to rule out certain actions than to imply exactly which actions will be taken, it is about narrowing down the choices of an actor through looking at what actions are housed in their respective discourse. Moreover Wilson’s definition does not give any indication of exactly how this interplay of hard and soft power is supposed to be applied in order to work in a mutually reinforcing manner. It is expressed as knowing the effects of each instrument of statecraft at your disposal (Wilson 2008, p. 115). Since this vague definition of smart power seems to provide us little use in analysis one could question why it is brought up. This is to show that in making an assessment of an agent one must be mindful of the possibility of the existence of other not previously conceived instruments in their discourse. An analysis also takes place from within a discourse and it is not a given that the analyst’s discourse will house a wider array of instruments than the subject for analysis.

### 4.3 A responsible power?

China has tried to characterize itself as a responsible power, as “China shoulders broad international obligations, and plays a responsible and constructive role.” (www.china.org.cn). The characteristics of a responsible power in China’s view seem to imply an agent who concerned with peace promotion and world development, together with its own development. Relying on “the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, China has developed friendly, cooperative relations with other countries and promoted peaceful coexistence and equal treatment among countries” (www.china.org.cn)

Being a friendly neighbour and focusing on the importance of negotiation seems to imply an emphasis on soft power instruments as persuasion takes precedence of coercion. Following the argument forwarded by Aggestam that persuasion and dialogue are favoured actions for a responsible power (Aggestam 2008, p. 9). So in order for us to characterize China as a responsible power we need to show that the Chinese instrumental power discourse correlates with soft power characteristics.

# 5 Analysis

## 5.1 A perspective for analysis

How then to conceptualize the perspective for analyzing the instrumental power discourse of a government? The previous sections have dealt with the theory of discourse and different conceptualizations of power. I now move on to compile these into a perspective for analysis. One basic hypothesis laid out in the beginning of the essay was:

- By uncovering an agent's instrumental power discourse one can assess what instruments of policy are conceived as available to it and as a result make predictions on said agent's behaviour.

Discourse theory rests on how the articulation and re-articulation of certain elements in a given discourse serve to fixate it."The purpose of the discourse analysis is to reveal what myths about society as an objective reality that are implied in speech and action" (Winther & Phillips 1999, p. 47 *translated here*), this is also the point of departure for this analytical perspective.

From this one is able to establish what kind of power a nation will exercise by finding out how power is articulated in government and foreign policy discourse. By reducing the state to a single agent one can establish the conception of available power instruments and make predictions on possible and potential state behaviour. In effect the analysis will look for references to (articulations of) the different instruments of power usage outlined in section 3 in order to sketch a model of Chinese foreign policy. This could be done schematically with a simple calculation of the most common uses. This however is a cold way of describing language and may not always capture how things are expressed in relation to what is emphasized and what isn't. Of course the frequency of a sign indicates its standing, but it still seems that a judgement based on what is perceived as important captures the nodal points of a discourse better. It is of course possible to further this perspective to approach domestic policy as well, especially in light of how the instruments of statecraft, as conceptualized by David A Baldwin (1985), do not necessarily pertain to any specific area of policy. That theoretical focus is however left to further research.

The practical application of this kind of power analysis is through discourse analysis determining the desired outcome for the agent and then through logics of equivalence trying to establish how the agent thinks this is best achieved. By looking at how the agent puts positive emphasis on certain actions in relation to the

goal and negative emphasis on other actions one can draw conclusions as to what practises are seen as positive and from this conclude that these modes of actions are more likely to be employed. Previously I defined discourse as the conscious space from within an agent makes his decisions. From this perspective, analyzing power agents entails trying to chart this conscious space and from this make predictions on possible and likely actions of an agent.

## 5.2 Characteristics of Chinese instrumental power discourse (nodal points)

### 5.2.1 Stability

Stability seems to be one of the key nodal points of Chinese discourse in the Security Council. It is continuously referred to in a non-questioning manner, often expressed as a non-questioned goal of policy and once expressed with a positive affiliation to “strategic importance” (Yishan 2006/02/27). As such we could deduce that this nodal point can indicate what kind of power China is. By building logics of equivalence around this nodal point we are able to deduce what actions China deems likely to yield the desired stability. It is expressed how the AMIS (African union Mission in Sudan) force and later a UN operation could help stabilize the Darfour region (Guangya 2006/04/25 & Guangya 2006/08/31), It has however also been expressed however that reaching stability requires dialogue between concerned parties as well as calls for constructive negotiations (Guangya 2006/01/27 & Zhenmin 2006 & Zhenmin 2006/09/13 & Jun 2007/10/21). A version of stability is expressed as the consolidation of peace to which sanctions is put as a negative to (Zhenmin 2006/08/09). Stability is also put at opposite ends with what is referred to as a “violence for violence” and “toughness for toughness” logic (Guangya 2006/12/12). Another positive relation to stability is the concept of economic development (Guangya 2007/09/23), and stability is put to in a positive context with a more generalized form of development (Jiechi 2007/09/25 & Yi 2008/04/16). How can this then be conceptualized in a way that gives us an indication of how China is likely to act as a power?

Well, we can tell that with stability as goal of policy and the reaching of that goal deemed more likely through means related to soft power, with the exception of the reliance of peacekeeping force in the Darfour region dialogue and development are stressed. In the earlier developed conceptualizations of different instruments of hard and soft power we can fit dialogue under diplomacy (soft power). And while economic development implies the use of a “carrot” of economic character it also relates to institution building, an instrument Nye explicitly calls a soft power capacity (Nye 2004, p. 8). This taken in the context of the Chinese aversion to sanctions seems to imply a soft power approach. It is however

also expressed that a military force can provide for stability, a relatively clear cut example of a hard power instrument.

This dual articulation of hard and soft power instruments of course implies that China could be the previously suggested agent characterized as a smart power, however in the previous discussion of smart power it was suggested that in order to determine whether a state could be characterized as a smart power it had to be established that hard and soft power were used in a mutually reinforcing manner. So in order to make such a conclusion further empirical study is required since smart power implies success, it is however possible to dub China a potential smart power. Looking back at the statements though, one can deduce that there is an emphasis on soft power instruments.

### 5.2.2 Cooperation and all parties concerned

Another element in discourse found in the statements to the Security Council is a stressing of cooperation and concern for all parties involved in a conflict, especially explicit in the statements concerning terrorism (Guangya 2006/01/27 2006/02/21 & Jiechi 2007/09/25 & Yi 2008/04/16 & Yishan 2006/05/30 & Zhenmin 2006/08/09, 2006/12/13, 2006/09/13, 2007/08/28, 2007/10/11). This can be correlated to the soft power instrument of diplomacy as most of the references to cooperation also receive a positive connotation to dialogue. We cannot however easily conceptualize this in a way that will give us an indication of potential actions by China, since cooperation is not generally expressed as an end in itself but merely a mean. This nodal point of instrumental power discourse gives us however an indication that in the Chinese instrumental power discourse cooperation or multilateralism generally receives a positive connotation. The question of multilateral diplomacy highlights one of the problems with the empirical records, as discussed earlier they are riddled in politics, and the turn to multilateralism in diplomacy is a global phenomenon which blossomed with the explosion of states and spread of democratic ideas after World War II (Berridge 2005, p. 170). It is important not to rush to conclusions and a discourse has to be examined in its discursive context. Talks of multilateralism may have a genuine positive standing in Chinese instrumental power discourse but it may also be the result of the diplomatic setting in which the statements were made. The assessment of the agents preferred actions must take into consideration the setting, and possible hegemonic discourses that may exist. A focus on multilateralism is possibly such a discourse. Cooperation could of course also be conceived as a way of accumulating hard power means, but the way cooperation seems to be approached in the Chinese instrumental power discourse suggests an inclination towards the soft power aspect.

### 5.2.3 Mutual trust, a friendly China

In emphasising traits of itself, stressing China as a friend or friendly actor is a continuously occurring characteristic (Guangya 2006/01/27, 2007/09/23 & Jiechi 2007/09/25). Likewise trust seems to be a concept that receives attention (Guangya 2006/08/31 2006/12/12 & Zhenmin 2007/08/28), highlighted with principles concerning mutuality (Jiechi 2007/09/25). This to should be view in light of the context in which the statements are made since being “friendly” is basically a requirement in international relations and diplomacy. But the usage of such a concept in discourse still suggests an awareness of the soft power instruments of persuasion.

### 5.2.4 Force

Force is not really a prominent concept in the Chinese discourse, but will be addressed as it is the primal instrument of hard power. The use of force, the ultimate form of coercion generally receives a bad connotation (Guangya 2006/08/31, Zhenmin 2006/08/11). However it also sometimes receives a positive connotation as a practical mean to reaching stability (Guangya 2007/09/23 & Yi 2008/04/16). As such force may in certain cases seem to be a viable alternative in Chinese discourse that cannot be overlooked. It can thus be characterized as an antagonism of Chinese instrumental power discourse as its definition is contested.

### 5.2.5 Summary

Briefly summarized, one could place the different articulated nodal points of the Chinese discourse in the manner described in figure 1.1

<b>Hard Power (Coercive) instruments</b>	<b>Soft Power (Persuasive) instruments</b>
Military Force	Dialogue
Economic Aid (Carrot)	Cooperation
Sanctions	Diplomacy
	Economic Aid (influence)

Figure 4.1: *Instruments revealed by discourse analysis*

A brief look at the division between hard and soft power instruments seem to suggest that China’s discourse shows an emphasis on soft power means of reaching desired outcomes. Sanctions were an available concept however there was an aversion against their usage. The use of force was not necessarily seen as a negative indicating that is seen as a possible action for China. Still in reading the

statements the image of a soft power seems predominant. In figure 4.2 the instruments are arranged in another manner to better visualize this.

<b>Instruments positively conceptualized (preference)</b>	<b>Instruments negatively conceptualized (aversion)</b>
Cooperation [soft power]	Sanctions (hard power)
Dialogue [soft power]	Military force (hard power)
Diplomacy [soft power]	
Economic Aid (influence) [soft power]	
Economic Aid (carrot)[(hard power]	
Military force (hard power)	

Figure 4.2: *Instruments divided by preference*

In finding military force both as a preference and aversion we can conclude that it is a possible course of action though will probably be employed with caution. This division makes it clear that among the preferred soft power instruments seem to dominate. There also seems to be little change in the character of statements over time and therefore we can conclude that this discourse is fairly rigid.

### 5.3 Chinese foreign policy

There is an inherent problem with the analysis' linguistic focus: That is that it doesn't take actions into consideration and actions as we know sometimes speak louder than words. While Laclau and Mouffe claim that everything is discourse as actions also are given meaning through discourse, both still need to be examined for a complete analysis. To ascertain the validity of the nodal points the analysis uncovered this section looks at other researchers conclusions in trying to characterize Chinese foreign policy. Contrasting these against the findings of the discourse analysis will help to complement the shortcomings of a purely linguistic approach.

Wang (2007) reaches a similar conclusion to the discourse analysis in his brief analysis of Chinese foreign policy looking in part at how China used a multilateral approach through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to achieve stability crucial to China's economic development (p. 39). He reaches the conclusion that China is likely to continue its cooperative policy as this policy has proven to be constructive (Wang 2007, p 41). Rex Li arrived at the conclusion that the peaceful approach China has taken stems from pragmatism as China is in part restrained by its interdependence with trading partners (Li in Zhao 2004, p. 46-47).

These conclusions correspond well with the image of China portrayed in its own discourse, as we have already established that cooperation serves primarily as a soft power instrument. Although there is also analysis of Chinese foreign policy that challenges the characteristics that have been pointed out such as the indications of preference on multilateralism and cooperation, Wu Xinbo concludes that while China expresses enthusiasm about multilateralism it still prefers bilateralism (Xinbo in Zhao, p. 65). But it could as already suggested be related to the fact that multilateralism is part of a hegemonic international discourse through which China must express itself.

## 6 Conclusions

### 6.1 Chinese power characterized

What then can be said about the Chinese character of power? The previous discourse analysis suggests that China can be expected to turn primarily to soft power instruments. Since China's instrumental power discourse seems to show an emphasis on what we have characterized as instruments of soft power we could characterize China as a soft power. However China was in its discourse not a complete stranger to instruments of hard power. A look back at the definition of smart power tells us that smart power is the mutually reinforcing use of both hard and soft power, in short a dual use. From this perspective China stands as a *potential* smart power, but the practical conceptualizations for analysis presented in this essay is not sufficient in providing the last piece of the puzzle, that relating to the degree in which the different instruments are used. It was earlier suggested that the analysis could be applied in a purely schematic sense, such an approach to the analysis would provide for a template on which calculations of degree could be based upon. While this *prima facie* would seem to give more validity to ones conclusion it is not the case, especially in light of the context from which these empirical records are taken out of. A more statistical approach was hinted at with the structure described in figures 4.1 and 4.2. But as already discussed these didn't reflect the complexities of the discourse to a satisfactory level.

We must of course take into account the ever changing nature of discourse, hence this characterization should only be thought of as the current character of Chinese instrumental power discourse. Making predictions based on this analysis is thus more suited towards the near future. To conclude we can then characterize China as a soft power user and therefore expect that China's will employ primarily instruments of soft character. We can expect China to insist on dialogue and diplomacy and avert from using coercive means such as sanctions.

### 6.2 Evaluation of the analytical perspective

The purpose of creating the analytical perspective was in order to make an assessment of the kind of power China was, but it could also of course be applied to other agents acting in a number of fields. This was necessary in light of the concept provided by the discussion of the particularity of the EU as a power (Sjursen

2006, 169). This implied that not only could power be used in different ways, but the reliance on different power instruments could be portrayed as characteristic for that power agent. This meant that there can be a qualitative difference between power users, not just usages of power. The need/possibility to sketch out these characteristics could become a valuable tool in making predictions on the behaviour of an agent. I argue that looking through this perspective actually has provided us with a sketching of the face of Chinese power, a sketch that could be used as a template in predicting Chinese policy. A lingering problem of course is that this essay lacks the empirical footing to ascertain that this is the case. The discourse perspective which this essay adheres to does not accredit actions any extra-discursive meaning. While things exist and actions take place outside discourse they will always be given meaning only through discourse (Howarth 2000, p. 104, Winther & Phillips 1999, p. 42). Meaning aside the analysis here has been from a strict linguistic perspective and a evaluation of actions is necessary to make a conclusive analysis. As both actions and language are given meaning through discourse, a complete discourse analysis looks at both. But the perspective serves to cast light on an agent's conceptions of the tools available to them and which tools are favoured, and it has produced results. It could be argued that the analytical perspective may be working but applied to such rhetorical material all it produces is a reflection of smoke and mirrors. A conceptualization of a show put on to appease the international community. A real assessment would require an analysis of the discourse taking place in the upper echelons of Chinese politics, where policy is formed, not merely expressed. Of course this would be a preferable approach but a strict adherence to such empirical records renders the perspective somewhat inept at dealing with what it was designed for, since these records are seldom easily accessed. Of course a state that speaks in one way and acts in a quite different manner will probably lose its credibility sooner or later.

But let us step back to the origins and purpose of the discourse analysis. "The purpose of the discourse analysis is to reveal what myths about society as an objective reality are implied in speech and action" (Winther & Phillips 1999, p. 47 *translated here*), a successful discourse analysis is thus a revelation of what is conceived to be objective. An actor so skilful that he in his public rhetoric manages to portray his worldview as something other than it is deserves credit as this requires a complete overhaul of his conceived notion of the objective, a task complicated enough for an outsider let alone for the party concerned. I'm not saying it could not be done - in fact it could be a very useful skill in social relations - it merely seems unlikely. Besides such an actor would of course be using modes of persuasion, or what is here referred to as an instrument of soft power. Deception is as already known a powerful tool of persuasion.

### 6.2.1 Weaknesses of the perspective

One of the most prominent problems with the analytical perspective is that it is context sensitive, trying to discern a particular agent's discourse requires one to be mindful of potentially existing hegemonic discourses. This was highlighted by the

manner in which multilateralism seemed a preferred action of China while other analyses of China say otherwise. This could be avoided by first identifying any hegemonic discourses in the context in which an agent's discourse is analyzed. The analysis of China actually proved that it was possible to intercept such a problem merely by taking into consideration a *potential existence* of a hegemonic discourse. It didn't require a previous discourse analysis of the contextual discourse. Still it is a weakness, since this does not mean that all *potential* hegemonic discourse were accounted for.

Another weakness of the perspective is as previously noted that a more appealing empirical material for study of this kind would be the talks taking place behind closed doors. While states sometimes have ways of eavesdropping through these doors, these tools are rarely available to scientists, at least not as a fresh commodity, and since discourses are not rigid entities such analysis may seem futile in giving us tools to predict an actor's behaviour.

Another limitation possibly conceived is that this perspective simply accepts the definition of soft and hard power, but as already pointed out this perspective was simply chosen in order to gain reference points for analysis. Just like the agent is restrained by its discourse so is the analyst. The discerning of different instruments of power requires that these instruments can be conceptualized in the analytical discourse.

## 6.2.2 Strengths of the perspective

What positive aspects can be found with a discourse analytical approach? Firstly, in light of the fact that the analysis did produce a result corresponding fairly well to other estimations of Chinese foreign policy, we can conclude that the analysis made from a discourse perspective is less time consuming. There is no need to search the entire spectre of decisions and actions of foreign policy and then look to their origin in order to make assessments and predictions on foreign policy. Instead through this perspective we look directly at possible actions through what is conceived as possible and preferable. While a valid assessment may require some work after the analysis in order to establish which course of actions is more likely in a specific case, the analytical perspective gives an immediate indication of what needs to be looked into in further detail. This perspective on power analysis can as such be used in order to make brief assessments of an agent's character to rule out certain behaviours, thus enabling the researcher to use this analysis in furthering the research without being stuck with the arduous task of assessing possible and likely behaviours from a myriad of different empirical sources. While one often can rely on others' analyses, these are not always readily available, or when available not looking at the aspect one desires to look into.

Another strength of the analytical perspective relates to one of the weaknesses put forward, the one pertaining to the context sensitivity of the perspective, even though the most desired material might not always be available one can almost always find relevant material, especially in an international environment since states now are under constant scrutiny, making the need for public diplomacy a

key element of any strategy, as media has created a involuntary transparency of state affairs, highlighted most recently in the war in Iraq (Mor 2006, p. 157, 162). More and more actors have gone public, especially governmental actors, through this publicity power actors are forced to create material that through discourse analysis can be studied.

Returning to the problem of making power analysis in a discourse, another strength presents itself. As stated in the previous discussion of this limitation the analyst is also *trapped* in a discourse, but should an analysis present an instrument of power that cannot be properly categorized this illuminates possible shortcomings and restraint of the power discourse within one makes the analysis.

### 6.3 Future research

The perspective developed in this essay certainly deserves more attention since it has managed to effectively characterize the Chinese power agent and the means available to that agent. However the fruitfulness of looking from this perspective needs further testing to prove its reliability.

One could also develop the different conceptualized instruments of power in order to make better and clearer characterizations of agents. Simply relying on the distinction between hard and soft power means is probably not optimal. A developed system of instruments of power would serve to make more detailed accounts of the character of an agent.

The perspective should thus both be further developed in itself to give it a sharper edge as well as be tested on other agents and compared to more conventional analyses to strengthen reliability.

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### 7.3 Internet Resources

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