AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CHINA’S QUEST FOR INFLUENCE IN AFRICA

BY
MARY NAA DEDEI OKINE
(10337518)

THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

LEGON    JULY 2017
DECLARATION

I, Mary Naa Dedei Okine, hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research work, conducted under the supervision of Dr. Boni Yao Gebe. It has never been presented in part or in whole at any other university for a degree.

MARY NAA DEDEI OKINE
(STUDENT)

DATE: ..............................

DR. BONI YAO GEBE
(SUPERVISOR)

DATE: ..............................
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God, Almighty and to Africa’s glorious future.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first appreciation goes to God Almighty, for his bountiful mercies and sustenance during this period.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to my supervisor, Dr. Boni Yao Gebe for his guidance and insightful contributions in the production of this work.

To my family, especially Francis Ampah, I appreciate your undying support.

Mr. Daniel Lassey-Fiador, thank you for making my dream possible.

I also wish to extend my immense appreciation to the following people-

Prof. Kwame Zulu Shabazz, (Knox College, U.S.A.)

Dr. Lloyd Amoah, (CAS, University of Ghana)

Dr. Obadele Kambon, (IAS, University of Ghana)

To the students of the Confucius Institute, University of Ghana and undergraduate Chinese students of the same university, I appreciate your insightful contributions which you shared with me in the production of this work.
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFCOM</td>
<td>United States African Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AICD</td>
<td>Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAAC</td>
<td>China Africa Agricultural Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>Chinese Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Confucius Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTV</td>
<td>Chinese Central Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Confucius Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXIM Bank</td>
<td>Export-Import Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOCAC</td>
<td>Forum of China - Africa Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.E.</td>
<td>Her Excellency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF</td>
<td>Institut Français</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TanZam</td>
<td>Tanzania-Zambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGCI</td>
<td>University of Ghana Confucius Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .......................................................................................................................... i
DEDICATION ............................................................................................................................. ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................................... iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ....................................................................................................... iv
LIST OF TABLES ....................................................................................................................... vii
ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................... viii
CHAPTER ONE ........................................................................................................................ 1
RESEARCH DESIGN ............................................................................................................... 1
  1.0 Background to the Statement of the Research Problem .................................................. 1
  1.1 Statement of the Research Problem ............................................................................. 2
  1.2 Research Questions ..................................................................................................... 3
  1.3 Research Objectives .................................................................................................... 3
  1.4 Rationale of the Research .......................................................................................... 4
  1.5 Scope of the Study ....................................................................................................... 4
  1.6 Hypothesis of the Research ....................................................................................... 4
  1.7 Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................... 5
  1.8 Literature Review ....................................................................................................... 7
  1.9 Sources of Data .......................................................................................................... 13
  1.10 Research Methodology ............................................................................................. 14
  1.11 Limitations to the Study .......................................................................................... 14
  1.12 Arrangement of Chapters ......................................................................................... 15
ENDNOTES ............................................................................................................................. 16
CHAPTER TWO ....................................................................................................................... 18
APPRECIATION OF SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS SINCE 2000 ......................................... 18
  2.0 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 18
  2.1 A Maoist Face in Africa’s Independence Struggles ...................................................... 18
  2.2 China’s Economic Reform and Opening Up ............................................................... 19
  2.3 Forum of China-Africa Cooperation ........................................................................... 20
  2.3.1 Energy Investment .................................................................................................. 20
  2.3.2 Trade and Aid ......................................................................................................... 21
  2.3.3 Infrastructure .......................................................................................................... 23
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4 Peacekeeping</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.5 Agricultural Cooperation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.6 Educational Cooperation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN BOLSTERING CHINA’S INFLUENCE IN AFRICA</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Introduction</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Language as a Soft Power Tool</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 The Confucius Institutes in Africa</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.1 Chinese Bridge</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.0 Africa’s Perception of China’s Soft Power</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Enhanced View of China</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Perceptions of China’s Engagement with Africa</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3 Future of Mandarin in Africa</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4 China as a Contender to the US and Other Great Powers</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Language as a Tool for Bolstering China’s Rising Status</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Conclusion</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENDNOTES</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Introduction</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Summary of Findings</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Conclusions</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Recommendations</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Responses on changing perceptions of China by studying Mandarin..................40

Table 2: Responses on affirmation on perception of Chinese language and culture? ...........41

Table 3: Responses on Mandarin’s popularity vis à vis English and French......................45

Table 4: Responses on likelihood of more Africans studying Mandarin like English or French...45

Table 5: Responses on number of languages spoken by UGCI students.............................46

Table 6: Number of foreign languages spoken by UG students including English...............47

Table 7: Responses on China as a serious contender to the US and other great powers............48
ABSTRACT

China’s economic success at the beginning of the 21st century has evoked mixed feelings in the international system. For African states, China’s ‘model of development’ in contrast to that of the West, is a welcome alternative for Africa’s development, due to the absence of conditions to China’s aid and its alluring principle of non-interference. As African states become increasingly ‘East- oriented’, Western criticism of Africa’s long time ‘South- partner’ has not ceased. In a bid to enhance its image and quell the ‘China threat’ rhetoric by the West, the Chinese state decided to promote the study of its language and culture. This initiative is aimed at promoting an understanding of China, in order to smoothen the pursuit of its interests. It is in this purview that, the first Confucius Institute was established in 2004 in South Korea. China’s increasing engagement with Africa marked by its need for natural resources and markets, with the African side searching for a much practical approach to development led to the establishment of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation, thus institutionalizing the South-South Cooperation. The need to trickle down her soft power away from the African leaders to the citizenry, further inspired the need for the establishment of the Confucius Institute (CI) in Africa. From the first CI established at the University of Nairobi in 2005, the number of CIs has steadily increased in the region. China’s increasing economic clout has inspired a wave of ‘Chinese Fever’ that is sweeping all in its wake. Using soft power, first coined by Joseph Nye as conceptual framework, this study examines the role of language in China’s growing influence in Africa. The study argues that the promotion of Mandarin is bolstering China’s influence in Africa with a marked significance for its acquisition of power in the international system, given French and British antecedents. Using the mixed methods approach as methodology, it was realised that China’s image in Africa has greatly improved as more and more Africans are not only learning Mandarin via the Confucius Institutes on the continent, but are also going to study in China. Gradually, speaking Mandarin is seen as a feat as compared to mastering Western languages. However, amidst raging debate as to China’s true purposes and intent in Africa, there is the need for African states to assume a realist stance in their dealings with China in order to pursue their interests as the latter is doing. There is also the need to develop its human resource across various strata, to better engage with China under the institutionalized South-South cooperation, in boosting its development.
CHAPTER ONE
RESEARCH DESIGN

1.0 Background to the Statement of the Research Problem

The advent of the 21st century has seen an increasing number of African states align themselves with the ‘East’, and nurturing a burgeoning relationship especially with China, as a result of the attractiveness of the latter’s ‘no strings attached’ foreign aid to African states.¹ This cooperation between China and Africa in the 21st century albeit new is a mere renewal of old ties, established formally during Africa’s independence struggles and later during economic reforms in the 1980s.² There have been diverse interpretations from various scholars to this new face of Sino-African relations, ranging from threat to a welcoming alternative to the West. In all of these debates, however, there is no denying that this South-South cooperation in the 21st century has aided the power devolution from the West to the East. The first China-Africa summit held in Beijing in 2000 where US$1.9 billion was signed between the two parties as business deals, marked the watershed moment in Sino-African relations.³

By 2006, China ranked third to the US and France in bilateral trade with Africa, recording a leap from US$10 billion in 2000 to US$50 billion in that year.⁴ Whiles investing heavily in trade on the continent, China has also devoted significant resources towards infrastructural development on the continent, by building schools, railway, hospitals and public buildings. The most symbolic is the funding of the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, costing $200m (£127m).⁵ The Forum on China Africa Cooperation, as part of its aims, has also sought to promote educational and cultural exchanges between both sides.⁶ As strides in technology have further integrated societies, the need
to attract people through culture and favorable policies has brought about a new “soft power battle” in international relations, where states seek to win over the hearts and minds of a global audience.⁷ Ten years after a state declaration of exploiting soft power in 2007, China boasts today of an estimated 1,000 Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms worldwide.⁸ In Africa, the surge in the number of people studying Mandarin is evinced in the 48 Confucius Institutes present in 37 of its states, not to mention the 27 Confucius Classroom and over 400 teaching centers.⁹

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Eight years after Xi Jinping’s enunciation of the need to promote language and culture as China’s soft power tool, the People’s Republic of China makes huge strides in the global soft power rankings, none the least attributable to its Confucius Institutes around the world, whereas the US falls to third place from its penultimate position.¹⁰ In Africa, China’s economic expansion far outstrips Africa’s erstwhile colonial powers, Britain and France on the continent, presenting a welcoming East alternative, bereft of conditions.¹¹

By the end of 2005, the first Confucius Institute in Africa was established by a joint cooperation between the University of Nairobi and the Tianjin Normal University. Today, Confucius Institutes are spread across the length and breadth of Africa including Egypt, Benin, Ghana, South Africa, Malawi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Liberia, Burundi and even as far as Madagascar with the highest concentration in South Africa, Kenya, and Zambia.¹² In Ghana alone, there are 2,5000 students learning Mandarin across various echelons of education.¹³ Reinforcing the importance of the language further on the continent, is the policy by some states to making Mandarin a second official language.¹⁴
Given the historical and contemporary antecedents of English and French as languages which have emerged as the lingua franca of the international system and dominant languages of identity in Africa, this study seeks to examine how the concerted promotion of Mandarin in Africa bolsters China’s influence and power on the continent and the international system.

1.2 Research Questions

- Why is there an increase in the promotion of the study of Mandarin in Africa?
- What has been the response of Africans, to this ‘soft’ face of Sino-African relations?
- How does the dissemination of Chinese language and culture in Africa increase China’s influence on the continent and the wider international system?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research has three main objectives namely;

- To examine the reasons for the increased promotion of Chinese language and culture in Africa.
- To assess the response of Africans to this new dimension of Sino-African relations
- To ascertain the relationship between the dissemination of Mandarin and China’s influence in Africa and the international system.
1.4 Rationale of the Research

The increasing engagement between China and Africa has been further accentuated with the promotion of the study of Mandarin on the continent. The surge in the number of students learning Mandarin and the tenacious establishment of state-sponsored Confucius Institutes as tools of soft power projection makes it quintessential to probe beyond the ‘Chinese Fever’ rhetoric, to understand what this means for the expansion of China’s influence in Africa and the international system. This work thus, serves as a useful reference material for a variety of users including policymakers, international relations analysts, scholars as well as students who are involved in the study of Sino-African relations. Finally, as with every other research, this work adds up to the body of knowledge already available in the field of Sino-African Relations.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on exploring the surge in Mandarin studies in African states such as Egypt, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, and Madagascar. The period for consideration would be from 2004, marking the establishment of the first Confucius Institute in Africa to 2017.

1.6 Hypothesis of the Research

The promotion of Mandarin in Africa would bolster China’s influence in Africa and have an import on its acquisition of power in the international system.
1.7 Conceptual Framework

The concept of soft power, first coined by Joseph Nye in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century is the framework under which this work is analyzed. Power in broad terms is defined by Nye, as the ability to get others to do one’s bidding and wishes.\textsuperscript{16} The need to thus maximize or maintain power by states is not only necessary in pursuing their national interest but also, essential for their survival. Hitherto the development of the “second, or structural face of power” as a concept, power was generally construed in terms of the abundance of resources of a state, its teeming population, sturdiness within its domestic enclaves and most importantly, its military and economic clout.\textsuperscript{17} These tangibles at a state’s disposal enabled it to manipulate situations in its favor, using hard Power’s currencies of ‘carrots’ or military threats known as ‘sticks’.\textsuperscript{18} Despite this costly means of getting what one wants, there exists a far subtle method, whereby states in winning the hearts and minds of others, get the same results.\textsuperscript{19} He sums up soft power as seductive power that makes others compliant with one’s goals or aims.\textsuperscript{20} This is only achievable when a state practices what it preaches on the international scene within its own territory, exudes an appealing and enticing culture as well as a credible perception of its goals within the international system.\textsuperscript{21} It is worth noting that Nye does not relegate the importance of ‘hard power’ i.e. military and economic might in relations amongst states. He rather stresses the importance of the “second face of power”. There is the need to, therefore, make allies rather than enemies through defeat, since an alliance lends credence and legitimacy to one’s actions.\textsuperscript{22} This is obvious in US ascendancy in world politics, not only because of its military might but also because of its seductive ideals of freedom, democracy, and liberalized culture, propagated through movies and several other mediums.\textsuperscript{23}
Despite the attractiveness of the soft power concept, there has been some criticism from scholars such as Edward Lock who argues that, “social structures- rules or norms regarding, for example, the meaning of attractiveness- can be reinterpreted and reconstituted”.\(^{24}\) Also to “alter” existing norms or rules, there is the need for the target audience to not only understand but also accept the new rules. He further argues that, power must be “conceived in relational terms (rather than as a property of an agent.)”

For Gary D. Rawnsley, the all-encompassing nature of soft power leaves it open and ambiguous.\(^{25}\) He therefore advocates for a disintegration of the concept into various identifiable units for a better appreciation of its different facets.\(^{26}\)

Łukasz Fijalkowski further argues that, the liberalized view of a state’s attractive appeal is skewed in favor of developed countries who espouse democratic ideals.\(^{27}\) In this regard, China which is a communist state will be ill suited in liberal-oriented discussions of soft power, since its political ideals are not seen as an enticing alternative to that of the West’s. It is not surprising that China has portrayed its economic success and culture as its soft power tools.\(^{28}\)

The concept of soft power as originally propounded by Nye, though integrated into Chinese discourse of soft power is challenged by Chinese scholars.\(^{29}\) According to Li Minjiang, contrary to Nye’s source-conceptualization of soft power, base ‘attractive power’ on the ability of a state to not only influence others by reason of its appealing culture and acknowledged premiership in the international system, but also in its ability to propose an alternative to the existing structures.\(^{30}\)
In the same vein, scholars have argued that, irrespective of appeal the success of soft power relies on how states perceive the pursued interests of another state in relation to theirs.\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, the perception of power as ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ is largely dependent on the milieu of interaction.\textsuperscript{32} These advocates of soft power with Chinese characteristics point to “culture, values, development model, international institutions, and international image” as the pillars of soft power not excluding China’s economic diplomacy.\textsuperscript{33} This broadened scope of soft power by the Chinese is affirmed by Joshua Kurlantzick, who observed that the Chinese construe soft power as “anything outside of the military and security realm”\textsuperscript{34}

As Anja Lahtinen has emphasized, soft power in the 21st century is essential and priceless.\textsuperscript{35} China, in recognition of this fact, has not failed to leverage it to her advantage by stressing its importance in her reintegration into the world’s economy.

The concept of Soft Power is relevant to this research work since it helps appreciate and explain how China is using language as a soft power tool through the establishment of Confucius Institutes in bolstering its influence and status as an emerging power.

\subsection*{1.8 Literature Review}

The literature on Sino-African relations though abounding and diverging in views, is quite limited when it comes to the new face of China’s relations with Africa i.e. soft power, as it is an emerging phenomenon. As it is with the various aspects of Beijing’s interactions with Africa, the debate rages on as to whether China’s soft power is a mere cultural diplomacy or a ‘charm offensive’. For scholars from the West who are justifiably wary, this aspect of China’s foreign policy towards
Africa is not a mere benign South-South cooperation, but an asymmetrical relationship, shaped and directed by China to its benefit, to the detriment of Africa. In the midst of the controversy surrounding China’s true intentions towards Africa, the former keeps making headway in its soft power quest within the international system, most especially in Africa.

Toeing the ‘threat’ argument, Jennifer G. Cooke in her book *Chinese soft power in Africa* posits that, the “the other face of power” wielded by China in Africa is growing much to the inconvenience of the US, especially as more states have a positive view of Beijing. Even though she is quick to reify that China despite its overtures, still lags behind the US in terms of soft power, Cooke believes that the US can take a leaf out of China’s books with regard to the advancement of its soft power, by veering off the conditional aid mantra and rather adopting a more pragmatic approach in dealing with Africa. Despite China’s emphasis on an African partnership resulting in a positive sum game, she criticizes Beijing for proffering their services in the execution of contracts which are supposed to create employment and revenue for Africa. In as much as this article seeks to strengthen the US position in Africa by adopting China’s strategy, China’s economic resources is perceived to be its highest expression of soft power with no mention of its cultural resources, reinforcing its goodwill on the continent.

For JU and Kal in *Not Confucius, Nor Kung Fu, Economy and Business as Chinese Soft Power in Africa*, the limitation of Joseph Nye’s concept of soft power to “cultural, political values underscore the importance of business and development as sources of soft power to developing countries.” A subjection of Angolan and Zimbabwean media to content analysis showed that, readers paid very little attention to traditional notions of soft power such as culture as compared
to business-related issues which were given much attention. They point out that, China in its history has always focused on business first with culture only coming in afterward to reinforce its interest. China’s soft power has always been entrenched in its economic power and this nature unacknowledged by Joseph Nye in his conceptuality of the other face of power to other states but rather taking a Western perspective limits it.

They conclude that, the paen of China’s praises would give way to the stark reality of abuses meted out by the Chinese on the continent. Even though the study evinced that education and science were given some attention as a source of source of soft power, the failure to expand on what this education really includes and an examination of language and culture dissemination is a limitation of this work. Since the media decides what is news as was pointed out in their work, this could be a limitation, as the focus on a section of society, may affect the perception of soft power in economic terms. This work thus seeks to fill in this gap by examining the cultural and language aspect of soft power.

Anita Wheeler on her part argues predominantly in Cultural Diplomacy, Language Planning, and the case of the University of Nairobi Confucius Institute that the establishment of Confucius Institutes is Janus-faced. While for China, it is part of the larger aim of fostering goodwill among the masses by creating a better image of China, Africans view it as essential in effectively engaging with China as it interacts with the continent on all levels. The CIs are germane in promoting Mandarin given their location on campuses of universities on the continent. She makes interesting claims that, given the multi-varietal nature of African languages, China is likely to become not only one of Africa’s spoken languages but also, a widely spoken one. This argument is in line
with this work as it seeks to make a correlation with the British and French examples on the continent with the current trajectory of China in pushing its soft power agenda on the continent.

Wheeler further expands that, this is a means to an end, as the widespread global diffusion of Mandarin by imitating other language centers, would eventually bolster China’s “acquisition of power and influence in the global arena”. In this regard, China’s position of herself as an alternative to the West for Africa makes the promotion of its language, not a mere cultural exchange. It is on this premise and justification that this work advances. She however, concedes that, the use of English as the medium of instruction for Mandarin undermines the possible use of the latter as the lingua-franca in Sino-African economic relations. Despite this limitation pointed out by Wheeler, it is important to note that it may only be a part of a means to an end given the surge in the establishment of CIs on the continent.

She concludes that, taking into consideration the disillusions of Africans not being “equipped with marketable skills”, after studying Mandarin at the CIs, it is imperative that “systemic evaluations” of the CIs curriculum and activities are carried out. Even more peculiar of China’s Confucius Institutes is their location in the host university, unlike the other international language and cultural centers situated outside of the premises.

In their work Dissecting Soft Power and Sino-African Relations in Education and Exchanges Cooperation, Baoping and Jianbo argue that educational exchanges and investment in higher education will increase China’s soft power. With this in mind, China has consistently reified its commitment to developing education on the continent since the establishment of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation. They posit that, the quintessence of soft power is the ability to
influence at both regional and global levels.\textsuperscript{46} The importance of volunteerism in this venture to entrench China’s soft power on the continent is crucial, given the strategic importance of volunteers who, imbued with the values and ideals of their states, interact with the citizens of the host country who may hold future positions of influence.\textsuperscript{47}

Lucy Jane Corkin in her work \textit{China’s rising Soft Power: the role of rhetoric in constructing China-Africa relations} in examining the various perspectives surrounding the triangular Chinese, Western and African engagement, posits that whiles the West views China’s engagement in Africa as a threat to the current global structure and development in Africa, African states see it as an opportune moment whiles China sees it as test lab for entrenching its soft power in the international system.\textsuperscript{48} China has in response to its perceived threat, assumed the status of ‘developing’ country to assuage its critics from the West even though the latter’s seemingly protective stance towards Africa is hypocritical given their colonial history with the continent.\textsuperscript{49}

She also highlights that, pro-Chinese scholars have rebutted criticisms of China’s detrimental engagement with Africa stemming from its policies, by insisting that its approach has rather spurred empowered Africa and spurred development.\textsuperscript{50} The competition for influence in Africa by “big powers” is being advanced by “economic cooperation frameworks” and China being no exception, does this under the umbrella of FOCAC.\textsuperscript{51} She refers to He Wenping’s assertions that, “Africa is perhaps the most important testing ground for China’s soft power”.\textsuperscript{52} In conclusion, Corkin posits that, if China succeeds where the West failed in developing Africa, the former by international standards will achieve two feats by becoming an uncontested “great power” because of its influence and “achieved oneupmanship over the West”.\textsuperscript{53}
Even though Corkin elaborates on the importance of China’s projection of its soft power in Africa to its envisioned super power status in the international system, the focus of the paper was on the economic aspect of soft power and not the on the role of language as a soft power tool in aiding China in its quest for influence in Africa and the international system. It is in this vein that this work seeks to fill in this gap, by exploring how language as a tool for disseminating cultural values and ideals aids China in its subtle quest for global influence and domination.

Ousmane Sall on his part argues mainly that, in view of China’s quest for global dominance, there is the need for developed African states such as Senegal to ensure that Sino-African relations is not asymmetrical to the detriment of Africa. Thus, in his work *Chinese Soft power in Africa: Case of Senegal* he points out that, the surge in the number of African students going to China to study is as a result of the favorable conditions ranging from cheap living and tuition fees as well as the opportunities it presents for future employment, especially after the Beijing Olympics in 2008, that helped change China’s image. For Sall, Confucius Institutes are important attractive power tools since in disseminating Chinese language and culture, they attract foreign students to China. This in turn bolsters the rankings of Chinese Universities in global education, especially with “China’s relatively recent position as the third leading destination for international students globally, after only the United States of America and the United Kingdom.”

In line with earlier arguments, Sall reiterates that the establishment of Confucius Institutes on campuses of host Universities is to etch “their culture into the minds of Senegalese leaders of tomorrow.” He reveals that at the socio-cultural level, whereas the US soft power is gradually ceding as a result of its “racist socio-cultural constellation” that keeps Blacks at the receiving end
of brutalities and injustices on the homeland, China’s soft power prospects are rising as an alternative to the West in Africa. He further asserts that currently, speaking English in Africa is not in vogue as compared to speaking Chinese.\textsuperscript{57}

Sall points out that even though the Chinese media in Africa has been criticized for shaping its destructive engagement on the continent, they have been quick to reify their “constructive journalism” which seeks to bring about transformation rather than the “watchdogs’” posture of their Western counterparts that only sell out bad images of Africa.\textsuperscript{58}

More importantly, Sall confirms that the establishment of the CIs is a mere replication of the West’s “strategy of conquest” that had a “devastating effect on the African psyche” since it consolidated their control over Africans with the influence exerted over them. \textsuperscript{59} This is an apt description of what this study seeks to accomplish, by examining the influence language in consolidating powers in the in the international system. He is however quick to add that the CIs are purported channels of fostering Sino-African relations since they help promote understanding. He concludes, however, by bemoaning Africa’s continuous embracement of propounded ideals from without, which only undermine its progress.\textsuperscript{60}

\section*{1.9 Sources of Data}

The research draws on both primary and secondary sources of data. For the purposes of this work, 15 students of the Confucius Institute located at the University of Ghana, as well as 30 undergraduate students studying Chinese as a 1\textsuperscript{st} degree program across all levels at the same university, constitute the sample population. The numbers depended largely on the availability of
students. Engaging both groups of students despite the different curricula was necessary to ensure a thorough assessment of the China’s soft power especially as normal university students also go for Language Immersion programs in China. Also, in addition to the director of the newly established Center for Asia Studies at the University of Ghana who is interviewed, a Foreign Service officer of Ghana’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also engaged for a broader perspective to this new tangent in Sino-African relations. Secondary sources of data include books, journal articles, documentations, reports, news articles and internet sources.

1.10 Research Methodology

This study relies on the mixed method approach in understanding the execution of China’s soft power in Africa via the medium of its language. The study thus draws on both primary sources of data in the form of questionnaires and unstructured interviews and secondary sources such as books, journal articles, official speeches, reports and internet sources.

1.11 Limitations to the Study

Even though the scope of this study is Africa, financial constraints and the insufficiency of time did not allow for an extensive research of each Africa’s Confucius Institutes. This thus, necessitated the narrowing of the sample population to regular students reading Chinese as part of their undergraduate program at the University of Ghana, and students of the University of Ghana Confucius Institute.
1.12 Arrangement of Chapters

The study is organized into four chapters. Chapter One entails the Introduction, while Chapter Two provides an overview and appreciation of Sino-African relations from the year 2000. Chapter Three investigates and analyses the role of language as a tool of soft power and how China is employing it in Africa in order to consolidate its influence on the continent and the international system. Chapter Four provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
ENDNOTES

6 http://www.focac.org/eng/wjyb/hywj/t157833.htm accessed on 7/9/2017 at 11:47pm
11 Alden, op. cit. p. 59.
12 http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm Accessed on 7/10/2017 at 3:00 pm.
15 According to Fallon (2014), the ‘Chinese Fever’ is a term used by the Chinese media to describe the “growing trend in learning Mandarin and Chinese culture worldwide, linked to China’s increasing global economic presence.”
17 Ibid. p. 3.
18 Ibid. p. 5.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid. p. 6.
21 Ibid. p. 11.
22 Ibid. p. 31.
23 Ibid. p. 50.
26 Ibid.
28 Ibid. p. 230.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
35 Lahtinen, op. cit, p. 207
38 Ibid. p. 55.
39 Ibid. p. 64.
41 Ibid. p. 51.
42 Ibid. p. 61.
43 Ibid. pp. 60-61.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid. p. 38.
53 Corkin, op. cit, p. 64.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid. p. 137.
57 Ibid.
58 Zhang Yanqiu director of the Africa Communication Research Centre at the Communication University of China quoted in Sall, op. cit, p. 138.
59 Sall, op. cit, 140.
CHAPTER TWO
APPRECIATION OF SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS SINCE 2000

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores China’s extensive engagements with Africa, from the former’s establishment of formal relations with the latter in the 1950’s to the ideological engagement during the colonial struggles. It also looks briefly at the nature of China’s engagement with Africa during the period of its Economic Reform and afterward, with the announcement of its “Opening-Up” in the last quarter of the 20th century. The chapter finally ends with an overview of revitalized Sino-relations under FOCAC in the 21st century. This tangent of the study gives an appreciation of China’s relations with Africa over the years and how the concerted promotion of language and culture as part of the renewed Sino-African relations, adds to China’s growing influence in Africa and the international system.

2.1 A Maoist Face in Africa’s Independence Struggles

Even though the rekindled relations between China and Africa in the 21st century have sent many tongues wagging, Sino-African relations are in no way novel.\(^1\) As far as 206 BC during the Han dynasty, China had already established relations with Africa.\(^2\) These old ties were however formally reestablished in the 1950’s.\(^3\) According to Lloyd Amoah, China’s aversion to Western imperialism due to its own colonial background, inspired African nationalist fighters to identify with her.\(^4\) Amoah continues that the 1955 Bandung Conference further confirmed China’s
ambassadorial position as Africa’s compatriot, during the independence struggles. Africa represented for the most parts, the vitality of the ideological warfare characteristic of the Cold War as she pivoted between Eastern European influence, Western influences and of course, Maoism.

Support for Maoist-identified nationalist fighters was varied and did not exclude military aid. Michael Meidan pegs the total amount of arms sales from China to Africa during this period at $142 million. However, of all the supports given, the construction of the Tan-Zam railway was not only a defiance of the West but also a signification of a “united comrades” capabilities for development. Alden and co thus identify the principles of “mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit”, enshrined in China’s ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’, which was first out-doored in 1949 as the building blocks for the South-South Cooperation.

2.2 China’s Economic Reform and Opening Up

According to Suisheng Zhao, as China sought to reform her economy in the 1980s, relations with Africa received little attention due to their perceived insignificant impact on the economic growth of the former. This notwithstanding, the semblance of cooperation between the two during the period was only strengthened after Beijing’s need to shield herself from Western criticism arising out of the Tiananmen massacre. The 1990s saw a renewal of ties between China and Africa in Beijing’s bid to secure resources for her growing economy. Zhao further adds that the need to secure markets for China’s expanding production coupled with its need for resources was characteristic of Sino African relations in the last decade of the 20th century. China’s increasing engagements with Africa fuelled by its growing economic interests ignited a race between itself and Taiwan for formal recognition by African states, which the latter leveraged on. However, it
was obvious at the end of the 20th century that, Taiwan was no match for this new China whose economic clout kept expanding. According to Zhang Chun, China’s total investments in Africa between the period of its economic reform and opening up was $51.19 million.\textsuperscript{16}

2.3 \hspace{1em} \textbf{Forum of China-Africa Cooperation}

The Forum of China-Africa Cooperation, FOCAC was established at the turn of the 21st century, as a way of institutionalizing Sino-African relations and providing a medium for partnering to ensure mutual development.\textsuperscript{17} As a platform for addressing the challenges of globalization through collaborative efforts between Africa and China, the forum is held triennially between the member states.\textsuperscript{18} According to Wang Jianwei and co, the watershed moment of this multilateral organization was the 2006 FOCAC, where the partners outlined their vision and strategies for the future.\textsuperscript{19} According to Kenneth King, the ‘Beijing Action Plan’ declared at the end of the 2006 summit, centered on education, politics, trade, investment and the development of the human resource of both parties.\textsuperscript{20}

2.3.1 \hspace{1em} \textbf{Energy Investment}

In the wake of its economic growth and increasing rural-urban migration, the need to secure its energy supplies in a US-allied oil international trade system prompted China to establish ties with other states who were themselves bequeathed and endowed accordingly.\textsuperscript{21} The need to feed its industries with resources as a result of its economic growth, made Africa the viable location for trade, given its abounding natural resources.\textsuperscript{22} As the world’s second largest oil consumer, the centrality of energy to China’s development has triggered investments in oil-rich countries such
as Angola, Sudan, and Nigeria. By 2005, China’s total oil imports from Africa was at 30%, set to increase with further engagements with the continent.\textsuperscript{23} As second largest oil producer in Africa sub of the Sahara and China’s largest trading partner, Angola has signed on to supply China Petrochemical Corporation with oil over a prolonged period.\textsuperscript{24} Even though China has signed similar deals with several African states such as Algeria, Cote d’Ivoire, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, Nigeria and Ethiopia, the one that generated a lot of controversies, especially in the West, was its oil-deal with Sudan before the separation in later years.\textsuperscript{25} Considered a pariah state by most Western countries due to the flagrant human right abuse, China still went ahead to support and trade with the regime, sometimes exchanging arms for oil.\textsuperscript{26} This fact notwithstanding, China’s success in developing Sudan’s oil sector into a global competitor, despite the international and domestic constraints, has undoubtedly transformed the economy significantly.\textsuperscript{27} It is no wonder then that, Petro-China had a 40% share in Sudan’s oil cooperation.\textsuperscript{28} Despite criticisms from the West regarding China’s alleged plunder of Africa’s resources, China’s oil imports from Africa, pale in comparison to that of the West.\textsuperscript{29}

2.3.2 Trade and Aid

By 2006, China’s bilateral trade stood at US$50 billion from 10 billion in 2000 making China, Africa’s third largest trading partner.\textsuperscript{30} Evidence of the flourishing trade between China and Africa is the “made-in-China” branded goods on the continent, ranging from electronic gadgets, furniture, and clothes to technology due to the cheap means of acquisition. In Africa today, there are over 800 companies owned by the Chinese state in Africa.\textsuperscript{31} The cheap nature of Chinese labor has resulted in their patronizing by Chinese companies in the execution of projects in Africa.\textsuperscript{32} It is
estimated that in 2012, there were at most a million Chinese migrants in Africa. By 2014, Chinese workers lived predominantly in Angola, Algeria, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. Studies from John Hopkins have shown that China’s investments in Africa have been predominantly in the areas of mining, manufacturing, construction, financial services as well as science and technology.

In addition to trade, economic aid also plays an important role in China’s relations with Africa. China’s foreign aid is categorized into grants, interest-free loans, and concessional loans. Alden surmises that Africa is the largest recipient of China’s foreign aid. By 2009, Africa’s share of China’s foreign aid was 45.7%. At the end of the same year, China canceled debts worth 189.6 million yuan for 35 African states. For most African states, the ability to get aid free of conditions that so often characterize Western aid, adds to the allure of China’s non-political aid which it incessantly reiterates much to the chagrin of the West. China’s aid to developing countries, a league to which it still clings, is based on four axioms of non-intervention, sovereignty, mutual benefits, and equality. It is estimated that, whereas the World Bank doled out US$ 54.7 billion in loans for projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, China’s alternative, EXIM bank dedicated US$ 67.2 billion in loans within the same time-frame of 2001-2010. Despite her economic wherewithal, China’s continual assumption of a ‘developing country’ status, has led to its rejection of OECD-membership, hence effectively shrouding in mystery its actual aid volumes to Africa.

In 2000, the first Forum on China and Africa Cooperation held in Beijing, marked the turning point in South-South Cooperation as another developing country, having triumphed the constraints in the international system, became an alternative to the West for developing states in Africa. The
2000 Beijing summit led to the call for a democratic reform of the current international order, the promotion of Sino-African interests in the international system through a new South-South Cooperation that will also ensure their mutual development. The “new strategic partnership” culminated in the signing of business deals worth US$1.9 billion by both sides.

2.3.3 Infrastructure

The deficit in infrastructural development in Africa led to a study in 2009 by (AICD) Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostics which was sponsored by the World Bank. The study revealed that, the cost of infrastructure in Africa was two times higher than all developing states due to the lack of competition, thus requiring an annual $93 billion to address, with power being the highest infrastructural challenge. It is no wonder then, that, China has repeatedly pointed out to the West that, what Africa needs is not lectures about democracy and good governance but rather, aid without ties that is able to solve Africa’s needs especially its infrastructural needs. According to Alden, China’s infrastructural investment in hospitals, schools, roads, and railways has been a juggernaut rather than a bane in spurring Africa’s development.

The year 2015 saw a flurry of activities in infrastructure across several African states. These include Angola’s 1,344-kilometers Lobito-Luau railway which links it to the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo). It is touted to be the second longest railway in Africa after the TanZam railway built by China. In the same year, Ethiopia also boasted of the 34 km Addis Ababa Light Rail Transit (AA-LRT) as well as the $4 billion 752.7-kilometer railway connecting neighbouring Djibouti’s port to its capital in 2016. Nigeria was also not left out as its railway connecting Kaduna to Abuja, was inaugurated in 2016. Tanzania on its part not only had its connecting railway
to Zambia which was built in 1970 rehabilitated but also, had a connecting bridge of 680-meters funded at $135 million by the Tanzanian government and built by a Chinese company, between Dar es Salaam and Kigamboni.\textsuperscript{50}

In combatting the perils of global warming ailing the globe, China collaborated with Kenya in building the Garissa power plant envisaged at reducing a yearly carbon dioxide emission of 64,190 metric tons of carbon emissions and churning out 7,600 kilowatt-hours of power annually.\textsuperscript{51} The impressive presidential palaces in Harare, Kinshasa, and Accra are also a strong mark of China’s presence on the continent. These monumental buildings are a sign of a new era, where memories and images of imposed old colonial buildings are effectively being replaced with new ones of the people’s choice. \textsuperscript{52} The US$ 200 million AU headquarters built by the Chinese government in Addis Ababa is no exception to this phenomenon.\textsuperscript{53}

\textbf{2.3.4 Peacekeeping}

China in 2006 contributed 1,101 troops to the UNs missions in African states such as Ivory Coast, Congo, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Sudan and Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{54} In 2008, 77\% of China’s 2,000 peacekeepers were stationed in Africa making it the UNSCs largest contributor to the continent. In line with its pursuit of global peace and harmony, its troops usually take on non-combatant roles such as policing or engineering during peacekeeping missions.\textsuperscript{55}

It also sent troops to Sudan in 2015, to contribute to peacekeeping. \textsuperscript{56}In that same year, the African Union received assurance of China’s support for the establishment of the AFCOM worth $100 million.\textsuperscript{57} In 2016, China’s first naval base established in Djibouti right across that of the US has
stirred up further controversy as to China’s true intent in Africa.\textsuperscript{58} China has nonetheless sought to allay fears of its intentions since according to them, it serves as support to the military by providing security and logistics to its peacekeeping troops in the UN stationed in the Gulf of Aden and Somalia.\textsuperscript{59}

\textbf{2.3.5 Agricultural Cooperation}

China’s quest for resources in Africa is not limited to feeding only its expanding economy but also its teeming population as a form of food security.\textsuperscript{60} Despite its sheer size, China’s tillable land pales in comparison to Africa’s 184 million hectares.\textsuperscript{61} In view of the benefits of Africa’s increased production capacity to both parties, China pledged to send Chinese volunteers to farming communities and also establish 10 more demonstration centers on the continent in addition to extending bursaries to Africans in agriculture at the third FOCAC summit.\textsuperscript{62} This is not novel as China in the latter half of the 1980’s aided 42 African states with resources and skilled personnel in the field of agriculture.\textsuperscript{63} Recognizing the need for Chinese partnership in its agricultural production, African leaders have partnered with the latter in creating a China Africa Agricultural Cooperation (CAAC) under the wide umbrella of the FOCAC. \textsuperscript{64}

In 2004, Nigeria’s partnership with Chinese companies saw its commodities export at US$500 million.\textsuperscript{65} By 2009, China’s agricultural investments in Africa was over $134 million, with an estimated 100 state farms and 50 established agribusinesses.\textsuperscript{66}
2.3.6 Educational Cooperation

China’s engagement with Africa has not gravitated solely around aid and trade but also sought to promote educational and cultural exchange between both sides. Cultural and educational exchange between China and Africa prior to this new page in South-South Cooperation had already been established in the 1950s and later on in the twilight of the 1960s during the building of the TAZARA railway to equip Zambians and Tanzanians with skills in managing the railway.\(^{67}\) According to the 2007 China Report, African students in 2003 constituted a third of all foreign students in China with an estimated 1,500 African students benefitting annually, as at 2007, from Chinese scholarships.\(^{68}\) Unlike the focus on universal basic education in Africa by the West, China goes further by emphasizing and supporting higher education as well as a vocation and skill-oriented education on the continent.\(^{69}\)

By 2005, Africa did not only host six Confucius Institutes but also had 530 teachers sent from China to facilitate teaching and learning. Aside from the fact that, 8000 Africans were learning Chinese, an additional sixty educational projects were being funded by China.\(^{70}\) The 3\(^{rd}\) FOCAC in 2006 saw China reifying her support for education on the continent, by pledging her support for the building of 100 schools in villages, over a span of three years. It was estimated that by 2009, Chinese scholarships to African students will be doubled from 2,000 to 4,000.\(^{71}\) This target was exceeded as by 2010, over 5000 African students were studying in China on scholarship.\(^{72}\) The Chinese government between 2009-2015, made scholarship provisions for 34,500 Africans as well as 4,500 and 2000 for health professionals and agricultural professionals respectively.\(^{73}\) It is worth pointing out that, in 2010, China placed an emphasis on postgraduate studies by awarding 2,334 scholarships for masters studies and 850 scholarships to doctoral students from Africa.\(^{74}\)
China’s facilitation of academic exchange and research between Africa and itself boosts the ranks of its universities globally and helps promote an appreciation of China’s successful journey to development. Most importantly, this South-South educational cooperation is supposed to foster and promote Africa’s self-reliance and spur its development.

Charles Mulinda has said that, these kinds of exchanges are relevant for promoting the understanding of the cultures and past of both sides. It is against this background that in 2004, the first Confucius Institute emulated along the concepts of Alliance Française and British Council, was established in South Korea. What perhaps distinguishes China’s Confucius Institutes from her Western peers, is their strategic location on the campus of a host university.

Wheeler indicates that in 2005, Africa had 200 language teachers sent to schools on the continent offering Chinese from China. Two years later, Africa’s first Confucius Institute was established in Kenya. By 2009, there were 15 Confucius Institutes and 4 Confucius classrooms across Africa. Chair of China’s CIs further established that there were over 1,000 CIs and Confucius classrooms in 120 states. From 15 CIs in 2009, Africa’s CIs had further expanded to 38 in 2014. In 2017, Africa boasts of 48 Confucius Institutes dispersed across 37 of its states in addition to 27 classrooms and over 400 teaching centres.

For most Africans, studying Chinese presents a lot of opportunities. It offers an in-depth understanding of a people they only encountered in movies practicing, Kung-fun or martial arts. Moreover, the economic utility of languages for most people in the developing south especially Africa, is an understatement. Having a second and third foreign language is not only a sign of
achievement but also an avenue for launching one’s career at the international level. With China’s booming economy, it offers business and employment prospects for Africa’s youth. In Kenya, officials view the study of Chinese as important for several reasons including job placement for youth, facilitate bilateral trade between the two sides, as well as the smooth transfer of knowledge and skills for development.\textsuperscript{82} This positive perception reverberates across various sections of the African populace. In Ghana, there are a purported 2500 students studying Chinese from primary schools right through to the tertiary level, where the figures are preponderant. South Africa is no different as a state policy in 2016 made Mandarin a Second Additional Language to be taught in schools.\textsuperscript{83}

\section*{2.4 Conclusion}

This Chapter has given a succinct overview of the three levels of China’s engagement with Africa, starting with the ideological struggle characteristic of the Cold War era, during which principles such as mutuality, and non-interference guiding the South-South cooperation still holds today. The second moment of interaction was fuelled by China’s significant economic gains attributable to its 1980’s economic reform. This period was marked by the exportation of China’s products to Africa and importation of Africa’s resources and renewed competition between Taiwan and China for Africa’s formal recognition. In the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, Sino-African relations was revitalized and institutionalized with the establishment of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation. Under this new engagement, much focus has been given to trade, aid, energy, infrastructure, as well as agricultural cooperation.
This overview allows for a deeper appreciation of the discussions in the ensuing chapter that deals with the relationship between the promotion of Mandarin and China’s growing influence in Africa, as well as the international system.

ENDNOTES

5 Ibid.
7 Ibid. p. 18.
9 Amoah, op. cit.
12 Ibid.
13 Alden, op. cit, pp. 11-12.
15 Meidan, op. cit, p. 75.
16 Chun, op. cit, p. 11.
17 Ibid. 14.
19 Ibid.
22 Meidan, op. cit, p. 76.
24 Ibid. p.10.
25 Ibid. p. 7.
26 Ibid. p. 8.
27 Alden, op. cit. p. 12.
28 Ibid.
30 Alden, op cit, p. 8.
31 Ibid. p. 42.
32 Ibid. p. 45.
35 https://www.ft.com/content/0f534aa4-4549-11e7-8519-9f94ee97d996?mhq5j=e3 Accessed on 7/11/2017 at 5:10am.
37 Alden, op cite, p. 35.
40 Ibid.
41 https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/20416/ASC-075287668-3270-01.pdf?sequence=2 Accessed on 03/05/2017 at 7:12pm.
42 Alden, op. cit. p. 22.
44 Alden, op. cite. p. 2.
46 Corkin, op. cite. p. 54.
47 Alden, op. cite. p. 17.
48 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-03/26/content_28682186.htm at 11:50pm
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Alden, op. cite. p. 36.
53 https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/20416/ASC-075287668-3270-01.pdf?sequence=2 Accessed on 03/05/2017 at 7:12 pm.
57 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid. p. 18.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Alden (2005), op. cit, p. 13.
66 Alden (2013), op. cit. p. 19
68 Beri, op. cit.

King, op. cit, p. 342.

Ibid. p. 345.


Niu, op. cit, p. 39.

Ibid. p. 34.

Ibid. p. 35.

Mulinda, op. cit, p. 247.


Wheeler, op. cit, p. 53.

CHAPTER THREE
THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN BOLSTERING CHINA’S INFLUENCE IN AFRICA

3.0 Introduction

This Chapter, in line with the objectives of this study, examines the importance of promoting the Chinese language as a soft power tool in Africa and how it is being achieved. Drawing on responses from the questionnaires and interviews conducted in addition to secondary data, this chapter further assess the response of first Africans, to this new feature in Sino-Africa relations. Finally, it looks at how this influence garnered through language, adds to China’s growing power.

3.1 Language as a Soft Power Tool

Most often than not, the mention of language evokes images of a people, their culture, how they think and how they relate to others. For a lot of people, language does not only allow one to understand another culture but is also the golden key that allows the toppling down of communication barriers and accessing a plethora of associated opportunities. Frantz Fannon sums this up by iterating that, “[…] A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language.”

Despite the social and rosy nature of language in uniting people of different cultures, it is undoubtedly a double-edged sword with political undertones. Historically, the expansion of empires and the consolidation of their power have to a large extent, depended on the spread of
their language since it allowed them to spread their culture and subtly exert their influence. In the 15th century when Spain was expanding her territories, Professor Antonio de Nebrija, underscored the importance of language in constructing and consolidating the power of the new Spanish empire.  

In succinct words, he re-echoed an ancient truth that “Always the language has been the companion of the empire, and in such a way one followed the other that together they started, grew up and flourished, and then together they both fell.”

In the not so recent past, Britain and France as they expanded their territories, used language in further exerting their influence over their colonies. Whereas physical strength helped to entrench themselves in their colonies, language aided in touching at the heart of the very soul of the colonized, their minds. Cheikh Hamadou Kane captures it as thus - “…Therefore behind the cannon was a new school. But better than the cannon, it made the conquest permanent. The cannon forces the body and the school fascinates the soul.” It is hence beyond any doubt that, the European language was a quintessential tool in captivating the minds of the colonized, by keeping them in awe and reverence of the new culture and rule.

By 1934, as Pax Britannica neared its end, the threat to Britain’s hegemony impressed a need to cultivate allies who will understand and therefore, legitimize the pursuit of British interests, through the global promotion of its language and culture. The British Council was thus established in 1935 with the aim of attracting both states and people as allies, through the promotion of its language and culture.
In contemporary times, states are engaged in a new warfare devoid of guns and military might, as they subtly battle for the ‘hearts and minds’ of people in an increasingly integrated world.\(^8\) Decades of isolation from the international community and the sudden comeback as an economic success triggered suspicion and fears within the current world order of China-led world order.\(^9\) For China, the need to rebrand and enhance its image in the eyes of the international community is of utmost importance amid the ‘threat’ rhetoric.\(^10\) This ‘threat’ perception necessitated the promotion of global understanding of its identity and goals through the projection of its language and culture.\(^11\) Moreover, it realizes that for the legitimate pursuit of its interests, building a soft power base is indispensable.\(^12\)

In the face of China’s growing cooperation and engagement with Africa, the need for the former to build goodwill among the African people has become germane for future relations.\(^13\) This is not only important in quelling any misperceptions, but also to transcend Africa’s elites whose hearts and minds have already been won through continuous economic diplomacy, to the very masses.\(^14\) This is also in light of the fact that, Africa is considered a vital ground for testing China’s soft power.\(^15\) Zhang Xiaoling also adds that, it is necessary to balance economic clout with soft power in order allay any thoughts of economic pillage.\(^16\) In her address at the 1st-anniversary celebrations of the first CI at the University of Ghana in 2015, H.E Sun Baohong iterated that, cultural interaction between China and Arica was one of the 3 foundations of the revitalized Sino-African relation.\(^17\) The first Confucius Institute was opened in South Korea after piloting a model in Tashkent.\(^18\) A year afterward, Africa’s first Confucius Institute was established in the University of Nairobi, Kenya in 2005.\(^19\)
3.1.1 The Confucius Institutes in Africa

The Confucius Institute is named after the Chinese philosopher, Confucius who lived between 551–479 BC. The “Guojia Hanban” shortened as Hanban in Chinese, is the Chinese Language Council International, tasked with the promotion of Mandarin and the associated Chinese culture. As the headquarters of CIs stationed in Beijing, the Hanban is empowered to establish and manage CIs worldwide. CIs are generally classified into three groups by virtue of their funding—those fully sponsored by the Hanban, joint partnerships with the host university and franchised CIs, nonetheless, the proclivity is generally towards the joint partnerships between Hanban and the host University.

In addition to monetary support, the CI headquarters supplies the required stationary to the various institutes to facilitate teaching and learning at the CIs. The peculiarity of establishing CIs and CCs on the campuses of host universities and schools is what sets China’s cultural agency apart from all other cultural and language centers that are situated outside of the hub of learning. As at 2009, Beijing had far outdone its projection, of 100 CIs worldwide by 2010 by over threefold, thus encouraging it to expand its horizon to meet the insatiable global demand. Three years later in 2013, there were 440 CIs and 646 Confucius Classrooms in 120 countries worldwide.

By 2017, there were 48 CIs in 37 African states in addition to the 27 CCs and over 400 teaching centers. Modelled more along the blueprint of France’s Alliance Française’ than the UK’s British Council, there can be several CIs in one country alone by virtue of the demand. Thus, in Africa, the leading states with the most CIs are Egypt, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Rwanda. Africa’s CIs unlike other CIs around the world is quite unique. In addition to the core mandate of
teaching Chinese language and Culture, the CIs as part of the “China-Africa People-To-People Friendly Action” will also promote “cooperation in science and education, strengthen professional training and help African countries improve their human resources”. Since its establishment, CIs in Africa have had over 100 teachers sent to teach Mandarin. It is estimated by UNESCO that the CIs receive not less than $100,000 to keep them running. As CIs are established on the campuses of host universities, so is the gradual infusion of the study of Chinese into the educational curricula of universities as seen in Cameroon. In the case of Ghana, however, the offer of Chinese as a degree program instituted in 2009 preceded the establishment of the first CI at the nation’s premier university in 2014. Thus, as part of the degree program, students after their third year, go for a language immersion program in China usually on scholarships.

As a newcomer to Africa in terms of language and culture dissemination, China’s Mandarin competes with the comfortable statuses enjoyed by dominant languages such as French and English who, due to their colonial legacy, are Africa’s predominant official languages or 2nd additional languages and thus employed in everyday use. This notwithstanding, the CI in Africa is gradually permeating Africa’s educational space by reaching out to primary and secondary schools, even though the number of Africa’s CIs pale in comparison to other regions. The CIs also have several all-year scholarships to facilitate the study and teaching of Chinese.

The concerted effort and significant investment by China in the promotion of its soft power through the CIs and CCs in Africa, within a short time span is gradually yielding dividends. By 2005, there were 8000 Africans learning Chinese. In Ghana, there are an estimated 2500 students studying Chinese in the two CIs and its associated classrooms. The teeming number of Africans studying
in China points to the fact that, China’s soft power is gradually increasing among the youth. Even though not all of them have studied at the Confucius Institutes, it is for sure that as part of the cultural interaction, more Africans are receptive to studying in China across all echelons of education, despite the initial perceptions of difficulty with the language. Charles Mulinda posits that in 2010, over 5000 African students were studying in China on scholarship. The Chinese government disbursed scholarships for 34,500 Africans as well as 4,500 and 2000 for health professionals and agricultural professionals respectively between 2009 to 2015. As part of the measures of building Africa’s resources, China awarded 2,334 scholarships for masters’ students and 850 scholarships to doctoral students from Africa.

3.1.1.1 Chinese Bridge

The Chinese Bridge competitions known as the “Hanyu Qiao Zhonghwen Bisai” are held annually in China for all students studying mandarin in the CIs and CCs around the world. In different categories, the CB for tertiary students was first held in 2002, with that of secondary school students first held in 2008. Foreign students studying in China are also not left out as they also take part in the CB, with finals aired on the CCTV. Usually, their country and regional representatives are chosen after preliminary rounds in the various countries, with students usually adorned in Chinese clothing as part of the depiction of the culture. Each year the themes for the CB are changed as part of enhancing China’s images among its students worldwide. In Ghana alone, there have been 16 preliminary Chinese Bridge competitions with winners usually being from the University of Ghana. In 2016, the five-member African team drawn from Ghana, Egypt, Tanzania, Madagascar won the Team competition bronze medal of the Chinese Bridge
Competition. This further demonstrates that increasingly, knowledge of Chinese culture and grasp of the Mandarin by Africans is markedly positive.

3.2.0 Africa’s Perception of China’s Soft Power

Scholars such as Ousmane Sall have argued that soft power despite the intents of the actor, is very much dependent on the reception of the targeted audience. Anja Lahtinen also iterates that, in as much as China is actively advancing its soft power, the perception and reception by its target audience are the most important part of the projection.

In Africa, China has in no doubt invested immensely towards the projection of its “attractive power” in Africa not least through its economic success and activities on the continent, but also through the projection of its culture as a soft power tool. The response in Africa has been somewhat positive. As Sall has pointed out, the leap in the study of Mandarin by Africans is evidence of China’s growing influence. Increasingly, the idea of speaking Mandarin as compared to other foreign languages is considered a leverage for success. More importantly, general societal views concerning the speaking of Mandarin has greatly improved. Hitherto, Chinese was a language of sounds where any sound at all, made with a supposed Chinese accent made meaning. However, as Africans engage at almost all levels with the Chinese, speaking Mandarin is a feat worth commending. In comparison to foreign languages like French, Spanish or German, speaking Mandarin in contemporary times evokes awe, admiration, and respect amongst contemporaries. According to Kabwete, Chinese language and culture have permeated the ranks of African society...
even to the entertainment industry. Not surprisingly, contemporary hit musicians such as Tekno, whose name is of itself perceived to be linked to a Chinese brand of phones, has consistently depicted Chinese culture and language in his music. African leaders on their part have wholeheartedly embraced Mandarin, since it has economic prospects for their economies, by enhancing skills and knowledge transfer, as well as providing employment for their nationals who have grasped the language.

According to Anita Wheeler, the success of the CIs in Africa is dependent not only on the quality of its courses and the socio-political milieu of China’s dealings with the host country but also on the perceptions of the literate and business people. It is in this regards that the success of China’s soft power was gauged among students at the University of Ghana Confucius Institute and the undergraduate students offering Chinese at the same university. Responses from questionnaires and interviews were grouped under a) enhanced perceptions of China and its language b) perceptions of China’s engagement with Africa c) Future of Mandarin in Africa d) China as a contender to the US

3.2.1 Enhanced View of China

A total of 15 students from the University of Ghana Confucius Institute and 30 undergraduate students studying Chinese across all levels from the same university were polled. 9 females and 6 males made up 60% and 40%, respectively of the sample population for the UGCI, whereas that of the undergraduate students was distributed across 17 (56.7%) female students and 13 (43.3%) male students constituting the sample population. For the undergraduate students, 15 (50%) respondents had chosen Chinese as part of their course combinations, prior to coming to the
University whereas an equal number had had it added by the University, as part of their program. Even though the 15% who chose to study Mandarin were motivated mainly by China’s new economic status and the opportunities it represented, they like the other 15% perceived the Chinese people as unfriendly and the language system difficult to master. However, as studies progressed, an overwhelming 86.7% had had a positive change of mind as they now perceived the Chinese to be friendly, hardworking, humble and welcoming. There was also a deeper appreciation of the Chinese culture with the language being described as “easier and philosophical”. Respondents changed perceptions are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Undergraduate respondents on whether studying Mandarin had changed their earlier perceptions they had about China, its language and culture.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s own computation

It is clear, however, that, despite the 4 (13.3%) respondents who had not revised their opinions, studying the Chinese language had significantly enhanced an understanding of China and its culture. For the majority of students at the UGCI, studying Mandarin offered opportunities in business, employment, and education, with the likelihood of it being the world’s future lingua franca further endowing it with prestige. Most of them had their earlier perceptions of a rich,
inspiring Chinese culture and philosophical as well as interesting language being reaffirmed as they veered into studies at the UGCI. This is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Responses of UGCI students on whether studying Mandarin had entrenched their earlier views about China, its language, and culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s own computation

From Table 2, it is evident that 8 (61.5%) respondents responded in the affirmative. However, of the 5 (38.5%) respondents representing having earlier viewed the language as difficult, the people unfriendly and the culture closed, 2 (40%) had positive views, with 3 (60%) respondents reversing their earlier opinion of Mandarin being easy to study. From Tables 1 and 2, it is evident that China’s objective of promoting a global understanding of China and its culture, espoused by its leaders and scholars is being realized, as students’ views of China is greatly improved, after studying the language.52

Moreover, final year students who had gone for the language immersion program in China as part of their course, not only expressed admiration for the latter’s economic and technological advancements in spite of its obvious constraints as a developing country but also appreciated its
culture’s semblance to that of Africa’s. Students though showing disdain for some level of racism in China towards Africans, where in the words of a respondent “They are so rude. They just say ting bu don before you even start speaking” and in the words of another, “It’s overt racism but you just don’t realize it. They get up from their seats when you sit beside them in the bus.” were, however, quick to point out that, it was born of “ignorance, inexperience, and fear” rather than cultural superiority. Captured in the words of one respondent “It’s not their fault. China is a big place and some of them have not seen black people before because they live in villages.” There were also comments such as, “I wouldn’t say they are not educated but rather they are not exposed. China is now opening up.” This attempt at balancing perceptions, affirms what scholars such as King and Ferdjani have suggested- that Africans who study in China are crucial to the enhancement of Sino-African relations due to their understanding of both cultures.

3.2.2 Perceptions of China’s Engagement with Africa

Perceptions about China’s increased engagement with Africa have been mixed not only among the African populace but also in the West, with debates ranging from China planning to colonize Africa and the former actually spurring Africa’s development. Though concerns have been genuine due to Africa’s colonial past, Chris Alden has pointed out that, China’s engagement with Africa far from being a bane, has rather brought unprecedented levels of development. According to Suisheng Zhao, although African leaders are cautious in their dealings with China, Sino-Africa relations is a positive-sum game, thus a better alternative for development. However, as Alden argues, the ordinary people and not the leaders would shape the directions of this relationship as it becomes nuanced. Wheeler stresses that encouraging the study of Mandarin is germane to the success of the politico-economic ambitions of the Communist State in the host country since it
promotes the image of the state.\textsuperscript{60} It is in light of this, that the views of respondents were sought with regards to China’s engagement with Africa in recent years.

Generally, China’s engagements with Africa was seen by respondents as positive, since China’s investments in Africa’s economy is believed to have brought about significant development. Moreover, China’s investment in Africa’s infrastructure and technological cooperation was also seen as contributing immensely to development on the continent, with echoes of a “win-win partnership”.

These positive views nonetheless, as this study was carried out in a period of general societal backlash against Chinese miners whose mining activities, known in local parlance as “galamsey”, polluted water bodies and arable land, the adverse effects on China’s attractive power was pronounced. An overwhelming number of students indicated that contrary to popular believe, not ‘all’ Chinese were embroiled in the pollution of the environment even though their disregard for the environment has dented China’s positive influence.

Responses from the interviews echoed the fact that, Africa’s agency in the renewed Sino-African relations has been rather reactive than proactive. The perceived laxity on the part of African states due to China’s alternative to development has contributed to the growing asymmetrical nature of Sino-African relations skewed in favour of China. In the words of a respondent “African leaders are only interested in where the next aid comes from without thinking of the consequences for the future generation. They forget that there is nothing like free lunch.” Respondents also bemoaned the lack of an adequately trained human resource that would safeguard Africa’s interests in its dealings with China- “How many of our people can read and properly understand the Chinese
characters? Sometimes we sign some of these deals without fully appreciating the nuances of the
text”, a respondent said. Moreover, the absence of an African-China policy emanating from the
African side leaves the two-way relationship to a seeming game with fate. It might thus be too
simplistic to blame China if Africa fails to strategize this relationship to its benefit by viewing
Sino-African relations like a “foster-child” situation, where parents just dole out benefits with no
interests in sight. A romanticized view of China’s engagement with Africa could lead to a
repetition of Africa’s exploitative history with Europe especially if Africa refused to shape the
relationship by defining its interests.

3.2.3 Future of Mandarin in Africa

As the “Chinese fever” sweeps across states in Africa, capturing its audience in a vice-grip of
economic awe, the future of Mandarin in Africa, where a colonial legacy has privileged English
and French as official languages, is debatable. Wheeler has argued that the blatant presentation
of China as an alternative to the West, effectively erases the neutrality of language as a benign
cultural tool, by endowing it with political undertones. She emphasizes that due to the
plurilingual nature of Africa’s populace, Mandarin would end up being one of Africa’s most used
languages as it carves a comfortable niche for itself on the continent. Contrary to this view,
however, Antonio de Nebrija observed that languages of great powers took center stage when
their states become hegemons and diminished in the same way. Thus even though an
overwhelming number of 19 (63.3%) respondents of the undergraduate sample population did
not perceive Mandarin as popular as English and French globally, the belief that it would be
popular just like English, French or Spanish in Africa received an outstanding 92.3% affirmation
from 24 students. This is displayed in Tables 3 and 4.
Table 3: Response of respondents on whether Mandarin is as popular as English and French.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s own computation

From Table 3, 19 (63.3%) respondents answered in the negative whiles 11(36.7%) respondents perceived Mandarin on the same level as English and French.

Table 4: Respondents on the perception of more Africans studying Mandarin just like English or French.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s own computation
From Table 4, it is evident that while an overwhelming 24 (92.3%) respondents affirmed the likelihood citing predominantly, the economic incentive of the Chinese language and the power devolution to the East, only 2 (7.7%) respondents believed otherwise, citing colonial legacies of English and French and the perceived complexities of Mandarin.

It is obvious then that the prospects for Mandarin in Africa are promising as more and more Africans are likely to be swept up in the currents of the Chinese fever. Data gathered from respondents showed that even though a majority could speak at least 2 international languages, they still chose to study Mandarin. This information is presented in the Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: number of languages spoken by Students at the University of Ghana Confucius Institute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s own computation

As depicted in Table 5, 8 (53.5%) respondents speak 2 languages excluding Chinese. 3 (20%) respondents speak one international language. Also, 4 (26.7%) respondents speak 3 international languages excluding Chinese.
In Table 6, 22 (73.3%) respondents asserted that they speak 2 languages including the English language. Further, 8 (26.7%) respondents representing claimed that they speak 3 languages including English.

From the data in tables 5 and 6, it is clear that, despite the fact that an overwhelming number of respondents speak more than 2 international languages the incentives for studying Mandarin is inducing more Africans to study the language. Furthermore, the incentive for studying Mandarin has attracted language policy action as seen in South Africa where Mandarin has been made a 2nd additional foreign language. These developments may be priming Mandarin to not only attain the privileged status of Africa’s colonial languages but also probably surpass them as a result of China’s increasing economic clout.

### 3.2.4 China as a Contender to the US and Other Great Powers
Having gauged the perceptions of Africans to China’s growing influence in Africa, the researcher sought to measure the perceptions of respondents as to China’s growing influence in the international system in view of its activities in terms of language promotion, economic aid to developing countries, technological advancements and infrastructural development. This is displayed in table 7.

### Table 7: Undergraduate Respondents’ perceptions of China a serious contender to the US and other great powers in the international system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s own computation

From Table 7, it is evident that all the respondents overwhelmingly agreed to the assertion that the study of Chinese around the world in addition to its economic policies makes China a serious contender to the great powers in the international system as well as the United States. 12 (40%) respondents agreed, whiles 18(60%) respondents strongly agreed with this assertion.

Responses from students at the UGCI showed a significant majority indicating that the possibility of China being a superpower is high. In the words of a respondent - “Very likely. Everything has been planned.” whiles another believed that China already possessed the attributes of a superpower. The significance of this for China’s acquisition of power and influence in the international system is discussed in the next section.
3.4 Language as a Tool for Bolstering China’s Rising Status

The inneutrality of language and its importance to the rise of great powers has been established by de Nebrija. In addition to this line of argument, Ding and Saunders posit strongly that the promotion of Mandarin shores up China’s power and influence in the international system.67 This phenomenon is crucial, in view of the raging debates about US declinism in the 21st century. According to scholars such as Christopher Layne, China in its quest to develop economically played to the dictates of the US-led world order.68 This made it adopt an almost submissive position vis à vis the US by allaying fears of its threat to the existing structures.69 However, in recent times as the US is almost offering its hegemonic status on a silver platter by refusing to sign important treaties such as the Paris climate agreement, amidst the infamous Trump-rhetoric, China is not only joining multilateral organizations but is increasingly playing important roles within the international system.

Furthermore, China’s role during the 2008 Great Recession coupled with its growing economic prowess and projected economic clout by the second half of the 21st century, has greatly propped up its perceived image within the international system.70 Moreover, holding 2 trillion dollars’ worth of the worlds ‘lender of last resort’s vast resources in reserves, China has had no qualms advocating for the replacement of the dollar with its own currency.71
China’s rise to economic fame is however not new, as its Mandarin interpretation “Zhong Guo”, meaning ‘middle kingdom’ is an indicator of its erstwhile glory as the world’s largest economy in the 17th century and later in 1820 when it reclaimed its position from India. John Mearsheimer posits that the overarching desire of every great power, is the attainment of hegemonic status within the international system, hence the incessant need to alter the power dynamics in their favor. Mearsheimer continues that, the consequences of any revolutionary attempt at redistributing global power, may compel great powers to be subtle about their ulterior aim until an opportune moment. According to realist great powers have been known seek to develop the necessary power and means of safeguarding their interests abroad. This they do by transforming their fledgling economic clout into military power, in the pursuit of their burgeoning geopolitical interests. China’s establishment of its first naval base in Djibouti adjacent the US is proof of this fact. It is not surprising then, that despite its earlier stance of not laying claim to global power, China’s positive returns on its investment in soft power projection has resurrected its great power tendencies.

According to Lloyd Adu Amoah, China had nursed these ambitions as far back as 1957, when Mao Zedong rather ambitiously, envisioned overtaking both the US and Britain. Even though some scholars such as William Wohlforth and Stephen G. Brooks have been quick to dismiss the possibility of a China-led international system, Layne remains adamant that, the rise and fall of a hegemon is a natural course of history, to which the US is no exception. Thus, as China bids her moment of reckoning when she finally overtakes the US as a superpower, though not admitted, the need to cultivate and grow her soft power has never been more germane. More so in Africa, where her economic success despite its political inclinations towards communism, has been touted and inspired an East-option for many African states.
Historically, China has depended on Africa’s votes and solidarity, during pivotal decision-making moments. Thus, even though Africa provides a huge market for China’s products as well resources for the latter’s booming economy, Africa, more importantly, serves as a stronghold for China’s fight for legitimacy within the international system.

The concerted use of soft power for influence has not been limited only to China as it has become important for states to wield it in the 21st century. In 2010, erstwhile French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Bernard Kouchner revealed that states are now more than ever engaged in a new warfare of the “hearts and minds”, thus failure to cultivate and deploy soft power is detrimental to the pursuit of one’s interests. The new ‘Institut Français’ which reunites all of France’s numerous cultural agencies under its jurisdiction, is pivotal in the promotion of France’s “ambitious diplomacy of influence” through a mutual cultural exchange. Since its establishment in 2010, there are 96 IF currently strung across 161 states in addition to 300 Alliance Françaises. It was not surprising then that, France’s cultural appeal was cited as a second reason for its domination in the 2017 “Soft Power 30” rankings, as the US dropped from the first to second position. China was however not left out, as it moved 3 places further up on the charts from 28th position in 2016 to 25th in 2017.

As Alden has argued, the global promotion of its language and culture and expands China’s sphere of influence and shores up China’s power. Thus, the strategic use of language in the consolidation of China’s power and influence juxtaposed against French and British antecedents in Africa indicates that China is gearing up for global power. Even though the US still holds an attractive
appeal, China is perceived by a large number of people, as a future hegemon. More important is the generous amount of goodwill and influence it enjoys in Africa. The importance of Africa to China’s rise does not only stem from its resources, receptive markets, and goodwill but also, in the nature of their solidarized-relationship in elevating their statuses as developing countries.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This Chapter in meeting the objectives of the work first looked at language as a soft power tool. It further examined the Confucius Institutes and the Chinese Bridge as China’s soft power tools in promoting the knowledge of its language and culture in Africa. Using mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative), it examined Africa’s perception of China’s soft power by drawing on existing literature and data from questionnaires and interviews carried out. This approach established that Africans are embracing the frenzy of the ‘Chinese Fever’, not least because of its economic incentive, but also the prestige and opportunities with which it endows its speakers.

The success of China’s influence in Africa is inextricably linked to its global influence and interests, as a result of latter’s strategic importance to China’s rise. As China leverages this subtle face of soft power, it is undoubtedly shoring up its new economic clout amidst debates of US decline and perceived future super power status.
ENDNOTES


5 Wa Thiong’o, op. cit, p. 9.


7 Ibid.


14 Zhang, Herman and Winston, op. cite, p. 8.

15 Ibid. p. 9.

16 Ibid. pp. 9-10.

17 Address by H.E. Sun Baohong, Chinese Ambassador to Ghana, on the 1st anniversary celebration of the establishment of the CI at the University of Ghana in 2015 http://gh.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t1157878.htm Accessed on 7/8/2017 at 7:45 pm.


19 Wheeler, op. cit, p. 52.


21 Gil, op. cit, p. 8.


23 Rui, op. cit, p. 241.

24 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Cox and Doug, op. cit, p. 418.
72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Cox, and Doug. op. cit, p. 415.
76 Kurlantzick, op. cit, p. 5.
78 Kurlantzick, op. cit, p. 412.
79 Wheeler, op. cit, p. 51.
80 Alden, op. cit, p. 17.
82 Lahtinen, op. cit, p. 207.
83 https://franceineurope.org/spip.php?article1764 Accessed on 7/10/2017 at 11:05 pm
84 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Alden, op. cit.
89 Nieto, op. cit.
90 Lahtinen, op. cit, p. 204.
91 Fijakowski, op. cit, pp. 229-230.
CHAPTER FOUR
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This Chapter is presents a summary of the work’s findings provides relevant conclusions and also proffers recommendations for a better-placed Sino-African relations.

4.1 Summary of Findings

The research makes the following findings:

- China’s transportation of Mandarin is a mere replication of what Britain, France and other great powers resorted to when they were only emerging economies. The promotion of language is strategic in winning the 21st century war of ‘hearts and minds’. Thus amidst the debate of US’ waning influence, China’s promotion of its language only adds to its sphere of influence, as it maximizes its power in the international system.

- Africa is of strategic importance to China’s global influence as the former has increasingly played an important role in defining moments of China’s history. Thus, whether it is in the recognition of the “One China” policy, international solidarity or in the provision of resources to boost China’s growing economy, Africa remains vital to China’s foreign policy, hence the need to court its goodwill through soft power appeal.
China’s late entry into the multilateral international system after its Economic Reform in the 90’s, has necessitated the need for the establishment of Confucius Institutes around the world, to enhance its image, in the pursuit of its interests. It is thus not surprising that, by promoting the study of its language around the world especially in Africa, perceptions of China have greatly improved with proof being in the mushroom growth of China’s Confucius Institutes across the African continent.

In spite of the rich legacy the English and French language enjoy by virtue of their “official language” statuses in most African countries, the prospects of Mandarin in Africa remain positive. Apart from the fact that, there are language policies that are already making Mandarin a 2nd additional language in Africa, it is fast becoming a contender to these colonial languages on the continent, as the tide of ‘Chinese Fever’ gently sweeps up Africans due to China’s growing economic clout.

This notwithstanding, the ‘foster-child’ lenses through which African states seem to perceive China could contribute to the growing asymmetrical nature of a supposed South-South Cooperation where China as the ‘big-brother’ of all developing countries, doles out aid ‘without conditions’.

4.2 Conclusions

The examination of the role of language in China’s quest for influence in Africa aimed at assessing the perception of Africans with regards to this new dimension in Sino African relations. Using soft power as a conceptual framework for analysis, the research examined how China was promoting
its language and Africa’s perception of China’s growing soft power. Findings from the research proved that the promotion of language is bolstering China’s influence and power in Africa with rippling effects in its quest for power acquisition in the international system.

4.3 Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, this section advances some recommendations in the ensuing paragraphs.

- China by presenting its model of development as an alternative to that of the West, must ensure that the activities of all its soft power actors such as its businessmen, ordinary citizens and Foreign Service Officers are effectively harmonised to ensure that the projection of its soft power is not sabotaged by the individual interests of these groups as it is in the case of illegal Chinese miners destroying arable land and water bodies in their economic quest.

- Moreover, in carrying out the ‘People-to People Policy’ there is the need for the Chinese state to encourage its citizens who are migrants in Africa, to mingle with the local populace in order to facilitate an understanding of the state, its culture and interests in the host country, since most people view the Chinese as cold and withdrawn.

- As an all-out war has been declared in the bid to win the hearts and minds of people in an increasingly globalised world, there is the need for African states to individually and
collectively as a union define and project their soft power to quell the negative stereotypes of Africa within the international system.

- Also, in order to ensure that the interests of individual African states are safeguarded, there is the need to develop the capacity of Africa’s human resource in terms of learning and understanding Mandarin on African terms, to better engage with China. Moreover, instead of solely relying on scholarships from China for African students, African states collectively and individually must create schemes that would cater for young African potentials in China in the areas of science and technology, who would return after their period of study to contribute to the development of the continent.

- Finally, it is impetuous for African leaders to grasp the fact that states are motivated by their national interest in their dealings with other states. Thus, as engagement between Africa and China becomes increasingly multi-faceted, there is the need to dispel any disillusions of a win-win situation without any concerted effort on the part of African states to secure their interests. If the case of China is anything to go by, development was not handed on a silver-platter and thus if the ‘charm-offensive’ rhetoric of the West is to be held valid, African states must assume a realist stance in their dealings with any state in order to advance and safeguard their interest.
Bibliography

Books


Journal Articles


Rui, Yang. Soft power and higher education: an examination of China’s Confucius Institutes, Globalization, Societies and Education. 2010.


**Interviews**

Interview with 1 of the 2, 2016 Chinese Bridge contestants from Ghana at the University of Ghana on 6/19/2017 at 2:00 pm

Interview with 5 final year students from the Language Immersion Program at the University of Ghana on 6/18/2017, 5:00 pm.

Interview with Dr. Loyd Amoah, Dir. Of the Center for Asian Studies, University of Ghana at the University of Ghana on 7/27/2017 at 1:00 pm.

**Websites**


Reports/ Documents


Address by H.E. Sun Baohong, Chinese Ambassador to Ghana, on the 1st anniversary celebration of the establishment of the CI at the University of Ghana in 2015 http://gh.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t1157878.htm accessed on 7/8/2017 at 7: 45 pm.

He, Wenping. 2007. ‘The Balancing Act of China’s Africa Policy’ China Security, Summer,
Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire - UGCI Students

1. I am a ........ a. male   b. female
2. I am a ............ a. graduate   b. student   c. businessman/woman d. other
3. How did you hear about the Confucius Institute?
   a. friends                 b. social media                 c. news journals                 d. other
4. How many international languages do you speak excluding Chinese?
   a. 1                        b. 2                                     c. 3
5. Did you have any prior knowledge of Chinese before coming to the Confucius Institute?
   a. Yes                     b. No
6. What is your motivation for studying Chinese?
7. What were your perceptions about the Chinese state, culture and language
   before your study at the CI?
8. Has studying Chinese at the CI further entrenched these earlier views you had?
   a. Yes  b. No
9. If ‘Yes’, how and what are your views now?
10. What are your views on the increasing number of Africans studying Chinese in the
    various CIs?
11. Is it likely that Mandarin in the future would dominate over the English and French
    language in Africa?
12. What are your perceptions of China in Africa?
13. Is China likely to be a superpower in the international system?

Appendix 2

Questionnaire – Undergraduate Students

1. I am a …………….
   a. Male  b. Female
2. How many foreign languages do you speak including English?
   a. 2  b. 3  c. 4  d. above 4
3. What is your current year of study
   a. 1st year  b. 2nd year  c. 3rd year  d. 4th year
4. Did you choose Chinese as a program during your application for university studies?
5. If Yes, what informed your decision?
6. If No, what has been your experience studying Chinese?
7. Has studying Chinese changed your earlier perceptions of the language, the people and the culture?
   a. Yes  b. No
8. How does the study of Chinese benefit you?
9. Would you consider Mandarin/Chinese as popular as English and French globally?
10. Is there a likelihood of more Africans studying Mandarin as a 2nd language as they do English, French or Spanish?
11. In your estimation, what is Ghanaian society’s perception of China?
12. Does this affect its influence in Africa?
   a. Yes  b. No
13. What are your views of China’s relations with Africa?
14. China’s promotion of its language coupled with its economic activities makes China a strong contender to other great powers in the international system as well as the US.
   a. agree  b. strongly agree  c. disagree  d. strongly disagree
Appendix 3

Sample of Interview Guide - Unstructured (Language Immersion students)

1. Did you have any prior knowledge of Mandarin before your undergraduate studies?
2. What were your impressions before you started your Chinese course modules?
3. What changed after the first year?
4. What were your impressions of China before going for the Language Immersion Program?
5. How would you describe your experience in China?
6. Would you describe China as developed?
7. Has the Language Immersion program made you more favourable towards China?
8. What do you perceive as general society’s view of the Chinese?
9. Are they wrong in thinking so?
10. What are your views on the mushroom growth of CIs in Africa?
11. Are they likely to enhance society’s understanding of China and its culture?
12. What are then prospects of Mandarin Africa vis a vis English and French?
13. Is the current trajectory of China likely to make it a super power?
Appendix 4

Sample of Interview Guide - Unstructured 2 (Experts)

1. What is new about the South-South Cooperation in the 21st century?
2. How justified is the West in cautioning Africa about China’s intentions?
3. What is China’s interpretation of soft power?
4. How does the promotion of studying Mandarin add up to China’s soft power influence?
5. How does the surge in the number of Africans studying in China add up to its growing influence in Africa?
6. Is China’s vigorous activities a reclamation of their past glory?
7. Is China another power seeking to exploit Africa?
8. What accounts for the emerging asymmetrical nature in Sino-African relations?
9. How can Africa reshape this in its favour?
10. How does China play into the US declinism debate?
11. How strategic is Africa to China’s rise?