

TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

CHINESE SOFT POWER: THE CASE OF KENYA

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ABSTRACT

China's political and economic influence in the international arena increases and the country's leaders concentrate on creating a favorable image in foreign countries, particularly in Africa. Through the application of Joseph Nye's theory of soft power to the case-study of Kenya, this paper aims to determine the level of Chinese presence in the African country within the areas of culture, media and aid, as well as how such influence is perceived by the local community. By way of a detailed analysis of Chinese engagements in the aforementioned dimensions and of the overall impression of Kenyans, it has been possible to conclude that China's involvement in Kenya is notable. Kenyan's perceptions are mainly regarded as optimistic, meaning that Chinese soft power strategies might be effective in the country. However, concerns about economic dependency and Chinese political values are issues that produce distrust in the Republic of Kenya, so that they may require particular attention by Chinese leaders, as well as Kenyans one.

Keywords:

Soft power; Chinese influence; Kenya; perceptions.

RESUMEN

La influencia política y económica de China en la arena internacional aumenta y los líderes del país se concentran en crear una imagen favorable en países extranjeros, particularmente en África. A través de la aplicación de la teoría del poder blando de Joseph Nye al caso de Kenia, este documento tiene como objetivo determinar el nivel de presencia china en el país africano dentro de las áreas de cultura, medios de comunicación y ayuda, y cómo esa influencia es percibida por la comunidad local. A través de un análisis detallado de la influencia china en las dimensiones antes mencionadas y de la impresión general de los kenianos, se ha podido concluir que la participación de China en Kenia es notable. Las percepciones de Kenia son principalmente optimistas, lo que significa que las estrategias de poder blando de China podrían considerarse efectivas en el país. Sin embargo, las preocupaciones sobre la dependencia económica y los valores políticos chinos son cuestiones que producen desconfianza en la República de Kenya, por lo que podrían requerir particular atención tanto por parte de los líderes chinos, así como de los de Kenia.

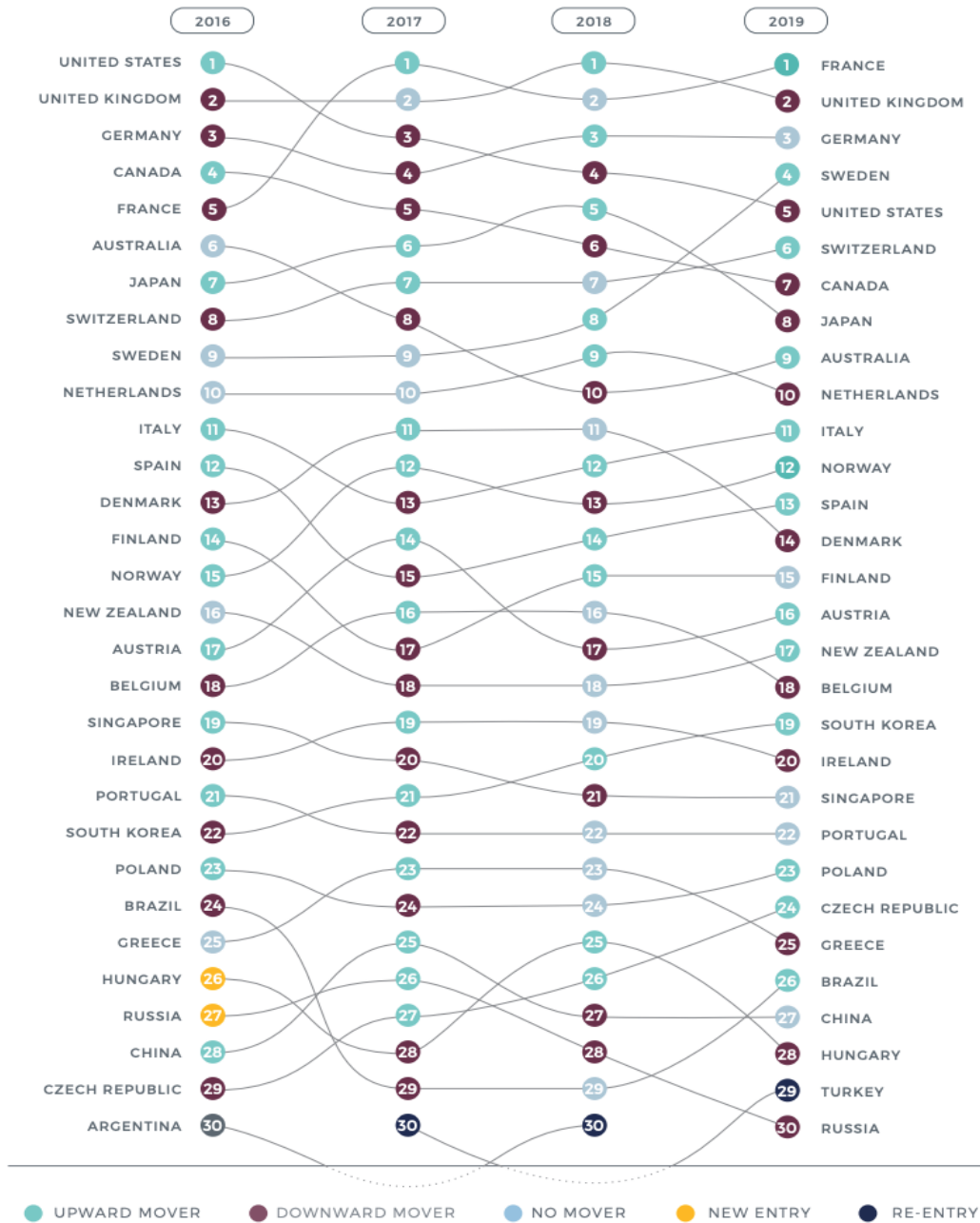
Palabras-clave:

Poder blando; influencia China; Kenia; percepciones.

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Figure 1: World Soft Power Ranking

YEAR ON YEAR COMPARISON



(Source: McClory, 2019)

INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS

PRC	People's Republic of China
US	United States
CI	Confucius Institute
UONCI	University of Nairobi Confucius Institute
CIKU	Confucius Institute at Kenyatta University
CIMU	Confucius Institute at Moi University
CRI	China Radio International
CCTV	Chinese Central Television
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the term “soft power” is repeatedly used in international public diplomacy and foreign policy practices. Defined for the first time in the 1990s by Joseph Nye, an American scholar, the expression is referred to as a force of influence and attraction that is based on the capacity of an actor to mold the preferences of other targeted actors (Nye, 2008, p. 95). Since its introduction, the latter plays a key role in the development of modern international relations and China’s government seems to make good use of it abroad.

Since the late 1980s, a period in which China commenced to make reforms to its economic system, the Chinese economy has been growing promptly; this has pushed the country to formulate strategies to maintain such heightening. Hence, friendly economic and political interactions with international actors began to be considered by China’s policymakers as essentials for entering new markets worldwide and achieving its desired goals globally (Tao, 2018, pp. 1-2). Moreover, due to Chinese interest in presenting the country as a peaceful partner and mitigating the general international perception of China as a threat to the global order, the notion of soft power started to be more and more popular within Chinese national and foreign agenda settings. At present days, this type of power is considered to be one of the main significant elements in the construction of the Asian nation’s foreign strategy (Mingjiang, 2008, p. 287). The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is committed to exploit all the sources that may create a positive perception of the country worldwide, but particularly in those geographic areas in which it has particular interests, for instance, Africa. In this sense, China attempts to promote its image and to expand its influence in a great number of African countries by engaging in their cultural, media and development dimensions. Given the extension of the African continent and the different outcomes that China’s use of soft power may achieve in each country, this study will focus on how China constructs its soft power in Kenya only and what are the perception of such presence in the selected African nation, so as to achieve a clearer and more detailed understanding of the matter.

There are several reasons why the case of Kenya, in relation to Chinese soft power, has been chosen for this study. First of all, there exists little research that agglomerates

all the aspects of Chinese soft power in the country and the overall impression that such force may entangle, so that highlighting such issues may be useful for clarifying the given topic. My personal close relation with Kenya is the second reason why I decided to elaborate on this investigation. By having spent most of my childhood in the country, as well as visiting it annually, I have been able to witness in first person the changes that China has been able to carry out by enhancing its influence in the nation throughout the years. In other words, the curiosity of discovering the level of China's presence in the country, as well as how this presence may be perceived by the Kenyan community, motivated me to elaborate a study about such questions. I felt the necessity to find confirmation of what I have been observing. Finally, as it will be seen later, Kenya has a strategic position within the African continent. Therefore, I believe that it is relevant to analyse the level of Chinese soft power, as well as its outcomes in the country, in order to estimate possible trends in the future in terms of power relations in the international arena.

1.1 Objectives

Against such a background, the principal aims of this research are the following: first, to examine and clarify to which extent China has expanded its influence in terms of attraction in the Kenyan nation; second, to analyse the positive and negative impressions that the Republic of Kenya may have due to an increased use of Chinese soft power in the African nation. In the interest of obtaining the desired outcomes for the aforementioned goals, the following secondary objectives have been set:

- To acknowledge the kind of sources, as well as the strategies, that China implements for increasing its soft power around the world.
- To determine the extent of Chinese cultural influence in Kenya.
- To establish the degree of Chinese media operations in the African country.
- To define the level of Chinese assistance in Kenya's development.

Expectantly, the results of this investigation will serve for a better understanding of the interaction of Chinese and Kenyan societies in terms of soft power. Hence, this paper will be useful for students, as well as professors that are interested in getting an insight on the given question and developing further research. More specifically, it is hoped that such paper contains information that may be relevant to both Kenyan and Chinese cultural institutions and media companies, along with Kenyan public bodies, for obtaining more awareness about the situation. On the other side, Chinese students and professors may find valuable information in the specific section about the perceptions that the Kenyan community held regarding its presence and influence; such individuals may acquire precise information about the way in which the PRC's posture towards Kenya may affect its image globally.

1.2 Methodology

With the intention of procuring an effective answer to the questions proposed in this paper, this type of research applies a methodology based on a qualitative approach. As previously said, this work touches fairly modern issues like China's implementation of soft power abroad and its expanding influence in Kenya. Given the complexity of evaluating the effects of this power in world politics, the attempt of this investigation is to provide an exhaustive description of the context and evidence that may lead to an answer to the posed research question; in other words, whether China's level of soft power in Kenya is high, as well as the perceptions that such power may produce.

In Robert K. Yin's "Case Study Research: Design and Methods" book published in 1984, the concept of case study is defined "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Zainal, 2007, p. 2). By considering such definition and by bearing in mind what said in the previous paragraph, it can be stated that this investigation correctly fits with such notion, hence, it must be regarded as such. Furthermore, it should be specified that this case study is of a descriptive type. In other words, the latter presents the description of a theory that sustains the narrative of the issue proposed. As it will be seen later, the theory about soft power, presented by Joseph Nye, supports this paper's discussion and it will be useful for the findings of the study.

In addition to what is mentioned above, the resources implemented for the elaboration of this research are secondary resources. Academic articles retrieved from journals of great relevance, as well as books, have been used as supportive tools for the work. Similarly, online dictionaries, official websites, digital newspapers and reports has been used with the aim of verifying the arguments that will be put forward in the paper.

Finally, in order for the reader to get a better understanding of the research, the latter has been divided into seven sections. The current section corresponds to the introductory part in which we can find the object of the study, its importance and its objectives, as well as the methodology implemented for its elaboration. Section two includes an overview of the use of soft power in the international arena. Part three is, in turn, divided into three subsections that focus on an extensive explanation of the conceptual framework on which the investigation is based. Section four's focal point is directed at describing the way in which Chinese scholars and leaders perceive the concept of soft power and the strategies that Beijing implements in order to increase such strength. The fifth part of the paper is centered on Chinese engagements in Kenya in terms of culture, media and development; in this sense, the section is divided into three sub-parts, each introducing the different ways in which China attempts to attract the Republic of Kenya. Here, it should be noted that given the great extension of China's participation in Kenyan development, the third subsection is, in turn, separated into other segments with the aim of facilitating the reading, as well as obtaining a full insight on the different types of assistance provided by China. Next to last, section six examines the perceptions of Kenyans towards Chinese engagement. Finally, the concluding section provides a brief discussion about the findings of the study, as well as some possible suggestions about the given topic.

2. SOFT POWER AROUND THE WORLD

Back in the 16th century, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote a political treatise, called "The Prince", in which he explained the importance of being feared rather than loved. However, in the era of global information, where the latter spreads at full speed all over the world, it appears that both being feared and loved is the best solution for political leaders in the formulation of their strategies (Coutu, 2008).

With the collapse of several authoritarian regimes at the end of the Cold War and the appearance of new democratic ones, the construction of a country's prestige in the eyes of others grew in importance. Governments and scholars began to acknowledge that hard power and its traditional means of deployment are no longer sufficient by themselves for the attainment of foreign policy objectives. Policymakers all around the world came to a closer understanding that every facet of a country's power has to be taken into account for pursuing each specific goals that have been set both in domestic and international terms so that, with the passing of times, the concept of power has become less tangible and it includes elements which are considered to be 'softer' (Heng, 2010, p. 276).

With information circulating at such speed around the planet, the advent of new technologies contributed to simplify the coordination of propaganda, to improve its radius of action and to increase the potentiality, if used wisely, of the soft power of a nation. With this in mind, nowadays governments have figured out that, indeed, creating a good reputation of a country relies on the ability of policymakers in, first, making the most of all sorts of power, such as military, economic and cultural ones according to every different goal a state desires to achieve, but they also came to a realization that the effective promotion of a country's cultural and political values, through legitimate foreign policy actions, the voluntary participation in international institutions, the national performance and so on, may greatly benefit the rendition of a state in terms of influence and goal pursuit (Gallarotti, 2011, pp. 4-5).

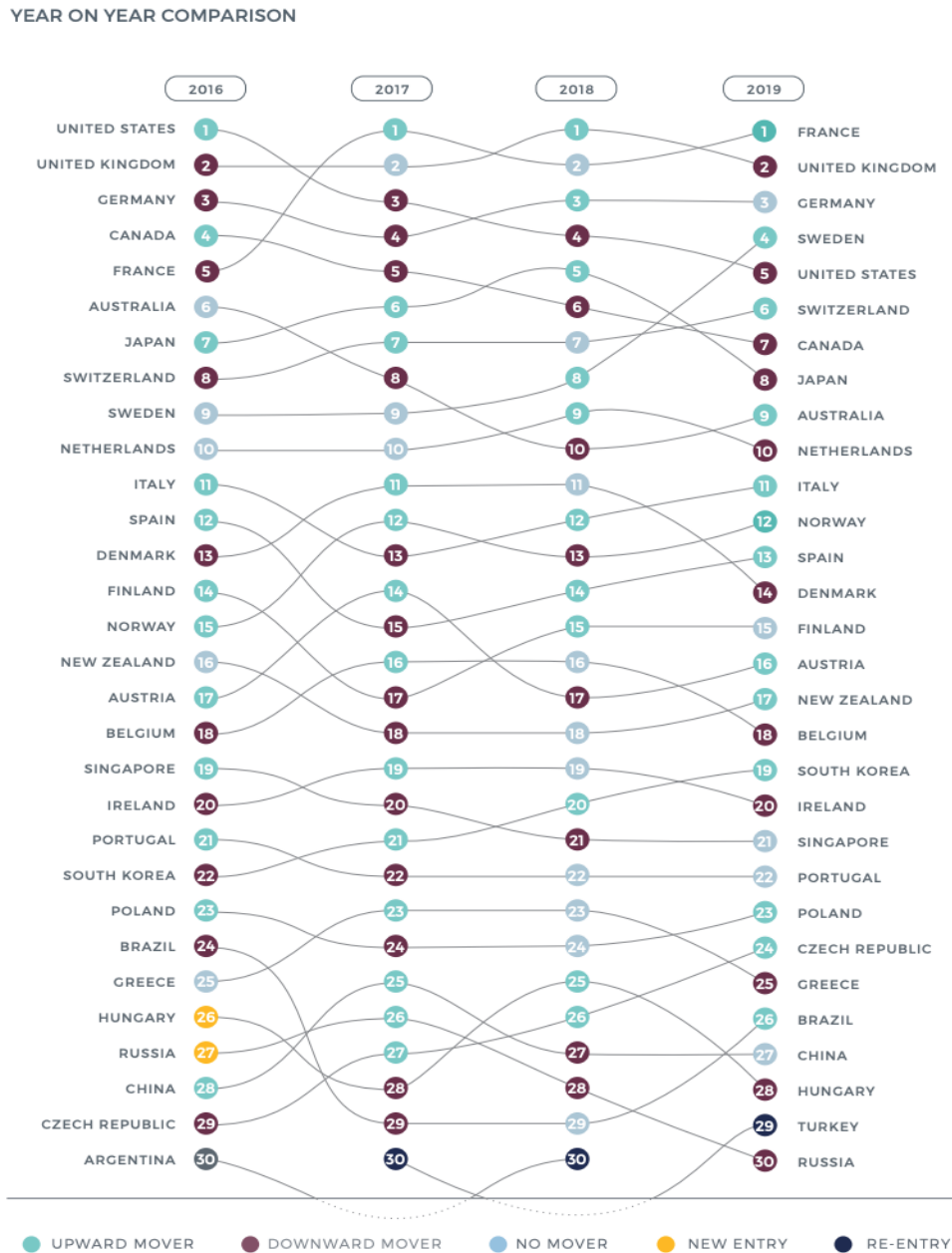
Once more, in the 21st century, the correct use of the potentiality that soft power, for indirectly influencing others to do what an actor prefers, is crucial for both the national and international success of a country in terms of economic, cultural and diplomatic relations (Heng, 2010, p. 299). If not used prudently, the impacts that soft power may generate unfavorable results and prevent the attainment of certain goals. For instance, the standby period forged to the request made by China in 1986 for it to enter into the World Trade Organization (WTO) was a negative reaction by the international community that was preceded by the Tiananmen Square massacre carried out by the Chinese government in 1989; such mass murder damaged the image and reputation of the Public Republic of China (PRC) (Feng, 2006, p. 57).

Now, for a clearer insight regarding how soft power is implemented around the world, it is convenient to mention the Soft Power 30 Index created by Portland Communications¹. The index is based upon six specific sources of soft power as an extensive framework for analysing such force. The sources used by the Index take as a reference point the three traditional pillars of soft power established by Joseph Nye, the father of this concept of power. In this regard, it is appropriate to briefly anticipate the discussion about what these three elements are. When referring to the principal instruments of soft power, Nye relates a country's culture, its political values and its foreign policy (Nye, 2008, p. 97). On the other hand, the six specific sources that according to Soft Power 30 Index may generate influence are: the global magnetism of a country's culture, the quality of a nation's education measured in respect of human capital and appeal to foreign students, the capabilities of a country in terms of digital infrastructures and diplomacy, the level of attraction of a country's economic model, a nation's global engagement according to the strength of its diplomatic connections and, as final, the virtue of the political institutions of a state in relation to their commitment to democracy and human rights (McClory, 2019, pp. 26-28).

The first survey is dated to 2015 and has been then repeated annually. As a consequence of the fact that the 2020 report has not been published yet, the results from the 2019 report will be used with the aim of shortly examining the countries in which soft power is implemented at its best. Figure number one (see Figure 1) illustrates the rankings in reference to the years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.

¹Portland Communications is a communications consultancy that collaborates with national institutions, companies and non-governmental organizations. It advises such actors through advisory practices that assist them in strategically managing their reputation globally (The Soft Power 30, n.d.).

Figure 1: World Soft Power Ranking



(Source: McClory)

As it can be observed, throughout the years, the top countries that remain within the five first positions of the ranking are well-known superpowers, such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States (US). However, none of the four nations has been able to maintain the first position during all years; this is a reminder that soft power can shift according to global perceptions (McClory, 2019, p. 39). On the other hand, the case of China is more particular since, according to the previously

mentioned six factors, the country remains stable within the 28th and 27th position of the ranking, giving the impression that its soft power strategy is not very successful. This is mainly related to China's illegitimate political values. However, a more specific analysis of the inherent characteristics of the PRC use of soft power and its resources will be provided in section number four.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Power as a General Notion

In order to gain a better understanding of the concept of soft power, I consider it important to first explain power as a general notion. The MacMillan Dictionary defines the term as "the ability to influence or control what people do or think" (n.d.). Such ability is usually linked to concrete and abstract sources of power; these are: a country's population and labour, its geographical location, its natural resources, its economy and level of development, its military body, its national values, the quality of its diplomacy as well as the one of its political institutions.

Historically, the power of a nation was strictly measured according to the strength of its army and economy; these types of forces form part of what is categorized as "hard power"; the simplest definition of this term is, in fact, "the use of aggressive military or economic actions to achieve political influence" (MacMillan, n.d.). In other words, a state changed the behaviour of other states through means of coercion or payments. Nowadays, hard power is still maintained and implemented by nations and other actors, however, mainly due to the changes caused by globalization, today, national security has been challenged by more complex issues and, other threats rather than military only, have been posed to countries; this implies that military and economic power are no longer the sole factors that contribute to the attainment of a country's desired outcomes (Yavuzaslan & Çetin, 2016, pp. 396-398).

Instead of growing in number of enemies, the participation and cooperation in the elaboration of the world agenda setting, as well as resulting as an attractive country in the eyes of the international community have become very important factors for governments. Here is when it comes into play the relevance of the role of soft power

in nowadays international relations. As it will be seen later, this type of power encompasses elements, among others, such as the following ones: culture of a country, its history, its economy, its foreign policy and its political institutions, etc.; all these sources can be converted into means of attraction (Yavuzaslan & Çetin, 2016, pp. 398-399).

At present days, neither soft power nor hard power are considered by international relations scholars as self-sufficient, leading to the conclusion that both powers are mutually strengthened. Maintaining hard power is crucial for a nation's security, especially in view of the complexities that one must face while directing soft power as its benefits strongly rely on the targets' level of acceptance. An inappropriate implementation of such power can result in a negative international perception of a country. Once more, the appropriate use of soft power is indispensable for directing both national and foreign concerns and creating a favorable image of a state (Nye, 2021, p. 5).

3.2 The Concept of Soft Power

The term soft power was first introduced by the notable political scientist Joseph Samuel Nye, in his book titled "Bound to Lead. The Changing Nature of American Power", written in 1990. In a broad sense, soft power is defined by the author as the ability of a subject to influence others, by persuasion and attraction rather than coercion, in order to achieve specific objectives (Nye, 2017, p. 2). Over time, the concept of soft power grew in importance as an analysis tool in order to gain a better understanding of the way in which power relations at the international level function nowadays as well as of the strategies implemented by the modern public diplomacy of the 21st century (Rønning, 2014, p. 2). In this respect, Nye presented an extensive idea of power which is no longer bound by a context of dominance between the agent and the target only, but also by a context of common desire between both subjects (Nye, 2021, p. 5).

While examining the realist approach in international relations which emphasizes traditional elements of power like the military resources of states and their security, Nye (2021) started noticing that within the main focus of such approach there were

missing elements of fundamental value (p. 4). Similarly, in the attempt of countering the general opinion about the fall of the United States as a great power in the late 80s, the author came to the conclusion that the US was not only able of achieving its national objectives through coercion or sanctions, but also through persuasion and attraction; in this sense, an example of the implementation of soft power by the US is clear during the Cold War, where the country was capable of spreading its culture throughout the European continent and therefore influencing it in its favour (Nye, 2021, p. 5). Hence, soft power is referred to as the ability to mold the choices and preferences of others; this is done not by relying on the use of force, but by means that produce attraction. In this connection, as already indicated, Joseph Nye (2008) sustains that:

“The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)” (p. 97).

As time progressed, international actors began to take interest in the issue and more interpretations to the concept were presented so that more elements have been added to these three pillars. The democratic values of a country, its culture including language, arts and sports, its history and society, its economic instruments, its political institutions, its participation in international bodies and its foreign policy are now considered to be all sources that support the growth of a nation's soft power worldwide (Yavuzaslan & Çetin, 2016, p. 398).

This type of power refers to all the potential strengths a nation can decide to implement instead of military sources of power; a clarification must be made here as not every behaviour rather than the use of military force or sanctions has to be considered as soft power. The latter has to ensure, without force, that the desires of others are in line with your desired objectives in order to be regarded as such (Nye, 2021, p. 6). On occasions, soft power is believed to be not so soft as it contains elements of coercion; however, as Nye (2021) mentioned, the line that differentiates 'hard' from soft power is “a matter of degree along a spectrum of behaviors that range from the hard end of command to the soft end of co-optation” (p. 8). In other words, even if a subject implements the elements that could increase soft power, such implementation is not

considered to be 'soft' unless they obtain positive and voluntary attraction. If attractiveness exists, such actions are reckoned to contribute to the growth of a country's soft power. In modern times, a clear understanding of the concept and its potential is fundamental for achieving other countries' acceptance and so, effectively, meeting national interests. Once more, an outstanding international perception is of great significance for a state's cultural, economic and diplomatic relations to be successful (Yavuzaslan & Çetin, 2016, pp. 399-400).

Finally, it must be noted that even though the introduction of the concept of soft power was based upon American experience, it is not limited to western nations; on the contrary, it can be applied by an infinite list of subjects, ranging from policymakers, leaders, companies and so on (Nye, 2021, p. 9).

3.3 Construction of Soft Power

The making of soft power relies on two fundamental strategies which comprehend both a national and an international sphere; the two are interconnected. Although a detailed analysis will be given later on, it can be mentioned that, in this regard, the Chinese's government is acting in two different ways: first, focusing on its internal weaknesses and so fostering stability (Arif, 2017, p. 100) and, second, expanding its influence by developing worldwide acceptance towards its country.

First, the development of a soft power strategy, capable of making a country achieve its desired outcomes, requires a government to focus on the national dimension. A positive behavior and the assistance of citizens in meeting their needs is the very first step towards the obtention of the support and a positive perception by the citizens of a country. Without legitimacy and internal consensus, the success of soft power is limited. Such limitations could lead to a diminishment of the strength that such force could establish abroad. Moreover, the global perception of a country would be weakened and little sustained (Gallarotti, 2011, p. 37). In other words, the national level is fundamental for a correct functioning of the strategies through which policymakers are willing to exploit such force of attraction. National values, the political system and a nation's institutions are important elements that reflect the manner in which governors employ their power. In an era in which information flows more rapidly than

ever, the use of this power in a national context resonates internationally, meaning that a wise use of information channels is of great relevance for turning the sources of soft power into effective forces of attraction.

At the international level, countries are constantly observing other countries' conduct for forecasting new possible situations that may arise within the international arena. In this sense, credibility has become a key element for the construction of soft power. As countries compete for boosting their credibility, "politics in an information age may ultimately be about whose story wins" (Nye, 2008, p. 100). National leaders have to be smart enough to choose the most appropriate manner to tell their narrative globally. With this in mind, the question of public diplomacy is considerably relevant. This type of diplomacy can be viewed as a means that policymakers implement for converting soft power assets into effective forces of attraction capable of charming foreign governments, but mainly their audiences. If there is a lack of credibility, public diplomacy efforts won't provide the conversion of soft power resources into forces of appeal (Nye, 2008, p. 95).

With the intention of calling attention to a country's soft power assets, public diplomacy engages in three different dimensions. The first is daily communications through both domestic and global press in which justifications to national and foreign policy decisions are given. The second is strategic communication which is carried out across determined campaigns with the aim of progressing in a specific field of interest. Finally, the third one is about maturing long-term relationships with key actors of the international community through, for instance, conferences and cultural exchanges. All dimensions contribute to create an appealing image of a nation (Nye, 2008, pp. 101-102).

Among the other instruments that are useful for the reinforcement of a country's soft power, one shall highlight: first, the economic capability as it plays an important role in deploying most resources of such force; second, the establishment of strong relations in terms of cooperation for ensuring allies and so gain ground within the global arena; third, the elaboration of foreign policies that are considered to be legitimate for gaining international admiration and therefore attaining the preferred outcomes of a nation (Gallarotti, 2011, pp. 35-36). Moreover, according to Nye (2008):

“The military can sometimes play an important role in the generation of soft power. In addition to the aura of power that is generated by its hard power capabilities, the military has a broad range of officer exchanges, joint training, and assistance programs with other countries in peacetime” (p. 106).

Enjoying the benefits of soft power rests on the capacity of policymakers in appreciating the available sources their country possesses in order to make the most out of it as well as and evaluating the targets to which the implementation of such force is directed (Gallarotti, 2011, p. 37). National leaders often perceive that the control of soft power is too complicated, particularly measuring its effects; nevertheless, such perspective does not reduce its significance in modern world politics.

Having explained the concept of soft power and the general strategies to be implemented by governments for its increase, one can now move onto the manner in which China has been perceiving such type of power throughout the years and what sources the country exploits in order to create attraction and influence abroad.

4. CHINESE SOFT POWER

Already two millennia ago, Chinese rulers and philosophers began to advocate the purpose of soft power. For approximately two thousand years, Confucianism was considered to be the country’s preeminent ideology; such dogma supports the idea that for a country to achieve a greater status of leadership, the first step is to present itself as an example for other countries without the imposition of personal values on the targeted subjects. In this sense, Confucius (551-479 BC), who was China’s most well-known political theorist and philosopher, focused on the importance of being able to regulate power and advised Chinese leaders to ensure treating others in a manner that corresponds to the way in which one would like to be treated. Similarly, the popular Confucian scholar, Mencius (372-289 BC), argued that great emperors should not have any enemies around the planet so as to achieve the support of all societies (Ding, 2010, p. 262).

With regard to China’s ancient approach to external relations, the rulers of the country used to implement military strategies that stressed the significance of exercising

diplomacy instead of military means. This idea is identifiable in the renowned book “The Art of War”, written by the military thinker Sun Tzu. The author shared the assumption that:

“To gain a hundred victories in a hundred battles is not the highest excellence; to subjugate the enemy’s army without doing battle is the highest of excellence. Therefore, the best warfare strategy is to attack the enemy’s plans, next is to attack alliances, next is to attack the army, and the worst is to attack a walled city” (Ding, 2010, p. 262).

In other words, Sun Tzu suggested that the real target is the rival’s intellect and not to destroy their cities.

In the late 70s, with the end of the Cultural Revolution, China began to open up to Western literature about international relations. However, the concept of soft power only gathered momentum between the mid-80s and early 90s, a period in which translations of Western classic writings were provided to Chinese academics. For instance, the works carried out by Nye about the notion of soft power were rapidly encompassed within Chinese literature, particularly by young scholars who began to conduct objective researches about the topic. By bearing in mind the historical perspectives of Chinese early culture, the country’s leaders started to perceive soft power as a requisite for improving China’s comprehensive national strength² and, therefore, being considered as a great power (Ding, 2010, pp. 263-264).

For the very first time, the concept of soft power appeared in a national policy during the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held in 2007, in which the back-then president Hu Jintao suggested that the reinforcement of Chinese culture is crucial for the formulation of an effective soft power capable of spreading the idea of China as a harmonious society which is undergoing a peaceful growth. Likewise, in 2014, the actual Chinese president Xi Jinping stated that the country

²Chinese scholars’ understanding of the concept of comprehensive national power is based on the inclusion of the following elements: “territory, population size, natural resources, military might, economic wealth, political power, foreign policy, cultural influence, education, etc.” (Chuwattananurak, 2016, p. 3).

should increment its force of attraction so as to improve the way in which Chinese ideals and values are propagated to the international community (Albert, 2018).

Nowadays, Chinese leaders share the common belief that in this new international environment, characterized by multilateralism, Chinese foreign policy practices based on the implementation of soft power are indispensable for the improvement of the PRC's reputation around the world (Ding, 2010, p. 265). Applying soft power would also be an advantage for the pursuit of China's national interests, particularly with regard to the consolidation of its economic relations around the world as well as the enhancement of its engagement in the formulation of policies of developing countries. Policymakers recognize that the use of hard power could be a double-edged sword. If implemented, such power could result in a feeling of threat to today's societies which would consequently reinforce their alliances with other countries in order to counter China's intimidation. Once again, the export of Chinese culture, language, media as well as its contribution to development are key strategies for strengthening the ties with those countries that may feel attracted by the PRC (Arif, 2017, p. 98).

4.1 China's Sources & Tools of Soft Power

The interpretation of the elements that produce soft power by Chinese academics goes beyond the three traditional sources of power introduced by Nye (Fijałkowski, 2011, p. 225). As it will be seen in this section, several sources are capable of generating Chinese soft power. Chinese culture, language and education might be considered as the principal ones; however, the PRC's media infrastructure is a great contributor to the process of strengthening its soft power. In addition to these sources, one shall indicate that Chinese participation in international organizations and in the elaboration of the international agenda-setting, as well as its role in providing assistance and humanitarian aid in developing countries, are other relevant sources for enhancing Chinese force of attraction worldwide.

As previously commented, public diplomacy is the instrument used by governments to effectively enjoy the benefits of soft power resources. However, Chinese public diplomacy can be divided into four categories that serve as tools for converting each

of the resources of soft power into attractiveness (Bühler, 2020). Here below such categories will be examined:

- The first is cultural diplomacy. Chinese culture is the most valuable source for increasing the country's soft power worldwide, therefore, this category focuses on spreading Chinese cultural values by reaching foreign audiences through a series of initiatives. The existence of more than four hundred Confucius Institutes (CI) that promote Chinese language and culture all around the world is the clearest demonstration of China's desire to grow understanding of the Chinese narrative globally. These institutes offer activities designed at encouraging cultural and educational exchanges as well as the learning of Mandarin. In fact, programs in these institutes include language teaching, Chinese cultural courses and so forth. By diffusing Chinese culture abroad, another goal of the PRC's government is to engage with international students and persuade them to embark on an educational experience in the country. Within the field of culture, education constitutes another relevant source of soft power which is strengthened by the annual offer of approximately twenty thousand scholarships to foreign students supplied by the China Scholarship Council (Arif, 2017, p. 99).
- Information diplomacy is the second category of China's public diplomacy. It spreads Chinese values and opinions about international events by building strong media infrastructures worldwide through which China's reputation is constantly improved. In this sense, all means of communication are under the management of the Chinese Propaganda Department of the CPC which ensures that the country's image is not distorted within the international perception (Mingjiang, 2008, pp. 300-304).
- The third type refers to exchange diplomacy. Within this category, relationships with international actors are fostered. In this sense, the establishment of bilateral and multilateral agreements, the voluntary participation to the most important international organizations, as well as the adaptation to the norms established globally, are crucial for increasing the Chinese soft power (Bühler, 2020). In this connection, since the 1990s until now, China has participated

more and more in the formulation of the international agenda and has established strategic relationships with most world's powers. The PRC's increase in participation in international institutions ensured China's signatures to a great number of international treaties, showing Chinese commitment on delicate issues such as the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and free trade. Consequently, the country's global legitimacy and image have improved (Ding, 2010, pp. 268-270).

- The last category is financial diplomacy. It is the most visible instrument as it takes advantage of China's economic strength in order to increase the country's soft power. It includes initiatives such as humanitarian aid, infrastructure investments and debt relief. Chinese international aid in developing countries such as African and Latin American ones is directed at reinforcing a favorable and charming image of China around the world. The country's economy has been integrated with almost 100 countries globally, showing that China's influence is being reinforced continually. By holding out loans as well as making enormous investments and trade deals, the PRC's goal is to establish ties that benefit both China and the countries in question, so as to increase its influence and admiration abroad (Arif, 2017, pp. 99-100). In this sense, it should be specified that economic strength is often not seen by a source of soft power by governments and other actors; however, the PRC has been able to turn such strength into soft power. In this sense, "the Trump administration's retreat from important areas of traditional leadership in global governance and multilateral frameworks has provided another opportunity through which China is able to project soft power and gain prestige, status, and legitimacy" (Ishmael, 2020).

With regard to Chinese political values, they are far from being considered as a source of soft power for the PRC. The international perception about the country's political values is often negative due to China being an authoritarian state and the little respect it pays to certain rights such as the freedom of speech. For increasing its soft power through this type of source, China should focus on carrying out some reforms to its political system. Providing a greater comprehensive approach to issues such as participation in political life, transparency of national institutions and respect for human rights would produce attraction for the PRC (Arif, 2017, pp. 99-100).

5. CHINESE ENGAGEMENTS IN KENYA

In the early 1990s, the PRC began to highlight the importance of establishing amicable relations within the international system. In this connection, China perceived Kenya as a strategic country for increasing its presence and influence in the African continent. For instance, the Port of Mombasa is of great significance for the passage of Chinese and African resources that are required for correctly carrying out the operations of both Chinese companies and the government (Tao, 2018, p. 87). Moreover, the political institutions of the Kenyan Republic are considerably more stable compared to the ones of other countries in the continent, turning Kenya into a war-free country and securing China with safe importation and exportation of goods (Kioko, 2011, p. 13).

Under the Kenyan presidency of Daniel Moi (1978-2002), the relation between China and Kenya began to strengthen through a series of initiatives. For instance, the construction of Moi International Sports Center, the enlargement of the Eldoret Hospital, as well as the construction of highways, are proof of such reinforcement. However, it was during the presidency of Mwai Kibaki (2002-2012) when Sino-Kenyan relations intensified. The back-then president wanted to lower the level of dependency on Western powers and initiated a policy focused on East powers like the PRC. The reason behind this choice is strictly related to China's policy of non-interference in other countries' affairs, contrary to the West (Tao, 2018, pp. 93-98). In this sense, it must be noted that the PRC emphasises the respect for other countries' sovereignty and the principle of solidarity as a base for its South-South cooperation. Given the fact that within the Kenyan political and economic system corruption is at the order of the day, it is deductible that Kenyan elites have been persuaded by such principles (Fijalkowski, 2011, p. 230).

Under the presidency of Uhuru Kenyatta (2013-present), Chinese influence continues to increase (Mulati, 2019, p. 745). China has been making possible the realization of many projects aimed at increasing development in Kenya. Moreover, the boost of China's presence in Kenya has enabled the strengthening of the relations between both countries, as well as the elaboration of a great number of cooperation agreements in the sectors of culture, education, media, technology and tourism. China offers advantageous loans to the Kenyan government and, likewise, it contributes to the

construction of better health and educational infrastructures around the country, particularly in the less developed areas. Consequently, the PRC's success in Kenya may be based on China's attractiveness in terms of economy and politics which is enhanced through the spread of appropriate information and the diffusion of cultural values (Kioko, 2011, p.13). Here, it should be indicated that Kenya is largely borrowing Chinese loans and that the deals established between both governments are signed under contracts based on secrecy. These issues create a negative perception of this relation worldwide (Newcomb, 2020, pp. 51-52).

As it will be seen in the following sections, the Chinese government has been working very hard in order to build a favorable perception of China within the Kenyan community. With the promotion of a win-win strategy, in other words, a strategy from which both countries would benefit in the long-term, the Chinese government has been able to augment its soft power in the African nation and, therefore, in the continent. Moreover, it seems that Chinese influence has been perceived as more favorable than the Western one within the Kenyan government and community (Fijalkowski, 2011, p. 223).

5.1 Chinese Cultural Engagement in Kenya

As it has been mentioned in the section about Chinese sources of soft power, the PRC force of attraction in terms of culture is particularly enhanced through the establishment of Confucius Institutes around the world and Kenya is one of the chosen countries. CIs in Kenya are a proof of the existence of cultural cooperation between China and Kenya. The goals that China attempts to achieve with these centers are: first, to establish a base for directing Chinese activities within the Kenyan community; second, to motivate local students in acquiring more knowledge about China through language courses and seminars with the secondary aim of promoting China-related investigations; third, to invite Chinese scholars, professors and business experts with the purpose of constructing strategic coalitions with Kenyan institutions and enterprises; fourth and final, to serve as a consulting facility for encouraging deeper economic ties between both countries (Wheeler, 2013, pp. 51-52). In line with this thinking, by diffusing Chinese culture and providing language instruction, the PRC is attempting to increase

its soft power capacity in the country and, therefore, securing an amicable relationship with Kenya.

According to an article published by the Journal of Asian and African Studies, the representatives from both Chinese and Kenyan governments signed, on the 22nd of June 2004, an agreement for opening a Confucius Institute in Nairobi, capital of Kenya. The following year, on the 19th of December 2005, the University of Nairobi Confucius Institute (UONCI) was established. The UONCI is the first institute that was ever opened in the African continent. Over the inauguration, Kilemi Mwiria, Assistant Minister of Higher Education in Kenya pointed out that such opening should be perceived as an investment in Kenyan education which, in its turn, will contribute to the country's economic growth. In other words, the perspective of Kenyan leaders is that learning Chinese should be seen as a commodity or as intellectual capital that students may obtain in order to perform well in a knowledge-based economy. What is more, the government of Kenya believes that due to greater Chinese investments in Kenya, the country will witness an increase in demands for Mandarin-speaking Kenyans in the future, as well as an augment of cross-oceanic trade (Wheeler, 2013, pp. 52-54).

Similarly, the back-then Kenyan Vice-president, Kalonzo Musyoka, stated that learning Chinese would serve the people of Kenya for getting ready for the arrival of more and more Chinese tourists to the country. A relevant aspect that is worth mentioning is that the UONCI's location within the University is strategic; if compared to other foreign cultural institutes such as the German and French ones, the Institute is placed on the main campus, while the others are situated outside the University's gates. The UONCI is also one of the most advanced institutes in the African continent and its opening constitutes one of the biggest Chinese investments in terms of education in Africa. These aspects reflect the level of influence that China is attempting to establish over Kenya (Wheeler, 2013, pp. 52-54).

That being said, since the establishment of the UONCI, Chinese and Kenyan policymakers have been opening other institutes. In 2009, the Confucius Institute at Kenyatta University (CIKU) was created, succeeded by the 2012 inauguration of the CI at Egerton University in the city of Nakuru, west-central Kenya. Ultimately, in 2015,

the Confucius Institute at Moi University (CIMU) was established, resulting in a total number of four institutes (Owaki et al. 2019, p. 175).

With regard to the CI at Egerton University, the latter offers research courses and training in the agricultural field. On the other hand, CIMU's curriculum offers courses in fashion design and training in textile engineering in order for students to learn about Chinese textile experience. Such courses demonstrate that China is improving the quality of its soft power as well as being able to establish a greater appeal to the Kenyan community, hence, to effectively pursue its interests in the country. CIMU is also used by both Chinese and Kenyan companies as a communication platform (Confucius Institute at Moi University, n.d.).

There exists other evidence about the ongoing presence of China in Kenya in terms of cultural expansion. For instance, in 2016, the Chinese Community School was opened and currently, more than 50 educational facilities, between both public and private universities, colleges and schools, are teaching Mandarin across the country. In this relation, further efforts have been carried out by the Chinese Government with the aim of guaranteeing a proper spreading of the Asian Giant's culture and language. In 2018, during the 19th Committee of the CPC, reforms to the system of Chinese institutes have been made with the intention of converting them into even greater forces of cultural and educational attraction which will consequently contribute to the strengthening of the PRC's diplomacy in Kenya (Owaki et al. 2019, p. 176).

Always inherent in the cultural field, the matter of Chinese tourism in Kenya is worth mentioning. First of all, China's investments in the sector are related to a desire of increasing the number of Chinese consumers in the African country. Given that tourism is the generator of the greatest income for the Republic of Kenya and that China's interests in the sector, in 2004, both countries signed an air services deal for promoting tourists' travel (Elmi, 2012, p. 83). Following this background, according to a Chinese newspaper, in 2018, the African country experienced the arrival of about 81,700 tourists from the PRC. In 2019, the number of tourists grew by 10% (Wei, 2019). In this connection, in a book proposal presented by professors of the CIKU, it is expressed that: "this important trend is informed by the great role that China plays in the various sectors of Kenya's economic development including education, medical research,

cultural activities, trade diplomacy and tourism” (Bingbo et al., 2014, p. 2). Therefore, the increase of Chinese tourism in Kenya could be observed as a way of enhancing the bilateral relations between both countries, particularly because the tourist sector is very significant for the Kenyan economy.

5.2 Chinese Media Engagement in Kenya

One more component of the PRC’s current strategy for increasing its soft power is media engagement in Kenya. Chinese media play a crucial role in China’s foreign affairs. In fact, as Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2018) pointed out that “the media constitute such an important component that reference is made to them in all the action plans of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation guiding Sino-African relationships” (p. 2214).

The greater presence of Chinese communication and media in Kenya is a clear example of how the PRC implements its media infrastructure in order to augment its influence in the global arena and so achieve its national goals (Tao, 2018, p. 114). Since 2013, the Kenyan media sector has been increasing at a pace of approximately 16% as a result of the 150 million dollars that the PRC invested in the African nation’s media and communication industry since the beginning of the 21st century; Kenya is now famous for its great digital innovation (Lefkowitz, 2017, p. 5).

China Radio International (CRI) is one of the first Chinese media that reached the African country. In 2006, the radio company placed its African nucleus in Nairobi and set in motion its international FM station which offers a daily program in several languages such as Kiswahili, English and Mandarin. The CRI addresses issues related to main international events, cooperation between China and Africa and China’s development in terms of society and economy. In this regard, the main objective of Nairobi’s FM station is to enhance the appreciation between Kenyan and Chinese communities, however, for the PRC’s government, the CRI in Kenya serves as a tool for expanding its cultural attraction and so augmenting its appeal in the country (Tao, 2018, pp. 110-111).

Likewise, in 2006, the Regional Editorial Office of Xinhua News Agency was moved from Paris to Nairobi, constituting another step of the expansion of Chinese media industry in Africa and, more specifically, in Kenya as well as consolidating their influence in the area. Through the expansion of its media operations in Kenya, the core aspiration of Xinhua is to increase its possibilities of competing with Western news-related agencies, hence, turning into a more internationally appreciated media company (Tao, 2018, p. 103).

In addition to the two previously mentioned media companies, one should not forget to mention the potentiality of the Chinese Central Television (CCTV) in terms of China's attraction. With the aim of boosting Chinese media in Africa, in 2011, CCTV opened its network's regional center in the Kenyan capital which constituted the first broadcast center located outside of Chinese territories as well as the major "non-African TV initiative in Africa". CCTV Africa's principal objective is to present China as a valuable rival in the competition of Western international news channels. Secondary objectives are linked to the PRC's media strategy in the continent which is based on an increase in political and economic engagement with African nations, as well as deeper participation in Africa's media landscape throughout the influx of information based on Chinese's perspectives about international relations (Tao, 2018, pp. 105-107).

Another PRC's state-owned company that entered the Kenyan media sector is China Daily. In 2012, the Chinese English-language newspaper established its media and editorial offices in Nairobi. Along the same lines of the CCTV, CRI and Xinhua, the main purpose of the company is the pursuit of Chinese national agenda worldwide and in the area. The construction of a charming reputation supported by the diffusion of Chinese selected information is of great significance for the agency which covers Africa and China-related issues (Tao, 2018, p. 109).

Huawei's participation in Kenyan communications industry also deserved to be mentioned. Although the Chinese company does not form part of the media sector, it is a networking and telecommunications multinational, meaning the engine of media production. Huawei played a crucial role in enabling the connection of technological tools to the internet in Kenya. Without the construction of ICT infrastructures, the propagation of Chinese media around Kenya would have been much more limited

(Lefkowitz, 2017, p. 6). As previously indicated, Joseph Nye explained that not only state actors participate in the generation of soft power. Huawei is a clear example that also corporations are capable of improving one's country reputation in the eyes of foreign countries or, at least, participating in such a process.

Finally, it is evident that Chinese media infrastructure as a whole functions as an instrument for expanding China's influence all around the world, but more specifically in Africa and Kenya. Once again, China's government wants to present itself as a reliable ally for the Kenyan community by allowing the latter to access a media offer through which African voices can be heard; a media arena that may substitute the Western one. Chinese policymakers believe that the shaping of China's favorable impressions by means of media operations may secure the country's diplomatic and economic goals in the continent (Guyo & Yo, 2019, p. 57).

5.3 Chinese Assistance to Kenya's Development

As previously described in the section about the sources of Chinese soft power, the PRC government also sees its economic strength as a source for increasing its attraction and influence around the world. China's policymakers have been capable of converting "economic capability into far-reaching soft power" (Ishmael, 2020). Kenya, as a target country, is not an exception. In 2011, the PRC published a paper about its peaceful development, in which it is indicated that China:

"Should seek mutual benefit and common development with other countries in keeping with the trend of economic globalization, and it should work together with other countries to build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity. This is a path of scientific, independent, open, peaceful, cooperative and common development" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs PRC, 2011).

In other words, China perceives economic development as a process that will result in equal benefits for both countries and that it will help China to direct the international public opinion in the appropriate direction. In this sense, since the inauguration of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in the year 2000, Sino-Kenyan cooperation has boosted and so has the influence of China in the country too, with the

PRC becoming one of the greatest sources of aid in terms of development. As it will be seen throughout this section, the PRC supports the Kenyan Republic in several sectors of its economy. Some of these sectors are the following: road infrastructures, energy, health infrastructures, agriculture and human-resource (Onyango, 2020).

5.3.1 Kenyan Transport Infrastructures

In 2008, the Kenyan government launched its Vision 2030 policy in which attention began to be paid upon improvements in transportation infrastructures, as well as energy ones. Given the lack of economic resources of the Republic of Kenya, Chinese policymakers presented their country as a valuable partner for carrying out such improvements. For instance, in 2007, the Jomo Kenyatta Airport in Nairobi, a Kenyan national airport, was expanded and upgraded in order to receive a higher number of passengers. The agreement for the modernization was signed in 2006 and secured a bid of more than 37 million dollars (Elmi, 2012, pp. 76-77). In 2013, another agreement was signed, however, information about the finalization of expansions made to the terminals of the airport have not been reported yet.

That being said, China is well-known for building modern roads at a very low price. In fact, already between the years 2004 and 2009, the PRC was involved in projects that provided for the construction of approximately 90 kilometers of roads around the country. Between 2010 and 2012, China also upgraded seven highways in the Kenyan nation (Elmi, 2012, pp. 78-80). In 2013, under the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR)” Chinese initiative, president Xi Jinping proposed new courses of action with the aim of promoting African development. The operation involves the construction of railways, natural gas pipelines, telecommunication infrastructures, ports, airports, highways and so forth. The initiative, which was later renamed as “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), is aimed at benefiting both urban and rural areas with the objective of enhancing both social and economic development. Being Kenya a maritime key point and given the necessity of infrastructure improvements in the country, China has begun to be more and more involved in the construction-related sector (Farooq et al., 2018, pp. 403- 405). Finally, in 2014, the Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta and president Xi Jinping signed 17 agreements with the aim of funding infrastructure projects, as well as the opening of the China-Africa Development Bank. In 2017, both presidents

announced the common desire to advance the countries' relationship into a comprehensive strategic partnership, leading to an enhancement of the existing political trust between both Kenya and the PRC that has allowed the elaboration of bilateral deals directed at the economic and cultural dimensions. By 2018, 70 big Chinese companies established their operational centers in Kenyan cities (Farooq et al., 2018, pp. 408-409).

Among the ongoing projects, one should highlight the following: the modernization of the Port of Mombasa, key for Chinese trade; the construction of a port in Lamu and the construction of a new railway line. The Lamu Port project's estimated cost is 27 billion dollars. With regard to the railway and the pipeline, both form part of a project of the price of 29 billion dollars and are made with the aim of linking the Kenyan ports to its neighboring countries, like Uganda and South Sudan. The railroad line is predicted to be of an extension of 2.700 kilometers (Farooq et al., 2018, pp. 410-411).

In this perspective, one shall highlight that the level of Chinese influence and assistance in Kenyan transport construction sector is high. Moreover, given the Republic of Kenya's need for these infrastructures in order to reach a greater development, it may be possible that such Chinese interactions are considered to be positive, resulting in more attraction towards the PRC.

5.3.2 Kenyan Agriculture & Human-Resource Sectors

Given Kenyan dependency on the agriculture sector, as well as the country's vulnerability to climate change patterns, the PRC has been engaging in such area based on grounds of development aid. China supports Kenyan agricultural efficiency by sending specialists that are in charge of training local farmers. These trainings include farm irrigation, the correct implementation of modern agricultural tools and water waste management. In 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the two countries to advance in agricultural cooperation and assist Kenya's resiliency in the sector (Elmi, 2012, pp. 97-98). In 2018, a MOU was signed between the PRC and the Kenyan Ministry of Education for enhancing cooperation in scientific and innovation areas (Xinhua, 2018). In this regard, the human-resource

segment constitutes one of the most significant manifestations of Chinese aid in the Republic of Kenya (Elmi, 2012, p. 93).

In closing, energy is another sector in which Chinese involvement is visible. Given China's proficiency in the energy sphere, the PRC assists Kenyan energy production. For instance, a reduction in the price of solar panels has been witnessed over the years, from more than 300 dollars per unit to approximately 70 dollars (Elmi, 2012, pp. 81-82).

Considering the importance of both sectors for the African country, Chinese assistance and training may be perceived as a positive doing by Kenyans who clearly will benefit by the learning of new techniques in the short-run, as well as in the long term.

5.3.3 Kenyan Health Sector

With the aim of expanding its influence, China has been focusing on Kenyan health sector by mainly providing medical equipment, teams and training.

In 2011, the Chinese government financed the construction of the Mama Lucy Kibaki Hospital in the West of Nairobi. The land was supplied by the government of Kenya and the country contributed to a small part of the cost in terms of medical equipment mainly. By 2017, it was estimated that since the moment in which the hospital began to operate, approximately 210.000 thousand people, both in and outpatients, have been attended by the staff of the health structure. Moreover, on account of Chinese funds, the Mama Lucy Kibaki hospital has become one of the principal centers for treating malaria in the whole African nation. Similarly, the extension of the Eldoret referral hospital is another initiative financed by China's government. The hospital's capacity increased from 800 to 1.800 beds and a new complex for inpatients was built for improving the service of the health center. Other projects supported by the PRC, in terms of health infrastructures, include the upgrading of the following medical centers: the Kenyatta referral hospital, the Nyamira Hospital, the Malindi Hospital, the Kakamega Hospital and the Nyeri Hospital (Gikiri, 2017, p. 14).

Regarding Sino-Kenyan cooperation within the medical arena, one should point out the visit made by the hospital ship of the PRC's navy, known as the 'Peace Ark', in the port of Mombasa in 2010. Kenyan civilians, students from the Red Cross department of the city, the military forces and Kenyan journalists were supplied with medical diagnostics, treatments and surgical operations where required. In addition to this, some activities were carried out during the visit; for instance, the training of medical staff is one of those. Chinese nursing expertise and medical techniques were taught to Kenyan medical personnel (Gikiri, 2017, pp. 14-15). That being said, it should be noted that the 'Peace Ark' visit was made by China for enhancing the relations between both countries, producing attraction and, therefore, attaining the perception of a positive image of the country by the Kenyan community and government.

Always in respect of Chinese tutoring in the health sector, courses for preventing malaria in Kenya, as well as training for controlling such disease are provided to the community. In relation to the section about the use of education for increasing Chinese soft power, the scholarships offered by the PRC to Kenyan students also include health programs and give Kenyans the opportunity to train themselves in the Chinese schools (Gikiri, 2017, pp. 14-15). Finally, China's government habitually makes donations of medical tools, medical machinery and medicines, creating a positive reputation in the African country.

As for the development assistance mentioned in the previous sections, health assistance in terms of training and infrastructures can be regarded as an optimistic attitude of China towards Kenya's communities, as well as its government. In view of the fact that Kenya's poverty levels are close to 40% (The World Bank, 2018), the access to health centers and education are limited, meaning that foreign aid may be welcomed and recognized as necessary for the development of the African country.

5.3.4 Chinese Emergency Aid to Kenya

Emergency aid is another form of engagement by the PRC in Kenya. In 2011, the Horn of Africa suffered a serious drought and China supported the area through humanitarian aid. Kenya, in this case, received a donation of more than 2.000 tons of rice which were worth approximately 20 billion dollars. By now, this emergency

assistance is believed to be the largest food relief donation that the Republic of Kenya has ever received from a foreign country (Embassy of the PRC in the Republic of Kenya, 2011). Similarly, in 2017, 450 thousand bags full of food were donated to the African nation. Chinese sent aid because that same year, Kenya was again facing another challenging drought which obliged Kenyan leaders to categorize such an occurrence as a national disaster. Kenya's people and government were very thankful to China (Badmus, 2017).

Since 2020 and the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, equipment such as surgical masks, protective gowns and respirators have become primary necessities. China has been very active in sending medical assistance to foreign countries and the Republic of Kenya has not been left behind. For instance, the first case of coronavirus was announced, in Nairobi, on the 12th of March of the same year and, approximately, 10 days later China began to send medical assistance to the African nation. The medical donation included 100 thousand face masks and 20 thousand testing equipment (Guguyo, 2021). More donations were made throughout the months that came later and the PRC presented itself as a reliable supporter for the Kenyan government by donating money, medical and technical expertise, as well as medical equipment and medicines. In this sense, the Kenyan government considers that the share of knowledge of Chinese doctors is being very useful for helping the local community and enhancing the efforts to counter the pandemic. Moreover, China's suggestions for the elaboration of policies for an effective management of the virus are recognized to be extremely important for saving Kenyan people (Xinhua, 2020). Finally, China also assisted in recovering Kenyan supermarkets with food and other categories of supplies (Xinhua, 2021). In this regard, it should be mentioned that particularly at the beginning of the outbreak, the country received many critics for the way in which it controlled the spread of Covid-19; this resulted in a negative perception of China and the deterioration of its image worldwide. Due to such context, Chinese media have been making many efforts to spread stories and images of the PRC's medical donations. The country proposed itself as the rescuer for those countries in which China has interests in expanding its economic and political influence and the spread of such message seems to be working. For instance, Kenyan leaders stated that China is a reliable partner for the nation and Kenya is learning precautionary measures to stop the diffusion of Covid-19 (Olander, 2020). Moreover, Kenya is counting on the Asian

nation for the arrival of the vaccine in the country as there exists a growing concern about the reliability of Western countries which seem to be struggling in countering the virus. On the contrary, the PRC is attempting to make Africa a priority in terms of receiving the cure (Fowdy, 2020). This clearly means that China's strategy for reassuring its soft power in the country is having positive outcomes.

6. KENYAN PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CHINESE ENGAGEMENT

Provided that measuring the effects of soft power abroad is extremely complex, in order to understand if a country is effectively attracting and, therefore, influencing another country's behavior, one should examine the perception held by the target in question. In this connection, by just having described the level of engagement that the PRC manifests in the African nation, it is now possible to move onto the plausible perceptions of Kenyan people about such engagement and evaluate them.

China puts a lot of effort into increasing its soft power through the diffusion of its culture and language. As seen, the construction of a great number of Chinese training centers, as well as Confucius Institutes is the proof. Given China's economic strength, as well as its development model, and the fact that Kenya is considered as a developing country, it is possible to deduct that the local community perceives such educational centers as positive. In this sense, the Kenyan government considers that the contribution of the CIs to the country is useful for the strengthening of the political and economic relations between both nations, but particularly for the future of Kenya in terms of economic growth. Similarly, the young African community has a confident perception of Chinese cultural engagements. The desire to collaborate with valuable Chinese businesses, the ambition of supporting the economic development of Kenya and the interests in understanding a culture that is more and more present in the country, are reasons for which this segment of Kenyans have such a good impression and begin to learn Mandarin. However, even though Kenyan's opinion mainly remains positive towards the context, it should be noted that for a part of the population, Chinese cultural influence is not always welcomed. Given the increase of Chinese investments in Kenya, students and workers from the institutes, as well as locals, believe that the PRC only focuses on the economic side of the relationship and this is mainly demonstrated by the curriculum that Chinese educational centers offer. For this

segment of the population, the interactions between China and Kenya are mainly based on the training and sensitization of Kenyans so that they will be prepared for a more reinforced economic cooperation throughout the years to come. The perception is that there is little offer in those fields that are not in the interest of both governments, limiting the interaction of Kenyan people with Chinese culture and language. Moreover, it is believed that Chinese companies with a base in Kenyan cities often prefer to hire Chinese workers instead of local ones. Hence, this problem has brought Kenya's people to believe that employment opportunities for local Mandarin-speaking workers are limited and, so it is the importance of Chinese educational training in the country and Chinese language learning (Wheeler, 2013, p. 56-58).

The Kenyan perception of Chinese media engagement in the country should be another issue of interest for the Chinese government so as to understand the efficiency of their soft power in the selected African country. As indicated previously, Chinese media presence in Kenya is aimed at providing a different sort of media from the Western one and where African voices can be heard in the international arena under an alternative perspective. In this regard, Kenyan people appreciate such an approach. Chinese media spread information about Kenya in an optimistic way, contrary to Western media where the country is often portrayed with negative narratives. For instance, Western international media mostly focuses on problems such as poverty, conflicts, corruption and lack of good governance when referring to the African country, while Chinese media emphasizes the local perspectives of current events with the objective of proposing a different way of perceiving Kenya. For such reasons, the overall perception of Kenyan people regarding Chinese media engagement remains positive. In addition to this, there are other aspects regarding the PRC's media engagement that are perceived as positive by Kenyans. First, Chinese media provision of facts-based events, as well as the neutral description of nowadays occurrences, produces appeal for the local community who categorized Asian media as attractive. This could mean that China is effectively establishing greater and long-lasting connections with local media and, equally, African people. The second aspect of China's media that is welcomed by the local community is the provision of media access and technology provided by the PRC and its companies, indicating that China's soft power may be able to attract and influence Kenyan public opinion and, so, to attain the Chinese national objectives in the continent. Finally, the African community makes

a voluntary use of Chinese media for personal entertainment and, as for the case of cultural engagement, for attaining a better understanding of China's lifestyle and its perceptions of the world; however, the consumption of such media in Kenya is still considered to be too little in order for the PRC to achieve its hoped effects on Kenyan audience. That said, even though Chinese media influence is mainly perceived as positive, certain aspects of it result in a negative impression, in other words, in a depreciation of China's reputation in the country. Kenyan scholars and people are concerned about the Chinese government's ownership of media companies established in Kenya. The perception of little editorial independence, Chinese national propaganda and lack of freedom of expression are major factors that produce little trust within Kenya's audiences with respect to the Asian nation (Guyo & Yo, 2019, pp. 58-65).

It is relevant now to examine the perceptions of Kenyans regarding Chinese assistance to the country's development. In the same way of the popular opinion about the PRC's cultural and media influence, the overall perceptions of Chinese participation in Kenya's development in the sectors of road construction, agriculture, human resources, as well as health, are positive. Also, emergency and humanitarian aid are highly approved by the Kenyan community. With respect to Chinese participation in infrastructure constructions and upgrading, as a result of Kenya's financial necessities, China has been able over the years to establish its presence and influence by supporting the sector, creating a positive perception by part of Kenyan people. In this regard, thanks to the PRC's assistance, local communities can now move around the country with greater ease and business operations are carried out more rapidly. Given the visibility of such improvements, the majority of Kenyans consider that China's role in infrastructure construction and development is the main reason why they have a positive perception of the PRC. According to both the Kenyan government and community, this engagement has turned the country into a more modern one and citizens' lives are, therefore, being improved. In addition to this, the African country's popular opinion about Chinese engagement in the rest of the mentioned sectors is considered to be mainly optimistic. However, it should be pointed out that due to the state-centric nature of Sino-Kenyan relations, the main attraction towards China derives from Kenya's policymakers and elites who are the principal beneficiaries of the country's development, particularly in the economic dimension (Waweru, 2020, pp. 8-

12); with this in mind, it is relevant to indicate, that due the little transparency of some Sino-Kenyan deals in terms of development, it exists a certain degree of suspicion within the Kenyan public. Concerns about a future dependency on the PRC due to a possible debt trap are the main mentioned issues (Newcomb, 2020, p. 52). Moving forward, another segment of the African public that has anti-Chinese feelings is the one that has been negatively impacted by Chinese influence in their country's development and, hence, its economy. The impression that Chinese businesses compete with local ones, as well as the fact that those same companies do not employ Kenyan workers and opt for Chinese low-cost labor force, creates an unfavorable image of the PRC in the eyes of the local community (Waweru, 2020, p. 9). Lastly, another negative perspective of China's influence is linked with the little respect paid to Kenya's national laws and policies by those Chinese companies which are involved in the process of Kenyan development. For instance, the building of the railway line within Nairobi National Park³ is a question that has been highly criticized by Kenyans, resulting in a decline of the overall positive perception of China's assistance to development in the Republic of Kenya (Newcomb, 2020, pp. 41-42). Finally, the issue of racism may be indicated. Apparently, due to the greater influence of China, Kenyan workers and people are witnessing episodes of discrimination. According to an article of the New York Times, racism behavior accusations have arisen particularly since the beginning of the above-mentioned railroad initiative where a feeling of neocolonialism was being perceived. For instance, Kenyans were not allowed to drive the train unless under the presence of journalists. This latter question is observed as unacceptable by the Kenyan audience (Goldstein, 2018).

7. CONCLUSION

The application of Joseph Nye's theory of soft power has been applied to this study with the aim of understanding Sino-Kenyan relations in terms of attraction. Through the main objectives posed in this study, questions such as the level of influence in terms of soft power in Kenya and the perception of Kenyan people wished to be

³The park is part of a larger ecosystem. It is an extended savannah land with a very large concentration of wildlife animals. It is considered by the Kenya Wildlife Service as a national conservation area that is worth protecting (Mbatia, 2015).

answered. In order to do so, the different sorts of Chinese engagement in the African country have been examined. In this regard, by recalling the way in which the Asian nation constructs its soft power abroad, one may first observe that the prevailing types of public diplomacy used in the Republic of Kenya are, for instance, the cultural, the information and the financial ones. In this perspective, through these three fields of public diplomacy, Chinese soft power strategies seem to be achieving the desired outcomes in terms of attraction in Kenya.

Within the dimension of cultural diplomacy, one may extract the conclusions as they follow:

1. In a broad sense, China has been able to increase its soft power to a greater level in Kenya. Through the establishment of a great number of Chinese educational centers and Confucius Institutes, the PRC's culture and language have reached a large part of the local community. In this relation, given that the overall impression of Kenyan people towards Chinese cultural values and language seems to be positive. Locals are interested in attaining a deeper understanding of China's culture in order to engage with the PRC's businesses, meaning that one may presume that China has been doing an appropriate use of its culture, as well as it has been capable of converting such source into a force of attraction for the Kenyan audience.
2. With the aim of improving its image in terms of culture and education, China may take into consideration the segment of the local population that believes that Sino-Kenyan relations are only based on economic interests due to the curriculum offered by CIs and other learning centers. Possibly, China should provide more courses in Mandarin in order to engage with a greater number of students.
3. Lastly, in terms of Chinese language teaching, it may be useful for the PRC to review the way in which Mandarin classes are given so that, perhaps, Chinese companies will be more prone to hire Kenyans Mandarin-speaking in the future. In this sense, it could also be useful to provide more information about African

culture to workers from the Asian nation's enterprises that work in Kenya's territory, enhancing to a higher level the cultural ties between both countries.

Within the field of information diplomacy, one may highlight the following observations:

1. In general terms, given the number of Chinese media companies in Kenya, one may observe that Chinese media influence in the country is considerable, but as the consumption of Chinese media by part of Kenyans is not sufficient, it is difficult to understand if Chinese soft power is producing attraction through the use of its media infrastructure. However, the overall positive image that Kenyans have of China may mean that, in the future, Chinese desired objectives in the country could be achieved through improved media strategies.
2. Due to the little trust produced by the issue of the Chinese government's ownership of the country's media sector and the little or non-existence freedom of expression, more strategically elaborated, as well as more equilibrated media operations that respect the independence of the Kenyan media sector may result convenient for China in the long-term; it may support the maintenance of durable relations.

Finally, regarding the field of financial diplomacy, a brief list of reflections could be made:

1. Broadly, one may deduce that Chinese engagement in terms of assistance to development in the country is notable. The large number of agreements, funds and aid may be the proof of such a statement. In this relation, given that most Kenyans justify their positive perception of China based on its participation in the country's development, one may reach the conclusion that the PRC has been capable of molding the opinion of the local community in a positive direction.
2. Due to the secrecy of the deals signed between both countries' governments, negative repercussions may be faced in the long run. As the local community is not entirely involved in the decision-making of Kenya, it is not fully aware of the

impacts that certain commitments may imply. Hence, there is a possibility that Kenyan perceptions towards China's assistance might produce an unfavorable image of China depending on the future outcomes of Chinese participation in the nation within Kenya's public. In this regard, one could recommend that with the objective of not creating distrust towards the PRC, the elaboration of upcoming agreements based upon the principle of transparency may result to be more advantageous.

3. Because of the legal breaches made by Chinese companies in Kenya, as well as the competitive environment that these create for local businesses, two possible suggestions for both governments are: first, to ensure through the settlement of new laws and policies that Kenyan enterprises are not destructively impacted by such presence and, lastly, to enforce those national laws that seem to be violated by the PRC's while attempting to increase its soft power. These recommendations may be useful for avoiding future pessimistic perceptions about China in Kenya.
4. Finally, the problems of racism and minimal hiring of Kenyan people in Chinese companies based in the African country might be resolved as advised hereafter. As commented previously, more knowledge of African people should be passed onto the human resources departments of Chinese businesses with a presence in Kenya in order to avoid discrimination and inequalities. Moreover, it may be important for Kenyan leaders to protect local workers by establishing the minimum rate of employment to be respected by Chinese companies at the moment of hiring new employees.

The above discussion may be useful for ensuring a win-win relationship between the two countries. In this perspective, the PRC may also be able to better ensure that the pursuit of its objectives, in terms of soft power, is following the desired course in the African nation.

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