

07.2.2026

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**Title**

Student-to-student diplomacy : Chinese international students as a soft-power tool / Ane Bislev

**Publication year**

2017

**Source/Footnote**

In: Journal of current Chinese affairs / Institute of Asian Studies at GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies. - Hamburg : Inst. of Asian Studies. - 46 (2017) 2, S. 81 - 109

**Inventory number**

46275

**Keywords**

Ausland : China : Auslandsbeziehungen ; Ausland : China : Studenten, Studium, Lehre ; Austausch von Wissenschaftlern und Studenten ; Ausländische Studenten : allgemein

**Abstract**

Chinese international students have become an increasingly visible presence around the globe, and interest in these students has consequently increased among universities, researchers, and policy-makers, who often see international students as a source of increased soft power. This article questions the idea of Chinese international students as a soft-power tool. This is done through a critical discussion of the concept of soft power and the rather limited research on educational diplomacy, demonstrating that the analytical vagueness of the concept of soft power leads to an oversimplified understanding of the linkage between international students and soft power. In order to provide a more nuanced understanding of this linkage, the article examines the actual overseas experience of Chinese international students and argues that the linkage between international students and soft power is highly complicated and that these students do not necessarily constitute soft-power resources. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)