

China's soft power investment in African nations

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Abstract

While western media reports describe China's increasing economic and political influence as "China threat" that can undermine U.S. influence and affect the existing international hegemonic order, public opinion poll data shows that Africans tend to have more favorable views of China. Previous literature suggests that China's soft power, such as scholarships, Confucius Institute, and iconic social infrastructure buildings, may be working to produce positive perceptions of China in African nations. However, few studies examine the causal link between China's soft power investments and public perceptions of China (i.e. the effectiveness of China's soft power projection). Numerous factors influence perceptions toward China including China's hard economic investment such as industrial infrastructure projects as well as trade. Thus this study addresses the following question: Has China's soft power investments generated positive perceptions of China among the populations in African nations? This question is examined within a framework of direct and indirect soft power. The goal of this study is to disentangle the influence of China's hard and soft power investment on African perceptions of China as well as the distinction between direct and indirect soft power. The findings reveal that China's soft power investments are not as effective as other studies suggest. Instead, this study suggests that China's image in African nations is most strongly influenced by the domestic media in each country and whether they portray China in a positive or negative manner.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)¹ in 2000, China's engagement in African nations increased dramatically. As of 2009, besides the fact that China allocated the largest amount of foreign aid to Africa, it also became the largest trade partner of Africa (Information Office of the State Council, 2011, 2013). During the Cold War, African countries were of strategic importance for the United States and the Soviet Union as they competed to spread their political ideologies and economic engagement on the continent. After the Cold War, the U.S. and the Soviet Union left the continent, and now China is filling in the political and economic vacuum. Western scholars and journalists argue that China is increasingly investing in African countries in order to gain access to natural resources and to cultivate the export market for Chinese products. As a result, African activists and journalists criticize China for adopting neo-colonialist and exploitative policies on the continent (BBC News, 2014; Finighan, 2014; Grammaticas, 2012; Mbaye, 2011; Quinn & Heinrich, 2011).

While some African leaders embrace China, some civil society groups in African countries are reacting against China's trade and resource related activities. For instance, trade unions in South Africa protested against China's cheap imports, which led to President Thabo Mbeki's negotiation with China's Premier Wen Jiabao to restrict China's textile exports to South Africa (Cooke, 2009). Further, in Gabon, a group of Gabonese and international nongovernmental organizations criticized SINOPEC (China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation) of falsifying reports on the environmental impact of an oil-related project which resulted in the shutdown of the project (Cooke, 2009). Furthermore, in Zambia, the public frequently protested against low wages and bad work conditions at mining sites, and eventually a

¹ The explanation of FOCAC will be provided in the section of "China's investment in African nations".

Chinese manager was killed by mine workers over a wage dispute in 2012 (Grill, 2013). In Zambia the anti-China politician Michael Sata also won the presidential election in 2011 (Gettleman, 2011). Under these circumstances, China can no longer neglect the voice of social groups while pursuing its economic objectives such as acquisition of natural resources or exportation of Chinese products.

However, China has been making efforts to provide a positive perception of itself to the African public. Compared to the increase in trade and resource-related activities, scholars and journalists often overlook this aspect of China's engagement. Indeed, China has also been increasing investment in Chinese-language teaching, construction of schools, hospitals, or soccer stadiums, and so on. For instance, in 2006 the Chinese government doubled the number of scholarships for African students to study in China from 2,000 to 4,000 per year (FOCAC, 2006). In 2015 the Chinese government more than doubled it again to 10,000 scholarships per year (FOCAC, 2015b). In addition, the number of Confucius Institutes (CI) and Confucius classrooms (Chinese-language and culture teaching institutions) has expanded from zero to 56 in a decade. China is also constructing visible and iconic social infrastructure, such as Lusaka General Hospital in Zambia, the soccer stadium in Mali, and Senegal National Grand Theater (AidData, 2016). These projects are associated with "soft power." This is the ability to attract others to align with another country and co-opts people rather than coerces or induces them.

While most scholars and journalists tend to place all non-trade and non-industrial investments in the "soft power" category, there is a distinction between direct and indirect soft power. Direct soft power is an investment in institutions such as visible and iconic infrastructure of a humanitarian nature (non-industrial and non-military), whereas indirect soft power is an investment in individuals and community cultural development projects. I argue that China's

various soft power projects presented above can also be sorted into either direct or indirect soft power. For instance, scholarships and CI are a part of indirect soft power, while construction of hospitals and soccer stadiums are a type of direct soft power. Thus this study unravels the distinction between direct and indirect soft power through the case of China's soft power in African nations.

China's increasing direct and indirect soft power investments in African countries will enable China to gain natural resources and export Chinese goods without facing severe opposition from societal groups as well as affect the regional power balance. Just like China's increasing influence of soft power in Southeast Asia is driving the U.S., Japan, and Taiwan out of the region (Kurlantzick, 2006), China's soft power in African countries could reduce the influence of the U.S. and former European colonial countries in the region.

In fact, western media reports suggest a "China threat" in the region that can undermine U.S. influence on the continent. It is assumed that the U.S. needs to counter act China's action in the region. For example, a key article suggests that the purpose for a Hillary Clinton trip to several African countries in 2012 was to reduce the political and economic influence of China in the region (Smith, 2012). Other media articles also project the rivalry between Chinese and American soft power (Chiu, 2013; Dynon, 2013). Although soft power does not necessarily result in a zero-sum game, media reports imply China's soft power possibly undercuts the influences of the U.S. and other regional powers and changes the existing hegemonic order in the region. The media perception of China's soft power in African countries matters to not only China but also to other countries including the U.S. However, it is the African perceptions of China's presence in the region or their country that is a clear measure of China's soft power success.

Has China's soft power investment actually produced positive perceptions of China in African countries? Despite over a decade of Chinese soft power investment, few scholars have closely examined African perceptions and point of view regarding the presence of China in their respective countries. Indeed, China's soft power may or may not improve China's image among African people. Both journalist and scholarly articles tend to overlook the African perspective of China's engagement. However, existing literature generally shows that China's soft power may be working in African nations (Moss, 2013; Yang, 2015). There also have been multiple attempts to measure popular perceptions of China through public opinion polls (Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006; Paradise, 2009). Indeed, poll data presented in the existing literature show that more than half of the people have a favorable view toward China in almost all the African countries surveyed (BBC World Service, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014). In addition, African countries generally have the highest percentage of favorable views of China than any other region in the world (BBC World Service, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014). However, few studies examine the causal link between China's soft power investments and public perceptions of China (i.e. the effectiveness of China's soft power projection). Numerous factors influence perceptions toward China including China's hard economic investment such as loans and infrastructure projects as well as trade. Thus the goal of this study is to disentangle the influence of China's hard and soft power investment on African perceptions of China as well as introduce the distinction between direct and indirect soft power.

Some scholars suggest that China's soft power does not provide positive perceptions to African civil societies. They argue that it only works for government officials (elites) and not for the general public (Fijałkowski, 2011; Horta, 2009; Kurlantzick, 2009). The perception that China has a more positive image in authoritarian countries also stems from the same logic that it

is the government officials who like China. In authoritarian countries where citizens' political rights are limited, the freedom of press is also restricted. When a government controls the information the public can see, and if the government leaders have a favorable bias toward China, their citizens will hear only good information about China's engagement in their country. However, this argument conflicts with some of the most recent public opinion polls; also whether China is more favored in authoritarian countries than democratic countries has yet to be clearly established. In sum, it is still unclear whether China's soft power investments can effectively generate positive perceptions of China among the public in African nations.

This paper will address the following question: Does China's soft power investments generate positive perceptions of China among the populations in African nations? I will address this question within a framework of direct and indirect soft power. While corroborating that the framework of direct and indirect soft power functions to operationalize soft power, this paper will examine whether they produce positive perceptions of China among the public in African countries by looking at a public opinion poll. The data of the public opinion poll will be drawn from the Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database. It is used to see whether the percentage of favorable views toward China is higher in the countries where China has larger soft power investments. The findings reveal that China's soft power investments are not as effective as other studies suggest. Instead, this paper suggests that China's image in African nations is most strongly influenced by the media in each country and whether they talk about China in a positive or negative manner.

This paper will proceed as follows: In the first section, I will examine the soft power theory and its issues of categorization, and further break soft power down into two categories, direct and indirect soft economic power. I will provide a definition and examples. In the second

section, I will overview China's soft power and investment in African nations based on the existing literature and construct hypotheses. In the third section, I will discuss the methodology as to how to assess if China's soft power investment generates positive perceptions of China in African nations. In the last section, I will present findings and discuss them in detail.

Chapter 2: Soft Power Theory

This chapter provides a theoretical framework of this study. This chapter is organized as follows: First, I discuss the concept of “soft power” based on the original definition, and present an ambiguity involving in the definition. Second, the boundary between soft economic power and hard economic power will be clarified. Lastly, I will break soft economic power into direct and indirect soft power, and provide definitions and examples.

Hard Power and Soft Power

The definition of soft power varies from scholar to scholar, but the term was originally coined by Joseph S. Nye, a political science professor at Harvard University. According to Nye (2004), soft power is “getting others to want the outcomes that you want - co-opts people rather than coerces them” and it “rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others” (p.5). Moreover, “It is also the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence. Simply put, in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft-power resources are the assets that produce such attraction” (Nye, 2004, p.6). He argues that there are three main soft power resources: culture, political values, and foreign policy (Nye, 2004). Among scholars, the most common definition of soft power seems to be the ability to get what one wants through attraction, rather than coercion or payments (Blanchard & Lu, 2012; Cho & Jeong, 2008; Gill & Huang, 2006; Wilson, 2008). Based on Nye’s definition and the most commonly agreed definition by scholars, soft power can be defined as the ability to attract others to align with another country. It is the ability to win the hearts of people and influence peoples’ preferences in a positive way.

Soft power is a powerful means to achieve foreign policy goals due to its nature described above. It makes it easier for a country to achieve political and economic objectives in

the international arena. When citizens in country A have a favorable view toward country B, it is easier for the government of country B to get political support or promote trade in country A. During the Cold War era, America's soft power played a significant role in achieving its foreign policy goals. For instance, it is argued that the Soviet scientists who visited the U.S. brought back political ideas together with scientific knowledge and "became leading proponents of human rights and liberalization inside the Soviet Union" (Nye, 2004, p.45). Similarly, besides America's soft power through educational exchange, its popular culture contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall: "The hammers and bulldozers would not have worked without the years-long transmission of images of the popular culture of the West that breached the Wall before it fell" (Nye, 2004, p.49). Furthermore, in the post-Cold War era, "the half of the leaders in the coalition against terrorism were once exchange visitors" in American cultural and academic exchange programs (Nye, 2004, p.110). Therefore, soft power is a strong force in international politics despite its "soft" designation. The notion of soft power was created in comparison with hard power.

The definition of soft power becomes clearer when it is compared to hard power. Hard power can be broken down into two kinds: military power and economic power (Nye, 2004). Soft power attracts others to align with another country, whereas hard power coerces or induces others to align with another country (Nye, 2004). Hard power can take the form of threats or force, payments, and sanctions (Nye, 2004). According to Nye (2004), coercive diplomacy, war, and alliance are types of government policies that are categorized as military power; aid, bribes and sanctions are policies that are categorized as economic power. On the other hand, public diplomacy and bilateral and multilateral diplomacy is soft power (Nye, 2004). Although the definition of soft power looks clearer when compared to hard power, it is still a vague definition

in the sense that it can be seen as anything that is not hard power. Further, due to its broad notion and loose definition, even the boundary between hard power and soft power becomes blurry in some cases.

Although the distinction between military power and soft power is relatively straightforward, a boundary becomes blurry when it comes to the distinction between economic power and soft power. Soft power should not involve any threats or exchanges (Nye, 2004). What if an aid or payment was given without any exchanges taking place? For example, many developed nations, including the United States, England and China, give out scholarships for students from other countries to study in the donor country. However, the donor government usually does not require or ask students to do any favor in return. Even though the donor government does not ask students to align with them, the fact that students receive scholarships from them, in addition to the experience itself that the students have in the donor country, brings a positive image of the donor country to the recipient. In this case, should scholarships be excluded from the category of soft power and categorized under economic power, along with bribes and sanctions? The following section addresses this issue and clarifies the boundary between economic power and soft power.

Soft Economic Power

Currently many things fall under the category of soft power: from pop-culture, governments' policies to educational investment. Due to the broad notion and loose definition, the boundary between soft power and economic power is not clear. Some scholars argue that Nye originally excluded aid and investment from the category of soft power (Kurlantzick, 2009; Varrall, 2012). It is true that Nye initially categorized aid and payments as economic power (Nye, 2004). However, some forms of aid or payments have the characteristics of soft power

(attraction) rather than economic power (inducement). Good examples are humanitarian aid or investment in education.

Humanitarian aid has the characteristics of soft power rather than economic power. Humanitarian aid is where the donor country does not request recipient countries to provide something in return. It is given out with the donor country's generosity to support the recipient country. This possibly creates a good will among people in the recipient country. That means that it does not induce the recipients to go along with the donor's purposes by payments. However, it can attract people in the recipient countries by giving them a good impression or positive image by helping them out of kindness. In this case, humanitarian aid is not economic power that induces or coerces others. Rather it has characteristics of soft power that provides positive perceptions of donor country to people.

Similarly, as for an investment in education, it is not the investment (payment) itself that influences peoples' view, but the contents of education that the country offers through investment that possibly attracts people in the recipient countries. Educational investments include scholarships, teaching languages, dispatching teachers, creating materials, and so on. However, it can also be cultural values or interactions embedded education experience that attracts people. Public diplomacy² that is categorized under soft power includes scholarship as a means to develop relationships with key individuals. Thus, educational investment does not seem to fit in the category of hard power.

Education in general where government provides support for foreign students may be

² Public diplomacy can be defined as “interactions aimed not only at foreign governments but primarily with nongovernmental individuals and organizations, and often presented as a variety of private views in addition to government views” (Nye, 2004, p.107). Public diplomacy has three aspects: (1) daily communications, (2) strategic communications, (3) development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels (Nye, 2004, pp.107-110).

counted as soft power. Educational aid or education in general, categorized under soft power, becomes more convincing when it comes to higher education. Nye also confirms the association between higher education and soft power by stating that “many observers agree that American higher education produces significant soft power for the United States” (Nye, 2005, p.13). For example, “academic and cultural exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union, starting in the 1950s, played a significant role in enhancing American soft power” (Nye, 2005, p.14). When students in higher education learn the language, cultures, and values of another country through the educational projects supported by foreign aid or investment, it is almost impossible not to be attracted or at least influenced by them. Therefore, higher education possesses the elements of soft power.

The previous literature discusses this matter of whether certain aid, payments, or investments should be counted as soft power. For instance, one points out this indistinct line between economic power and soft power by stating that “any non-military action such as investment deals is branded ‘soft’, obscuring theoretical differences between inducements and attraction” (Yee-Kuang, 2010, p.279-280). Some scholars argue that Nye originally excluded aid and payments from the soft power definition (Kurlantzick, 2009; Varrall, 2012; Yee-Kuang, 2010), whereas other studies suggest these reflect soft power. For example, as cited by Yee-Kuang (2010), the US Congressional Research Service includes all the following resources into soft power: “international trade, overseas investments, development assistance, diplomatic initiatives, cultural influence, humanitarian aid, travel and tourism” (p.279). Moreover, as cited by Yee-Kuang (2010), Nye stated that “a strong economy provides resource not only for sanctions and payments but can also be a source of attractiveness” (p.280). This reveals the ambiguity within the literature and “it seems difficult to maintain a strict theoretical distinction

between attraction and inducement” (Yee-Kuang, 2010, p.290). However, there is some agreement that investment and payments can be included in soft power. Given that economic resources have the ability to attract people, under which circumstances should economic influence be considered to be attraction, not inducement?

There is a way to distinguish soft power (attraction) from economic power (inducement). Blanchard & Lu (2012) provides clear definitions of hard economic power and soft economic power. According to Blanchard & Lu (2012), certain kinds of payments can be considered as soft power. The type of payment that is included into soft power is non-conditional payments or loans with no strings attached (Blanchard & Lu, 2012). In contrast, conditional payments are excluded from soft power and are best described as (1) the payments that come with conditions or (2) the payments that implicitly request something in return (Blanchard & Lu, 2012). This study adopts this definition and calls the former (non-conditional payments) “soft economic power” and the latter (conditional payments) “hard economic power”. According to this definition, what distinguishes soft economic power from hard economic power is whether the payments are accompanied by conditions or exchanges.

One example of the payments that come with conditions is Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Under SAPs, countries who receive loans from World Bank or IMF were required to conform to some economic policies such as privatization of state-owned industries or increase of free trade (World Health Organization, 2016). According to the definition provided above, structural adjustment loans with economic conditions are not considered soft economic power. Similarly, one example of the payments that request something in return is as follows. If a country gives aid to another country in exchange for natural resources, then the payments require something in return. This is

not soft economic power but hard economic power. Yet, if a country gives humanitarian aid to another country without any kinds of conditions or exchanges involved, then it is soft economic power.

Educational investment is considered to be a kind of soft power. Good examples of educational investments are the British Council of the UK, Goethe Institute of Germany, Alliance Française of France, and Confucius Institute of China. These countries' governments support the educational investments that convey their own languages and cultures to people in another country. Especially, China's Confucius Institute (CI) is often discussed in relation to soft power. Many scholars and journalists consider Confucius Institute to be soft power, although it is funded by the Chinese government, because it does not require students to provide something in exchange for learning Chinese languages and cultures.

Based on the literature, humanitarian aid and educational investment can be categorized as soft power under certain conditions. This is considered soft power unless the country utilizes these to induce another country through conditions or request into an economic or trade exchange. Clearly distinguishing soft from hard economic power will contribute much to the study of international relations. Although it is sometimes useful to have a broad definitions that provides a universal framework for, it is also important to have a more nuanced definition that can be applied to several in-depth case studies and analysis.

There have been previous attempts to disaggregate soft power. For example, one study broke it down into "high soft power" and "low soft power" based on the recipient or target (Kurlantzick, 2006). High soft power is targeted at elites, whereas low soft power is targeted at the broader public (Kurlantzick, 2006). Similarly, there can be different sources for a nation's

soft power such as public (state/government) or private sectors (Yee-Kuang, 2010)³. For instance, it is very clear that Japan's anime and manga, Korea's K-pop, or Hollywood movies of the U.S. are the great sources of soft power for these nations, and this kind of soft power is usually generated by private sectors. Whereas, investing in iconic and visible infrastructure, providing scholarships to bring foreign students into the country or adopting attractive foreign policy are types of soft power provided by government agencies. In other words, the states have more control over the latter kind of soft power than the former kind of soft power.

This distinction between state-led and private-sector-led soft power also gives an additional rationale as to why it is critical to distinguish soft economic power from other kinds of soft power. Since soft economic power refers to governmental aid or investment, it is generally classified public sectors (state/government). Since soft economic power is more likely to reflect government's intention in wielding soft power, it is easier for scholars to observe countries' soft power strategies from soft economic power than from soft power led by private sectors⁴. Moreover, unlike private-sector-led soft power, where states have less control or choose not to have control, soft economic power is a more useful tool for the states to achieve foreign policy goals. Since states are the main actor in wielding this kind of soft power, it is easier for them to connect it to their desirable foreign policy goals. In conclusion, distinguishing soft economic power from others could be a significant contribution to the study of soft power for the reasons described above.

³ Yee-Kuang (2010) argues that China's soft power is state-led, whereas Japan's soft power is largely led by private sector.

⁴ Although some countries could adopt a strategy, by which they purposely do not involve in private sector's soft power promotion. Private sector's lead might be more successful in promoting one's soft power in a sense that it does not give an audience an impression of propaganda.

Direct and Indirect Soft Power

Although the boundary between hard economic power and soft economic power was clearly distinguished, even within soft economic power, there is wide range of topics. The division in the soft power literature seems to fall along two lines; direct economic investment such as soccer stadiums, hospitals and schools versus indirect economic investment such as academic scholarships or language teaching.

Thus, I argue that soft power can be further broken down into two categories: direct soft power and indirect soft power. Among many resources that can be categorized as soft power, there should be a distinction between (1) the ones that involve direct payment from one government to another (or institution) to build humanitarian projects versus (2) indirect investments in individuals and professionals for scholarships and training including non-monetary cultural influences. Direct soft power is institutional investment, and involves direct investment in infrastructure or institutions from one government to another and does not require any conditions or ask anything in return either implicitly or explicitly. Indirect soft power is individual investment, and involves investment in the individual through scholarship or professional development programs. Examples of direct soft power include building schools and hospitals, while examples of indirect soft power include scholarships to study in the donor countries or teaching languages or culture in recipient countries.

Table 1. Distinction between Direct and Indirect Soft Power

Type of soft power	Direct soft power	Indirect soft power
Definition	Monetary investment in Institutions	Monetary investment in individuals and professionals
Examples	Constructing buildings/infrastructure (Hospitals/Stadiums/Schools)	Scholarships (Students exchange) Language teaching

Source: Author

There are significant distinctions between direct and indirect soft power, especially in the scope, size and long term impact of the investment projects. Although direct soft power (building iconic and visible infrastructures such as soccer stadiums or hospitals) seems to have a broader influence since it attracts the general public's attention, it is unclear whether the projects will have a lasting positive influence on the public. Indirect soft power (such as investing in individuals through scholarships) may only target one person at a time, but it can have long term influence on the individual. For instance, a foreign government builds a rural primary school in a town with 100 villagers. The villagers may acknowledge construction of school in the short term, but majority of people might not remember who funded the school 20 years later. On the other hand, a person receiving a scholarship from a foreign government and studied abroad in the donor country may remember and appreciate the experience for the rest of their life. Thus, it is fair to say that direct soft power aims for rather explicit and quick impression on a broader audience, while indirect soft power aims to influence the individual's view in the long term.

Furthermore, it is easier to ensure that indirect soft power reaches a narrow audience, while direct soft power targets a broader audience that may or may not achieve the intended

positive results. For instance, the visibility of infrastructure investment can become weaker when the country's population is large (Austin & Harris, 2001). Moreover, Austin & Harris (2001) argue in the context of Japan's aid to China⁵, Japan's aid did not work well to create goodwill amongst Chinese citizens, "in part because the ODA⁶ program has concentrated on building things (railways, bridges, airports and dams) and not on institutional enhancement or personal training" (p.158). This suggests that even though investing in visible infrastructure seems to be a quick way to attract a broad audience, it might be more difficult to ensure that its impact is reaching the target.

However, infrastructure investment can be either hard economic power or direct soft power. Some infrastructure projects reflect hard economic power that is directly connected to the donor country's economic motives or asks something in return, either implicitly or explicitly. In the context of China's investment in African nations, Lengauer (2011) relates infrastructure investment to trade and resource. In relation to trade, it is argued that "most projects served the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of transportation of goods to (and in the future also increase imports from) China" (Lengauer, 2011, p.60). Similarly, in relation to natural resources, it is claimed that China is paying for the natural resources, "mostly in form of donating infrastructure projects that create a basis for a stable economy" (Lengauer, 2011, p. 70). For example, the El-Gaili Power Plant in Sudan and the gas turbine power plant in Nigeria were funded by the Chinese government in exchange for natural resources as a payment (Foster,

⁵ "Between 1979 and 2005, Japan transferred 3.13 trillion yen to China in loan aid (yen loans), 145.7 billion yen in grant aid, and 144.6 billion yen in technical cooperation and became thus China's greatest bilateral ODA donor for many years" (Drifte, 2006, p.94). Japan's aid to China was seen as unofficial war reparation (Austin & Harris, 2001). For the Japanese government, it was also to foster friendly environment toward Japan in China and to pursue some economic interests in China (Austin & Harris, 2001).

⁶ ODA = Official Development Assistant

Butterfield, & Chen, 2009). These infrastructure projects, mainly in the sectors of energy and transport such as railways, roads, dams, airports or power plants, have characteristics of hard economic power.

On the other hand, some infrastructure projects reflect humanitarianism that derives from donors' generosity and contributes to institutional enhancement. For instance, constructing schools, hospitals, conference centers, housing units for low-income citizens and sports stadiums can demonstrate donor countries' humanitarian engagement that may foster goodwill among local citizens. Unless something was asked in exchange for the construction of these projects, these infrastructure projects aim at enhancing local people's lives. In addition, large cultural facilities or sports stadiums are highly visible and iconic to the general public so they appeal more broadly to the domestic audience than roads or railways. Therefore when it comes to direct soft power, attention must be paid to the nature of the projects

In conclusion, based on the different features described above, it is important to make a clear distinction between direct and indirect soft power. This framework of direct and indirect soft power will also help to operationalize soft power. It is essential to define which investments are counted as soft power investments when assessing whether one country's soft power investments actually provides positive perceptions in other countries. This paper will assess whether China's soft power investments produce positive perceptions in African nations while utilizing the framework of direct and indirect soft power. Why are China's soft power investments in African nations worth analyzing? What does China benefit from wielding soft power in African nations? The next chapter will review the existing literatures on China's investments and soft power in African nations and provide background which will be critical for the analysis.

Chapter 3: China's Soft Power and Investment in African Nations

This chapter reviews literatures on China's investment and soft power in African nations. The first section of the chapter will examine the literature on China's soft power. The second section will discuss the volume, history, motives, and criticism of China's investment in African countries. The last section will examine China's soft power in African nations. It will also identify unsolved question about China's soft power in African nations and provide hypotheses of the answer to the question.

China's Soft Power

As we discuss China's soft power, it is essential to first examine how people in China perceive soft power. The notion of soft power has been attracting great attention among Chinese scholars ever since Nye's book *Bound to Lead*, in which the term was coined for the first time, was published in Chinese in 1992 (Cho & Jeong, 2008). Furthermore, Chinese officials also started to show grand interest in the notion of soft power under the Hu administration (Cho & Jeong, 2008). As cited by Ding (2010), in 2007 President Hu gave a speech at the 17th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress and said:

Culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength ... We must enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests. (p.264)

Thus, it is clear that Chinese scholars and officials recognize the concept of soft power. However, the question is if they are defining soft power as others do.

Chinese scholars and officials are thought to have a broader definition of soft power. It was already mentioned that Nye originally excluded aid and investment from the category of soft

power in the previous section (Kurlantzick, 2006, 2009; Varrall, 2012). However Chinese scholars and officials do not seem to conform to that narrow definition. Kurlantzick (2009) argues that Chinese officials and scholars refer to all types of power outside of military and security fields; hence they include economic power such as aid and investment in their idea of soft power as well. Similarly, Varrall (2012) states “Although the meaning is still contested, one understanding of soft power now widely understood in Chinese academic and political circles, according to one Chinese academic, is ‘the ability to win the hearts of the people and of the world’” (p.139). Therefore, Chinese academics and officials see soft power as any kinds of non-lethal power and an ability to attract other people. According to this perception, soft economic power is soft power not hard power without questions in Chinese discourse of soft power.

While soft power is a hot topic within China among scholars and officials, how China wields soft power is probably more of an appealing topic outside of China. Although soft power was first coined mainly in relation to the U.S., China’s soft power seems to be attracting the most attention within the literature. If you type “soft power” on Google Scholar, as of October 2015, among the first 30 articles that come up in the first three pages, 10 articles include “China” in their titles. The prominent literatures in this field can be sorted into three categories: (1) arguing China’s soft power is a threat to the U.S. or current power balance of the world, (2) counter-arguing that China’s soft power is not a threat or still weak, and (3) examining the resources and weak points of China’s soft power.

First, along with the China threat argument⁷, its soft power is also perceived as a threat to the U.S. or current hegemonic order. For example, it is argued that China is increasing its

⁷ The China threat argument debates whether China will be a threat to the U.S. in terms of economy and world’s power order, and is named after the book by Bill Gertz published in 2000, *The China Threat: The Plan to Defeat America*. (d’Hooghe, 2005).

influence in Southeast Asia through soft power and it is driving the U.S., Japan, and Taiwan out of the region (Kurlantzick, 2006). Further, China's soft power undermines democratization and good governance, since it supports authoritarian regimes and also provides a development model which does not involve political reform (Kurlantzick, 2006). The change in regional order caused by China's influence is not limited to Southeast Asia. According to one media report, the trip that Hillary Clinton took to several African countries in 2012 is also thought to reduce the political and economic influence of China in the region (Smith, 2012). Increasing influence of China's soft power is often feared in terms that it potentially changes the power balance in some regions, especially undercutting the influence of the U.S.

Media articles tend to project rivalry of Chinese and American soft power. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a China-led development bank which was established in 2015, and its purpose is to provide funding for infrastructure projects in the Asia-Pacific region (BBC News, 2015; Watt, Lewis, & Branigan, 2015). It is considered to be a vehicle for China to spread its soft power and a rival of US-based World Bank (BBC News, 2015; Watt et al., 2015). The China-US soft power rivalry is also projected in the article titles such as *US beats China in soft power stakes* or *Soft Power: A U.S.-China Battleground* (Chiu, 2013; Dynon, 2013). Although soft power, which attracts and co-opts people, does not necessarily work in zero-sum game, China's soft power has been provoking unease in international politics as its economy grows in that it potentially contributes to the shift of current hegemonic order.

Second, some counter-argue that China's soft power is not a threat to the U.S. or current hegemonic order or it might not even be an intentional strategy. Some suggest that labeling China's soft power as a threat to the U.S. may be one sided when China's participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) is considered (Suzuki, 2009). Since United Nations

Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) works to promote democracy in countries affected by conflicts, China's participation in UNPKO is a soft power strategy targeted at the West (Suzuki, 2009). In addition, there is also an argument that China gaining soft power through aid is unintentional. This is still a debate within China whether soft power is beneficial since not all of China's elite think soft power is effective and also the mechanism of aid implementation in China is too complex to have a unified policy to use aid as soft power (Varrall, 2012). While some argue that China's soft power discourse is more complex than being seen as a planned strategy to undercut other nations' influence, others argue that China's soft power itself is weak.

Besides the complexity of China's soft power, another reason why it cannot be a threat to the U.S. or current world order is that China's soft power is weak. For instance, Huang and Ding (2006) argue that China's soft power is weak because of its incoherent multiple foreign policy goals and weak soft power resources. Furthermore, Nye also argues that China's soft power is weak, because China is oppressing the cultural activities of civil society domestically (Nye, 2012a, 2012b). The examples include the jailing of Liu Xiaobo (writer, human rights activist and Nobel peace prize winner) and the artist Ai Weiwei (Nye, 2012a, 2012b). Interestingly, most of the criticism is directed at China rather than the recipient countries that receive China's investments and aid. Soft power is an attractive power. In order to examine whether China's soft power actually provide positive perceptions of China abroad, it should be first identified what are considered to be China's soft power.

Third, the literature also examines the source of China's soft power. The most common source seems to be culture, the Beijing Consensus, and foreign policy. As one of the world's oldest civilization, many agree that China's traditional culture is a huge asset for China's soft power (Cho & Jeong, 2008; d'Hooghe, 2005; Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006). Its

traditional culture involves Asian values (mainly represented by Confucianism) that China has been trying to advocate as its central ideology as a replacement of its socialist ideology (Cho & Jeong, 2008). China has been also systematically strengthening this soft power resource through Confucius Institute (CI) (Paradise, 2009). CI is governed by its headquarters, Hanban, in Beijing. Hanban is “a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education” (Hanban, 2016). Much like British Council of England, the Goethe Institut of Germany, and Alliance Française of France, CI’s mission is to promote Chinese language and culture overseas (Huang & Ding, 2006; Paradise, 2009). CI as a soft power instrument is also claimed to have a political motive to teach “Beijing’s preferred version of Chinese” (Gill & Huang, 2006, p.18) that is Mandarin Chinese and simplified Chinese characters as opposed to traditional Chinese character used in Taiwan (Gill & Huang, 2006; Paradise, 2009). It also provides readings that contains Beijing’s view (Gill & Huang, 2006) and all the teaching materials are to be provided by its head quarter (Paradise, 2009). Therefore, scholars and journalists often argue CI is a vehicle for the Chinese government to wield soft power.

In addition to its traditional culture, Beijing Consensus is also a commonly named soft power resource of China. Beijing Consensus is a term coined by Joshua Cooper Ramo⁸ (Cho & Jeong, 2008; Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006), which refers to an economic development model that focuses on a country’s own characteristics rather than consistent solution (Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006). In other words, it can be interpreted as an economic development model that does not require a reform of political system, since China achieved its development without democratizing its political system. Although Chinese

⁸ The term was coined by “Joshua Cooper Ramo, a senior advisor to the investment firm Goldman Sachs and adjunct professor at Tsinghua University, in a research report entitled *Beijing Consensus* published in May 2004 at the Foreign Policy Center (affiliated with the British prime minister’s office)” (Cho & Jeong, 2008, p.461).

government never used this term officially (Gill & Huang, 2006), possibly in fear of contributing to the China threat argument, Chinese scholars has been trying to promote this Chinese model of economic development emphasizing the difference from the East Asian development state model of Japan, Korea, and Taiwan (Cho & Jeong, 2008). Beijing Consensus seems to be a stronger soft power resource in other developing regions such as Africa and Latin America (Cho & Jeong, 2008; Ellis, 2011; Thompson, 2005). In Latin America, it is claimed that business opportunities, along with Beijing Consensus and infrastructure projects, are the strongest soft power for China, whereas culture is the weakest soft power resource (Ellis, 2011). In Africa, along with Beijing Consensus, financial support for infrastructure projects and education (including scholarships and vocational training) seem to be prominent soft power resource (Ding, 2008, 2010; Thompson, 2005). This matter of China's investment and its soft power in African nations will be examined more in detail in the next section.

Foreign policy as a soft power resource includes participation in international organizations and institutions as well as good neighbor policies (Cho & Jeong, 2008; Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006). Increased participation in international organization, regional organization, and UN Peacekeeping Operations help China to give a good impression as a responsible and cooperative nation (Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006). Good neighbor policies can be seen in its effort to settle territorial disputes (Gill & Huang, 2006) and its “peaceful rise theory”⁹, “peaceful development theory”¹⁰, “harmonious world”¹¹ concept (Cho

⁹ The peaceful rise theory was coined by Zheng Bijian, senior foreign policy advisor of President Hu, in 2003 (Cho & Jeong, 2008).

¹⁰ President Hu Jintao and the premier Wen Jiabao replaced the word “rise” with “development” in 2004 in response to China threat argument (Cho & Jeong, 2008).

¹¹ “Harmonious world” concept was introduced by President Hu in 2005 to express the international order which China thinks is ideal (Ding, 2008).

& Jeong, 2008). They are targeted at its neighboring countries and aims to win their acceptance of its rise with eliminating their fear toward its rise (Cho & Jeong, 2008).

Along with the resources of China's soft power described above, the existing literature also examines what are the weak points of China's soft power. People in other countries might find China unappealing because of weak cultural products, failure in domestic social development, tie with dictators, strong nationalist sentiments (Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006), as well as issues of human rights, minority, and unification (Taiwan) (d'Hooghe, 2005). Although China's traditional culture is a strong asset for its soft power, Chinese cultural products such as cultural icons, movies or brand names are still not as well-known as those of the U.S., Europe, and Japan (Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006). Moreover, despite its successful economic development, a lag and inequality in domestic social development such as education and health care reduce the attractiveness of China's soft power (Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006). Furthermore, despite its good neighbor policy, strong national sentiment can decrease its popularity in its neighboring countries (Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006).

China's Investment in African Nations

China's investment in African nations has been rapidly increasing in the last 15 years through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). FOCAC was established in 2000 and ministerial conferences are held every three years in Beijing or in one of the African member cities (FOCAC, 2013). Member states are China, African states that have diplomatic ties with Beijing, and the commission of African Union (FOCAC, 2013). Every conference adopts an action plan that announces the content of cooperation between China and Africa and the content of China's pledges for assistance and investment in the next three years. The content of

cooperation varies from political and economical to cultural (FOCAC, 2013). The expanding engagement between African countries and China through FOCAC can be clearly seen in the amount of trade. The trade between Africa and China increased by approximately 32 times from pre-FOCAC 1999 (US\$ 6.5 billion) to 2013 (US\$ 210 billion) (China Data Online, 2001, 2014). In addition, China became Africa's largest trade partner in 2009 (Information Office of the State Council, 2013). Not only did the trade increase, but China's aid to African countries also increased in the last 15 years.

However, it is difficult to estimate the amount of aid that China gives to African countries. The estimated amount of aid that China provides to African nations greatly differs from one source to another. For instance, according to Brautigam (2009), China's aid to African countries increased by approximately 4 times from 2001 (US\$ 303 million) to 2009 (US\$ 1.4 billion). On the other hand, according to the Congressional Research Service Report, China's aid to Africa increased by nearly 1800 times from 2002 (US\$ 10 million) to 2007 (US\$ 18 billion) (Lum, Fischer, Gomez-Granger, & Leland, 2009). Other sources' estimates also vary from US\$1 billion to US\$3 billion (Lengauer, 2011; Lum et al., 2009). What explains this large discrepancy among various sources on China's aid volume estimation?

There are a few reasons why the figures for China's aid volume are unclear. First of all, China is generally secretive about its aid investments (Brautigam, 2009; Lengauer, 2011). Even when there are some figures published (Brautigam, 2009), China does not follow the definition of aid used by the traditional donors¹² that makes it hard to calculate an exact estimation. In addition, there are many agencies, from various ministries to China Export-Import Bank (Exim

¹² All the members of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) follow the definition of aid created by OECD in 1960, which is called Official Development Assistance (Lengauer, 2011).

Bank), that are involved in China's aid management, making report and analysis more difficult (Lengauer, 2011). These factors described above contribute to the large discrepancy in the estimation of China's aid volume. Especially, China's secrecy about its aid volume presents a great difficulty to the researchers of China's aid.

What are the reasons why China is secretive about its aid? There are few possibilities. First, if the exact figures of aid are published, the Chinese government is afraid of the possible situation in which some recipient countries demand the same amount of aid other countries received (Lengauer, 2011). Second, revealing the large figures of aid that China gives to other countries could rouse criticism from its domestic audience (Brautigam, 2009; Lengauer, 2011). When "many people within China believe that China itself is poor and should probably not be giving funds to other countries" (Brautigam, 2009, p.166), it is difficult for the Chinese government to publicly announce the amount of aid it is providing. In many ways, no matter which estimation is referred to, it is clear that China's aid to African countries has been increasing. Furthermore, China allocates the largest amount of aid to the African region, according to China's white paper on its foreign aid published in 2011 (45.7% of China's overall aid was given to Africa in 2009) (Information Office of the State Council, 2011). Why does China give increasingly large amounts of aid to faraway lands while there is even possibility to provoke domestic criticism?

Examining China's diplomatic history with African nations may address the motives. The level of engagement and the motives behind the aid shifted over time. In 50s and 60s, the Chinese government utilized foreign assistance in African countries to spread communist (Maoist) ideology and to acquire a seat in the United Nations (which was held by Taiwan at that time) (Ding, 2008; Kragelund, 2008; Lengauer, 2011; Niu, 2013; Varrall, 2012). After the

Cultural Revolution, China's aid decreased because it had to focus on domestic economic development (Njal, 2012; Varrall, 2012). Between 1979 and 1989, the number of recipient countries also decreased from 29 to 13 (Kragelund, 2008). What provoked a change to that situation was the Tiananmen incident in 1989 (Kragelund, 2008; Varrall, 2012). Under the pressure and sanctions from developed nations, foreign assistance became an important tool again for China to gain support in the African region (Kragelund, 2008; Varrall, 2012). China's overall foreign assistance almost doubled from 1991 (RMB 1.6 billion) to 1994 (RMB 3 billion), most of which was concentrated in the African region (Varrall, 2012). Thus, foreign assistance has been an important tool for China to gain ideological and political allies. While previous motives had been political, current motives are economically driven.

China's increasing investment in African countries in the last 15 years is thought to be driven by two economic motives: natural resources and export market. The most common explanation is that China needs natural resources (Cooke, 2009; Ding, 2008; Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006; Lengauer, 2011; Liang, 2012; Lum et al., 2009). As of 2014, China was the world's-largest net oil importer (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2015), and 30% of China's overall oil imports are from Africa (Cooke, 2009; Lengauer, 2011). Oil also accounts for 80% of China's trade in the African region (Lum et al., 2009). Further, it is claimed that 70% of China's infrastructure investment in the African region goes to oil rich countries such as Angola, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Sudan (Lum et al., 2009). In addition, China invested in several infrastructure projects in exchange for natural resources as a payment, which includes the El-Gaili Power Plant in Sudan and the gas turbine power plant in Nigeria (Foster et al., 2009). Due to all the resource-related activities, the word "exploitation" often appears as a criticism of

China's engagement in African countries (BBC News, 2014; Finighan, 2014). However, there is also a counterargument that China's investment is not only for oil.

Despite the large amount of arguments that China's investment in African countries is driven by needs for natural resources, there is also an argument that it is not all about resources. According to Brautigam (2009), China gives aid to all the African countries which do not recognize Taiwan. In addition, it even does not give more aid to resource rich countries (Brautigam, 2009). Further, there are infrastructure projects which are not related to natural resources (Brautigam, 2009). Furthermore, Brautigam (2009) argues that it is not all about natural resources, but rather about generating business in various sectors from contracts for infrastructure to exports of goods. This leads to the discussion of another motive of China: cultivation of the export market.

Besides the needs for natural resources, China's investment is also thought to aim to cultivate export market for Chinese products. African countries are seen as a new consumer market for China's manufacturing goods (Cooke, 2009; Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006; Lengauer, 2011; Liang, 2012; Lum et al., 2009). "Basic goods manufactured in China are well suited for the African market as they are sold at very low prices and are of satisfactory quality" (Lengauer, 2011, p.58). In fact, China invests in transport infrastructure not only to make it quicker to bring natural resources to China (by connecting mining location to the coast), but also to make it easier to distribute Chinese products (Lengauer, 2011). This motive is already reflected in the actual numbers; in the majority of the African countries, China exported more than imported as of 2013 (China Data Online, 2014). For instance, China's export accounts for 98% and 96% of overall trade with Kenya and Senegal respectively as of 2013 (China Data

Online, 2014). As a consequence, the trade imbalance is becoming a problem between China and some African countries.

The trade imbalance is starting to cause resentment in some African countries. According to Liang (2012), “China enjoys complementary trade with those natural resources-rich countries, including Angola and Sudan, but has conflicting trade interests with countries that also export manufactured products” (p.682). As a result of resentment against trade imbalance with China, trade unions in South Africa protested against China’s cheap imports that led to President Thabo Mbeki’s negotiation with China’s Premier Wen Jiaobao to decrease China’s textile exports to South Africa (Cooke, 2009). Similarly, Nigeria also banned import of 41 Chinese products, including textiles, shoes, and suitcases (Liang, 2012). Under these circumstances, China’s investment in African countries is sometimes criticized as “new-colonialism” (Grammaticas, 2012; Mbaye, 2011; Quinn & Heinrich, 2011). Facing the criticism of exploitation and new-colonialism against its economic activities, soft power investment in African countries becomes more and more important for the Chinese government. China’s soft power investment in African countries will be discussed in the next section.

Besides the criticism of exploitation and new-colonialism, China’s engagement in African nations is also accused of supporting authoritarian governments. For instance, China blocked the effort of the U.S. to put sanctions on the Sudanese government for the Darfur genocide (Ding, 2008; Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006). In addition, China helped the dictator Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, who suppressed the opposition parties with violence, to stay in power by providing assistance before election (Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006). Naím (2007) describes China’s aid as “rogue aid”, defined as “development assistant that is nondemocratic in origin and nontransparent in practice; its effect is typically to stifle real progress while hurting

average citizens” (Naím, 2007, p.96). Similarly, another criticizes that China’s aid increases political violence because China’s aid becomes a financial source for the government leaders to oppress opposition parties or citizens (Kishi & Raleigh, 2015). Democratic donor countries’ resentment toward China does not only stem from its support to authoritarian regimes but also from its aid policy which hinders their attempt to promote democracy through aid systems.

China is also accused of undermining the effort of international communities to foster good governance and democracy on the continent. China’s aid that does not require the recipient government to have good governance is thought to hurt international society’s effort to promote good governance and democracy (Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006). China does not require recipient countries to conform to political liberty or good governance due to its non-interference policy. Non-interference policy means that China does not interfere with other countries’ domestic issues, meaning China does not attach political conditions to its aid that recipient countries have to have good records of human rights or democratic institution (Cooke, 2009; Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006; Thompson, 2005). Other major donors who are democratic avoid assisting authoritarian countries who do not intend to move toward democracy. In other words, they attach political conditions to their aid that recipient countries have to democratize in exchange. Therefore, China is accused of being an alternative source of funds to authoritarian regimes, while they would have been forced to move toward democracy in order to receive funds from other donors.

However, there also seem to be signs that China is changing. For instance, China played a significant role to persuade the Sudanese government to agree on UN-African Union peacekeeping operations in Darfur (Brautigam, 2009; Lengauer, 2011). In addition, China also encouraged the national unity in Zimbabwe after South Africa’s decision to hold back aid until

the formation of a national unity government, which resulted in the formation of a national unity government between Mugabe and the opposition leader (Brautigam, 2009). There is also a counterargument that China's aid is bad for good governance and democracy since not only China but banks and companies from other countries including U.S. and UK also invest in Authoritarian countries (Brautigam, 2009). Further, there are cases in which China supported democracy such as the Chinese ambassador in Sierra Leone encouraging the president to have a peaceful transition after losing in the election (Brautigam, 2009). Furthermore, the lack of political condition of China's aid can hinder international community's effort to foster good governance only if the political conditions actually work (Brautigam, 2009). In many ways, there is still a strong perception that China has a friendly tie with dictators and authoritarian states in Africa.

In addition to the economic motives previously mentioned, there are also political motives behind China's increasing investment in African nations: isolation of Taiwan and support within the international organizations. First, China invests in African countries to prevent or discourage African nations from recognizing Taiwan as an independent country (Brautigam, 2009; Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006; Lengauer, 2011; Lum et al., 2009). China is known for not attaching any political conditions to its aid except for one, compliance to its one-China policy. It can be seen from the fact that China does not give aid to countries that recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state (Brautigam, 2009; Lengauer, 2011). Second, China also utilizes foreign assistance to gain support within the international organization (Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006; Lengauer, 2011; Lum et al., 2009). Since Africa is the largest voting bloc within the United Nations, if African countries vote with China in the international organizations, it will make it easier for China to achieve some of its foreign policy goals.

China's Investment and its Soft Power

Providing positive perceptions through soft power investments in African societies is increasingly becoming important for China in order to continue to acquire natural resources or expand trade on the continent. For instance, trade unions in South Africa protested against China's cheap imports that resulted in President Thabo Mbeki's negotiation with China's Premier Wen Jiabao to reduce China's textile exports to South Africa (Cooke, 2009). Furthermore, in Gabon a group of Gabonese and international nongovernmental organizations criticized SINOPEC (China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation) of falsifying report on environmental impact in an oil related project that resulted in putting an end to the project (Cooke, 2009). Under these circumstances where China can no longer neglect the voice of civil society to pursue its economic objectives such as natural resources or exports of Chinese products, China has increased investment in soft power.

China's soft power in African nations falls along two lines: investment in iconic and visible infrastructure and investment in scholarships and Confucius Institutes. An important point here is that China's soft power in African nations is often associated with official investment of the Chinese government. Ding (2008) states "China is very sophisticated in using its international aids to establish a favorite national image in Africa" (p.200). Similarly, Fijałkowski (2011) argues "In the case of Africa, the primary evident tool of Chinese soft power is development assistance" (p.230). This assures again that separating soft economic power from hard economic power is critical in the discussion of soft power. In sum, China's primary soft power in African countries is soft economic power.

One of China's primary soft power investments is scholarships and Confucius Institute. Scholarship for students to study in China is commonly named as China's soft power projection

in African countries (Brautigam, 2009; Ding, 2008; Provost & Harris, 2013; Thompson, 2005; Tingting, 2014; Yang, 2015). For instance, Brautigam (2009) states that “Scholarships for university study in China have also been an important component of China’s assistance and the projection of China’s “soft power”” (p.121). Similarly, Confucius Institute (CI) is also often referred to as China’s soft power investment in African countries (Bodomo, 2009; Ding, 2008; Kragelund, 2008; Lengauer, 2011; Liang, 2012; Nye, 2012a, 2012b). For instance, Liang (2012) argues that “China’s overseas Confucius Institute are the most visible example of Beijing’s growing soft power” (p.684). These soft power investment falls into the category of indirect soft power as discussed in the section of soft power theory.

China’s investment in indirect soft power has expanded in the last 15 years. The number of scholarships has increased five times in 10 years and the number of CI also grew drastically. The FOCAC held in 2006, Beijing declared to double the number of scholarships from 2,000 to 4,000 per year (FOCAC, 2006). Furthermore, the new pledge in 2015 promises to more than double it again to 30,000 scholarships in the next three years (FOCAC, 2015b). Similarly, since the first CI was established at the University of Nairobi in 2005¹³, CIs have expanded to total of 56 as of 2016 (Hanban, 2016). These astonishing increases of number of scholarships and CI clearly shows China’s attempt to improve indirect soft power in African countries.

Another aspect of China’s soft power investment in African countries can be seen in the various infrastructures which are iconic and highly visible (Bristol, 2011; Ding, 2008, 2010; Fijałkowski, 2011; Nye, 2012a, 2012b; Provost & Harris, 2013). For instance, Ding (2010) states that “Beijing’s financial support has been mainly provided to some iconic infrastructure projects, from new parliament buildings and conference centers to football stadiums and school buildings”

¹³ http://english.hanban.org/confuciousinstitutes/node_10908.htm

(p.269). Similarly, Provost and Harris (2013) names malaria prevention center in Liberia, National School for Visual Arts in Mozambique, and 1,400-seat opera house in Algeria. Furthermore, similar examples in some other countries include Lusaka General Hospital in Zambia, soccer stadium in Mali, and Senegal National Grand Theater (AidData, 2016). This type of soft power investment falls into the category of direct soft power as discussed in the section of soft power theory.

Although it is clear that China is actively investing in soft power in African countries, does it actually generate positive perceptions of China to the people in African countries? A view from an African side on China's engagement tends to be overlooked in both media and scholarly articles. However, soft power investment does not serve its purpose if it does not have positive influence on people's perceptions of China. It seems to be generally believed that China's soft power is working in African nations (Moss, 2013; Yang, 2015). For instance, Yang (2015) states that "This support for education improves China's image, builds grassroots support in local communities, and create a better understanding of China among the educated elites" (p.24). Similarly, Moss (2013) argues China has a favorable image in African nations while it does not look attractive in the West. Then, how can we confirm that people in African countries actually have a favorable view toward China?

There have been attempts to measure the efficacy of China's soft power investments based on various public opinion polls which surveyed China's popularity in multiple countries. The public opinion polls that the China's soft power literature quotes show that people have a favorable view toward China in African countries (Cooke, 2009; Gill & Huang, 2006; Huang & Ding, 2006; Paradise, 2009). Based on the BBC World Service poll conducted in 2004, Huang and Ding (2006) argue that China's soft power is effective in its neighboring countries such as

India and Russia, and Southeast Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African regions, but not so much in Western democracies, South Korea, and Japan. They also support the efficacy of China's soft power by the increasing number of international students studying in China and incoming foreign tourists to China (Huang & Ding, 2006). Paradise (2009) writes China generally has a positive image in developing countries based on the BBC World Service poll and the Pew Global Attitudes Project.

On the other hand, some scholars suggest that China's soft power investment does not provide positive perceptions to general public. They argue that it only works for government officials (elites) and not for civil society (Fijałkowski, 2011; Horta, 2009; Kurlantzick, 2009). For instance, Horta (2009) conducted interviews in the following six countries: Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia, Cape Verde, and Zambia. In the interview, 63 out of 67 officials expressed positive views about China, whereas 73 out of 98 non-government affiliated people expressed negative views (Horta, 2009). Horta (2009) attributes negative view among civil society to Chinese companies not using local labor, large amount of Chinese migrants, and environmental damage China caused. Similarly, Fijałkowski (2011) states "It is hard to evaluate the strength and scope of Chinese soft power in Africa, although it appears to be at best confined to the elites" (p.231). However, the argument that only officials have a favorable view toward China contradicts with the positive result of the public opinion polls.

Still, the increase in indirect soft power should improve China's image throughout Africa especially in countries with CIs and large number of scholarships. Therefore, in this study I test the hypothesis (H1): Indirect soft power provides positive perceptions of China in African nations. Also the rise in direct soft power investment projects should improve China's image. As opposed to indirect soft power, these China's direct soft power projects are highly visible to

broad audience and should result in a more positive perception of China in the population.

Therefore, in this study I test the hypothesis (H2): Direct soft power provides positive perceptions of China in African nations.

The recent BBC World Service poll and the Pew Global Attitudes Survey published in 2014 do show that people in African countries have positive perceptions about China. Their survey results in the bar graphs demonstrate that the percentage of favorable/positive views toward China is generally highest in the African region than in any other regions (BBC World Service, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014). However, it has yet to be shown that the positive results on these public opinion polls were a result of China's soft power investments (i.e. direct causal connection). Besides soft power, there can be numerous factors that influence people's perceptions about a country. For instance, hard economic power (such as investing in roads, railways or governmental buildings to induce government officials to align with China) might also improve civil society's perception. In addition, increasing problems of trade imbalance between some African countries and China could have negative impacts on people's perceptions. Therefore, in this study I test the hypotheses: (H3) Hard economic power provides positive perceptions of China in African nations, and (H4) China's popularity is lower in countries which have more imports from China.

The perception that China has more positive images in authoritarian countries stems from the same logic that it is government officials who like China. In authoritarian countries where citizens' political rights are limited, the freedom of press is usually restricted. That means the government can control media and information. Thus Authoritarian leaders may only allow positive reports on China and present an optimistic view of China's investments. The Senegalese journalist Adama Gaye states that "These dictators find China attractive for its complete package

solution (financial aid, technology compatible solutions, and infrastructure) and they can even argue that the West – and its backed institutions – failed in Africa” (Gaye & Brautigam, 2007). Authoritarian government leaders look to China as an alternative source of finance as opposed to Western countries with conditions attached to loans and aid. .

Comments and statement from African authoritarian leaders seem to confirm this. For instance, as cited by Liang (2012), the president of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe states “We look again to the East, where the sun rises, and no longer to the West, where it sets” (p.685). Similarly, the president of Uganda Yoweri Museveni expresses his preference of China’s assistance to that of World Bank by stating “How can you have structural adjustment without electricity? The Chinese understand the basics” (Kynge, 2014). On the other hand, as cited by Brautigam (2009), Human Rights Watch criticizes China’s financial support to dictators by stating that “China’s growing foreign aid program creates new options for dictators who were previously dependent on those who insisted on human rights progress” (p.284). While authoritarian leaders from African countries express their fondness toward China’s leaders, China also shows its support by protecting them from sanctions and providing financial assistance.

Indeed China has provided direct support for authoritarian governments and this has influenced the leaders and the public perception. For instance, China awarded Mugabe a Chinese version of Nobel peace prize (Confucius peace prize) in 2015 (Phillips, 2015). Furthermore, China funded the construction of presidential palace in Burundi and Sudan and Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Equatorial Guinea and Rwanda (AidData, 2016); all of these countries are considered to be not politically free by Freedom House as of 2016. When government’s leaders rely on China, they are likely to convey positive information about China’s engagement with the county and citizens. In authoritarian regimes where citizens have limited

access to information under media control, civil society's perception about China should be positive. Under this logic, whether civil society has positive perceptions about China depends on African countries' regime types rather than China's soft power investment. Therefore, in this study I test the hypothesis (H5): China's popularity is higher in authoritarian countries.

Many articles and reports tend to look Africa as a whole, and variation among African countries have been neglected. There are more than 50 countries on the African continent, from democratic countries to authoritarian countries. In addition, China invests more in some countries than the others. If it is China's soft power or hard economic power investments that are influencing people's view in a positive manner, countries where China invests more should have more positive perceptions about China. It is true that African countries generally tend to have higher percentage of favorable view toward China, when the BBC and pew public opinion polls are referred (BBC World Service, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014). Yet variation among various African countries, from democracy to authoritarian, should be taken into consideration.

In conclusion, the question of whether China's soft power investment produces positive perceptions of China in African nations has yet to be solved. First and most importantly, not Africa as a whole but variation between each African country should be examined. By comparing from country to country, it becomes clearer the high percentage of favorable views on public opinion polls is a result of China's investment. If it is China's investment that is influencing people's view in a positive manner, countries where China invests more should have higher percentage of favorable views. Furthermore, it has to be tested which factors affect the percentage of favorable views: direct/indirect soft power or hard economic power. Second, it has to be attested that China enjoys higher popularity in authoritarian countries as commonly argued. Third, it has to be examined whether percentage of favorable views toward China is lower in the

countries which imports from China more than it exports to China. As discussed in the previous section, China's export products are thought to be causing resentment in some African nations. Considering the second and third factors can test the possibilities that it might not be China's investment but other interfering factors that have influence on people's perception of China. The next chapter will explain how I will address the question of: Does China's soft power investment actually produce positive perceptions of China in African nations?

Chapter 4: Methods

This chapter describes the methods this study uses to examine whether China's soft power produces positive perceptions in African countries. The chapter proceeds as follows: First, I explain the method I use for the analysis (comparative case study method), and detail the method I use to evaluate the quantitative data collected for each variable (descriptive statistical method). Second, I present the cases selected for the study based on a purposeful sample. Finally, I provide conceptual, variable, and operational definition of each dependent, independent, and control variable.

I use the comparative case study method to evaluate the influence of China's soft power on citizen perceptions in African countries. If China's soft power investment produces positive perceptions of China in African countries, then countries where China invests in soft power more should have a higher percentage of favorable views toward China. Moreover, I expect a more positive influence from direct than indirect soft power. The comparative case study approach is best suited for this study because it allows the research to systematically compare a wide range of causal factors that can influence favorable perceptions of China. I also incorporate the descriptive statistical method to evaluate the quantitative data. The quantitative and qualitative data are presented in tables at the national level of analysis. All the data from the number of Confucius Institutes to the aggregation of public opinion is at the national level. The country cases are based on a purposeful sample of 11 African countries: Ghana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, Tunisia, South Africa, and Egypt. These 11 African country cases are selected based on a variation of key variables, such as level of democracy and proportion of imports from China. I chose a purposeful sample rather than a random sample in order to control specific variables.

In this study, the dependent variable is perceptions of China. The two key independent variables are direct and indirect soft power, and the three control variables are hard economic power, trade and level of democracy. The conceptual definition of the dependent variable is the perceptions of China. The variable definition is a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward China. The operational definition is a public opinion poll of the Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database. The survey question was “Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of...China”.

The first independent variable is direct soft power, and the conceptual definition is investment in non-industrial or military related infrastructure. The variable definition is China’s investment in institutions, such as visible and iconic infrastructure of a humanitarian nature. The operational definition is the number and the funding amount of infrastructure projects China funded, including construction of schools, hospitals, convention centers, parks, sports stadiums, or housing units for low-income citizens. The data was drawn from AidData.

The second independent variable is indirect soft power, and the conceptual definition is non-infrastructure investment designed for individual and community cultural development projects. The variable definition is China’s investment in individuals and community projects. The operational variable is the number of scholarships China provided in each nation for African students to study in China and the number of Confucius Institute/classrooms. The data of the scholarships was drawn from AidData, and the data of Confucius Institute/classrooms was drawn from the Hanban (CI headquarters) website.

The conceptual definition of the first control variable is hard economic power. The variable definition is China’s investment in industrial and economic infrastructure which is sometimes directly related to China’s economic objectives. The operational definition is the

number and the funding amount of infrastructure projects China funded, including power plants, dams, roads, railways, bridges, airports, manufacturing plants, industrial park, and other energy- or resource-related infrastructures. The data was drawn from AidData.

The conceptual definition of the second control variable is trade. The variable definition is whether the African country's imports from China exceed its exports to China. The operational definition is the percentage of the African country's exports to and imports from China in the total amount of trade. The data was drawn from China Data Online.

The conceptual definition of the third control variable is the level of democracy. The variable definition is the level of political and press freedom. The operational definition is the average score of political rights and civil liberties as well as the score of press freedom of Freedom House.

Chapter 5: Results and Analysis

This chapter provides the findings of this study, and organized by each variable that is connected to each hypothesis. After providing a brief overview of the dependent variable (results of the public opinion poll), I examine which independent or control variables are strongly related to the dependent variable.

In sum, this study found that neither of the independent variables (direct and indirect soft power) directly influences the dependent variable, public opinion. Furthermore, none of the control variables (hard economic power, trade, and level of democracy) also has causal effect on public opinion. Instead, this chapter introduces media (i.e. how African media portrays China) as a new variable that is most directly related to the public opinion.

Table 2. Public Opinion

Country	Public Opinion 2014 or 2015 (% of favorable view)
Ghana	80
Burkina Faso	75
Ethiopia	75
Tanzania	74
Kenya	70
Nigeria	70
Senegal	70
Uganda	65
Tunisia	64
S. Africa	52
Egypt	46

Source: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database

Table 2 shows that the level varies, but in general it is relatively high level of favorable view of China. For the public opinion poll, I used the 2015 data for all the countries but Egypt

and Tunisia. I used the 2014 data for Egypt and Tunisia because they did not have data for 2015. Then, in order to see what percentage of the surveyed population of each selected country had favorable views toward China, I added the number of “very favorable” and “somewhat favorable” responses for each country. Table 2 shows that in all the countries but Egypt more than half of the people have favorable views of China. This confirms that not only African elites but ordinary African citizens have favorable views of China in African countries. However, there is a difference in the level of approval towards China between the countries. Now the question is which independent or control variables explain this difference in the level of favorableness between the countries.

Table 3. Public Opinion and Indirect Soft Power

Country	Public Opinion 2014 or 2015 (% of favorable view)	Indirect Soft Power (Cumulative 1998 - 2014)	
		CI	Scholarships
Ghana	80	2	660
Burkina Faso	75	0	0
Ethiopia	75	4	255
Tanzania	74	3	50
Kenya	70	5	805
Nigeria	70	2	70
Senegal	70	1	70
Uganda	65	1	548
Tunisia	64	1	0
S. Africa	52	8	60
Egypt	46	2	0

Sources: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database, AidData, and Hanban website

The first hypothesis (H1) suggests that China's indirect soft power produces positive perceptions of China in African countries. Table 3 displays the public opinion poll and the number of indirect soft power projects China funded. To measure indirect soft power, I used the cumulative number of scholarships from 1998 to 2014 (to 2015 for CI). I use cumulative time or lag variable because the influence of soft power takes time to form positive perceptions among people. For instance, China giving 50 people scholarships or teaching Chinese language to 50 people at CI in 2014 would not immediately create positive opinions in the 2014 public opinion poll. If one country's public opinion shows the high percentage of favorable views toward China, it is due to the result of China's soft power investment in the last several years. The same thing can be said about direct soft power. The construction of a single hospital will not influence the national public opinion. The efficacy assessment of soft power investment should always take a time lag into account.

Table 3 indicates indirect soft power investment is not related to favorable views of China. For instance, China gives more scholarships in Uganda than in Tanzania, Nigeria, and Senegal, but the latter three countries have the higher percentage of favorable views of China. Similarly, China does not give any scholarships in Tunisia. Yet, more people have favorable views of China in Tunisia than in South Africa. Further, China has the largest amount of Confucius Institutes (CI) in South Africa. However, the percentage of favorable views of China in South Africa is the second lowest among all the countries in the table. On the other hand, there are only two CIs in Ghana with 80 percent of the people holding favorable views of China. In Burkina Faso, there are no indirect soft power projects because Burkina Faso recognizes Taiwan as a sovereign state. In short, indirect soft power is not directly related to the public opinion. Thus the first hypothesis (H1) is not supported.

Table 4. Public Opinion and Direct Soft Power

Country	Public Opinion 2014 or 2015 (% of favorable view)	Direct Soft Power (Cumulative 2000 - 2014)	
		Number of projects	Funding Amount USD
Ghana	80	16	148,796,323
Burkina Faso	75	0	0
Ethiopia	75	107	25,500,000
Tanzania	74	10	82,135,623
Kenya	70	9	260,467,390
Nigeria	70	6	14,894,061
Senegal	70	16	75,833,462
Uganda	65	10	49,106,587
Tunisia	64	1	28,737,008
S. Africa	52	1	250,000,000
Egypt	46	7	712,662,399

Sources: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database and AidData

The second hypothesis (H2) suggests that China's direct soft power produces positive perceptions of China in African countries. Table 4 shows the public opinion poll and the number and funding amounts of direct soft power projects China funded. Like indirect soft power, I also used the cumulative number of projects and the amount of funding for direct soft power projects from 2000 to 2014. Table 4 indicates that there is no pattern or correlation between direct soft power investment and favorable views of China. For instance, China financed the same amount of projects in Tanzania and Uganda, but there is about 10 percent gap in public opinion. Similarly, China financed almost the same amount of projects in Nigeria and Egypt; however, there is 24 percent gap in public opinion. Therefore, direct soft power is not directly related to public opinion, and the second hypothesis (H2) is not supported.

Table 5. Public Opinion and Hard Economic Power

Country	Public Opinion 2014 or 2015 (% of favorable view)	Hard Economic Power (Cumulative 2000 - 2014)	
		Number of projects	Funding Amount USD
Ghana	80	21	2,073,687,533
Burkina Faso	75	0	0
Ethiopia	75	25	4,738,284,830
Tanzania	74	26	8,541,980,095
Kenya	70	22	6,035,483,448
Nigeria	70	11	2,133,264,382
Senegal	70	14	87,346,006
Uganda	65	36	6,646,811,623
Tunisia	64	2	4,317,382
S. Africa	52	2	867,000,000
Egypt	46	7	1,348,333,580

Sources: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database and AidData

The third hypothesis (H3) suggests that China's hard economic power produces positive perceptions of China in African countries. Table 5 shows the public opinion poll and the number and funding amounts of hard economic power projects China funded. I used the cumulative number of projects and amount of funding for hard economic power projects from 2000 to 2014. Table 5 indicates that there is no pattern or correlation between hard economic power and favorable views of China. For instance, China financed a larger number of projects in Uganda than in all the other countries which have the higher percentage of favorable views of China. Similarly, China financed a larger number of projects in Egypt than in Tunisia. Still there is 18 percent gap between the two in public opinion. Furthermore, China invested the largest amount of money and had the second largest number of projects in Tanzania, but the percentage of

favorable views of China is higher in Ghana and Ethiopia. Therefore, hard economic power is not directly related to the public opinion, hence the third hypothesis (H3) is not supported.

Table 6. Public Opinion and Trade

Country	Public Opinion 2014 or 2015 (% of favorable view)	Trade (2013)			
		Total Amount (US 10 000)	Import from China (% of total trade)	Export to China (% of total trade)	% of Africa-China total trade amount
Ghana	80	514,936	77	23	2.4
Burkina Faso	75	29,028	36	64	0.1
Ethiopia	75	218,415	86	14	1
Tanzania	74	369,325	85	15	1.7
Kenya	70	327,026	98	2	1.5
Nigeria	70	1,358,922	89	11	6.4
Senegal	70	103,713	96	4	0.4
Uganda	65	52,414	86	14	0.2
Tunisia	64	143,989	88	12	0.6
S. Africa	52	6,521,920	26	74	31
Egypt	46	1,021,428	82	18	4.8

Sources: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database and China Data Online

The fourth hypothesis (H4) suggests that China's popularity is lower in countries receiving more imports from China. Table 6 shows public opinion poll and the trade balance between the African countries and China. The trade imbalance with China does not have an influence on favorable views of China. For instance, in Ghana, 77 percent of the total trade with China is imports from China. However, 80 percent of the people still have favorable views of China. On the contrary, in South Africa, 74 percent of the total trade with China is exports to

China. Yet, the percentage of favorable views of China drops by 34 percent from Ghana.

Furthermore, in Kenya, only 2 percent of the total trade with China is exports to China. However, 70 percent of the people still have favorable views of China. Table 6 also demonstrates that China does not give aid to Burkina Faso, but still maintains trade. In conclusion, trade imbalance is not related to public opinion. Thus the fourth hypothesis (H4) is also not supported.

Table 7. Public Opinion and Level of Democracy

Country	Public Opinion 2014 or 2015 (% of favorable view)	Level of political freedom (2014)	Level of press freedom (2014)
		1(free) to 7(not free)	0(free) to 100(not free)
Ghana	80	1.5	28
Burkina Faso	75	4.5	44
Ethiopia	75	6	83
Tanzania	74	3	54
Kenya	70	4	57
Nigeria	70	4.5	53
Senegal	70	2	48
Uganda	65	5.5	56
Tunisia	64	2	48
S. Africa	52	2	37
Egypt	46	5.5	73

Sources: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database and Freedom House

The fifth hypothesis (H5) predicts that China's popularity is higher in authoritarian countries. Table 7 shows public opinion poll and the level of freedom in each African country. The score for the level of political freedom is the average score of political rights and civil liberties. Table 7 suggests that the level of freedom is not related to favorable views of China. For instance, Ghana, the most democratic country in the sample and has the highest percentage

of favorable views of China. On the other hand, Egypt is much less democratic, but it has the lowest percentage of favorable views of China. Therefore, the level of democracy is not directly related to public opinion, and the fifth hypothesis (H5) is not supported.

It is interesting to note that the level of press freedom is not related to public opinion. This study originally predicted authoritarian regimes may control the media and impose positive reporting on China's relationship and investments in their countries. However, Ghana has the highest percentage of favorable views of China while having the highest level of press freedom among the sampled countries. On the other hand, Egypt has the lowest percentage of favorable views of China with the lowest level of press freedom among the sampled countries. Similarly, the level of press freedom is slightly higher in Tanzania than in Uganda, but Tanzania has the higher percentage of favorable views of China. Thus the finding suggests authoritarian regimes might not be completely controlling the media to project China in a positive manner.

The findings demonstrate that none of the independent and control variables, from soft power and hard economic power to trade and regime type directly influence popular perceptions of China in African nations. The last finding for the fifth hypothesis revealed authoritarian regimes might not have full control on their domestic media to report China positively or present optimistic views of China's investment in their countries. This leads to another probable variable that influences public opinion: media. People's perceptions of China might be determined by whether the domestic media portrays China in a positive or negative manner. In other words, it may be the media that has the strongest influence on citizens' perceptions.

Table 8. Public Opinion and Media Portrayal of China

Country	Public Opinion 2014 or 2015 (% of favorable view)	Positive (%)	Neutral (%)	Negative (%)	Name of media
Kenya	70	<u>43</u>	35	21	<i>Daily Nation</i>
Nigeria	70	<u>59</u>	19	22	<i>ThisDay</i>
		45	34	21	<i>New Vision</i>
Uganda	65	28	<u>55</u>	18	<i>Monitor</i>
		36	<u>45</u>	19	(Average)
		<u>43</u>	15	<u>42</u>	SABC 3: News @ One (2010)
		20	<u>52</u>	28	SABC 3: News @ One (2011)
S. Africa	52	<u>21</u>	58	<u>21</u>	<i>Business Day</i> (2010)
		10	<u>60</u>	30	<i>Business Day</i> (2011)
		24	<u>46</u>	<u>30</u>	(Average)

Sources: [Uganda] Nassanga and Makara (2015); [South Africa] Wasserman (2012); [Kenya/Nigeria] Raphiou (2015)

There are a few existing scholarly studies that examined the domestic media's portrayal of China in particular African countries. For example, Nassanga and Makara (2015) studied the portrayal of China in two major newspapers in Uganda. The study examined the news coverage in two daily newspapers “*New Vision* (partially government) and *Monitor* (private)” between August 2013 and July 2014 (Nassanga & Makara, 2015, p.6). Their findings show out of 445 articles on *New Vision*, 45 percent portrayed China in a positive manner, 34 percent portrayed

China in a neutral manner, and 21 percent portrayed China in a negative manner (Nassanga & Makara, 2015). As for 466 articles on *Monitor*, 28 percent was positive, 55 percent was neutral, and 18 percent was negative (Nassanga & Makara, 2015). In total, on the two Ugandan newspapers, 36 percent of the articles portrayed China positively, 45 percent portrayed China neutrally, and 19 percent portrayed China negatively (Nassanga & Makara, 2015). This indicates that portrayal of China in Ugandan media outlets is mostly neutral, but it leans more toward positive than negative.

Similar study was conducted in South Africa. Wasserman (2012) studied the portrayal of China on various media outlets in South Africa, from newspapers and TV news channels to radio stations. Among all, SABC 3: News @ One (“public broadcaster’s flagship TV channel”) and *Business Day* (“national business daily”) had the largest amount of news coverage on China from January to December 2010 and January to February 2011 (Wasserman, 2012, p.346). Between January and December 2010, 43 percent of the reports on China was positive, 15 percent was neutral, and 42 percent was negative on SABC 3 news; while 21 percent was positive, 58 percent was neutral, and 21 percent was negative on *Business Day*¹⁴ (Wasserman, 2012). Between January and February 2011, the portrayal of China was positive (20 percent), neutral (52 percent), and negative (28 percent) on SABC 3; whereas positive (10 percent), neutral (60 percent), and negative (30 percent) on *Business Day*¹⁵ (Wasserman, 2012). These results indicate that South African media portrays China largely in a neutral manner. Also, the proportion of positive portrayal and negative portrayal is balanced. Even when all the media platforms in the study are considered, the results suggest balanced perceptions of China.

¹⁴ Numbers are estimates from the graph in Wasserman (2012).

¹⁵ Numbers are estimates from the graph in Wasserman (2012).

Furthermore, the content analysis of newspapers was also conducted in Kenya and Nigeria. Raphiou (2015) examined economic news on the U.S. and China in Kenya and Nigeria and focused on the economic news articles on two major newspapers in Kenya and Nigeria, *Daily Nation* and *ThisDay* between January 2011 and December 2013 (Raphiou, 2015). The findings illustrate that out of 159 articles on *Daily Nation*, 43 percent portrayed China positively, 35 percent was neutral, and 21 percent was negative; while out of 130 articles on *ThisDay*, 59 percent was positive, 19 percent was neutral, and 22 percent was negative (Raphiou, 2015). The findings indicate that positive articles on China outweigh both neutral and negative articles on China in Kenya and Nigeria. Thus, both Kenyan and Nigerian media portray China in a positive manner.

The results of these content analyses of African media articles on portrayal of China seem to confirm authoritarian regimes are not completely controlling the media and that the variation in media portrayal of China is not related to regime type. For example, Nigeria has the higher level of freedom in terms of both political and press freedom than Uganda (refer to Table 7). Yet, Nigerian media portrays China in a more positive way (59 percent) than Ugandan media (45 percent) (refer to Table 8). This study expected authoritarian regimes may control the media and put a positive spin on China's relations with their countries. However, the above finding shows media in less democratic countries do not necessarily portray China more positively. Thus, the level of political and press freedom is not related to media portrayal of China nor public opinion.

These content analysis results of African media articles on portrayal of China might also explain the difference in the level of favorableness between the African countries. For instance, the percentage of favorable views on the public opinion poll was high in Kenya and Nigeria (both 70 percent), when domestic media's portrayal of China was mainly positive in both of the

countries (refer to Table 8). In Uganda, despite the relatively larger amount of China's investment (refer to table 3, 4, and 5), the percentage of favorable view is comparatively lower. The Ugandan media portrayal of China might explain this discrepancy. Ugandan media portrays China mainly in a neutral manner. Compared to Kenyan and Nigerian media, Ugandan media is less positive but more neutral about China. This might explain why the percentage of favorable views in Uganda is lower than that of Kenya and Nigeria even though China invests as much or more in Uganda than in Kenya or Nigeria. At the same time, the percentage of favorable views in Uganda is not necessarily low since it is still more than half (65 percent). This could be because there is more positive portrayal of China (36 percent) than negative portrayal (19 percent).

South African media's portrayal of China might also explain the people's perceptions of China in South Africa. The percentage of favorable views was relatively low in South Africa among all the countries listed in the table, while almost half of the people have favorable views (52 percent). The South African media portrays China in more of a neutral or balanced manner that might explain the balanced perceptions of China among people. On the other hand, there is relatively more negative portrayal of China in South Africa (21 – 42 percent) compared to that of Kenya (21 percent), Nigeria (22 percent), and Uganda (19 percent), which explains why the percentage of favorable views of China in South Africa is lower than that of Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda (refer to Table 8). These studies on African media's portrayal of China were conducted in different time periods, and some examined only newspaper articles or economic news while the others examined both TV and press. However, they still illustrate general views and tendencies of how the domestic media portrays China in respective African countries.

In fact, it seems that the Chinese government has also become aware of the importance of the media portrayals of China in African countries in recent years. China started expanding its

investment and cooperation in the media sector in African countries. For example, China has established the branches of its state-owned media on the African continent in the last decade. In 2004, Xinhua News Agency established its African bureau headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya¹⁶ (Wu, 2012). China Radio International (CRI) was also established in Kenya in 2006 (Wu, 2012). Furthermore, China Central Television (CCTV) established its African bureau in Nairobi in 2010 (Wu, 2012). The Chinese state media's engagement in Africa has been further expanded in the last few years. Xinhua launched its mobile newspaper in Kenya in 2011 as a joint venture with Safaricom (a Kenyan telecommunication company), followed by the launch of CCTV Africa in 2012 (Wu, 2012). China Daily also launched its weekly African edition in the same year (Verhoeven & Gagliardone, 2012). The entrance of various Chinese media into the African media sphere clearly demonstrates Beijing's interest in projecting China positively in African countries.

China's media engagement is especially prominent in East Africa, especially in Kenya. China Radio International (CRI) started program exchanges with the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), while CCTV also donated equipment to KBC (Wu, 2012). CCTV's recruitment of local journalists also brought excitement to the journalists in Kenya (Wekesa, 2013). Xinhua also holds a partnership with *Daily Nation* (Jacobs, 2012). Eric Shimoli, a top editor of the *Daily Nation*, commented in the New York Times: "You have to be blind not to notice the Chinese media's arrival in Kenya" (Jacobs, 2012). These examples of China's active media engagement in East Africa, centering in Kenya, might explain the relatively positive portrayal of China on Kenyan and Ugandan media. On the other hand, Wu (2012) argues that Chinese media have difficulty in gaining an audience in South Africa because South Africa's

¹⁶ The first Xinhua Africa Bureau was established in 1950s, 12 other bureaus were established in 70s and 80s (Gagliardone, Repnikova, & Stremlau, 2010; Wu, 2012).

media environment is competitive with other foreign media such as Al Jazeera and South Africa's robust domestic media. This might explain China's more positive portrayal in East Africa than in South Africa.

Not only does China export its media outlets to African countries, it attempts to influence African domestic media by inviting African journalists to visit China or to attend workshops. In 2006, 20 radio and TV journalists from 15 African countries were invited to the Chinese Media University, and also 42 journalists from 23 English-speaking African countries attended a workshop for African journalists hosted by the Chinese government (Gagliardone et al., 2010; Wu, 2012). Furthermore, 30 journalists from French-speaking African countries attended a two-week training course at the Chinese Media University (Gagliardone et al., 2010; Wu, 2012). The journalists who were invited to China actually reported improvement of their image of China after their visit to China.

There are multiple indicators that welcoming journalists to China works in China's favor. The interviews conducted by Nassanga and Makara (2015) suggest that inviting African journalists to China influenced them in a positive manner. Most of the journalists they interviewed in Uganda admitted that their image of China changed in a positive way after their visit to China, which ultimately influenced how they report on China in news articles (Nassanga & Makara, 2015). The journalists stated they thought China was a closed, conservative, and authoritarian country until their China visit changed their image of China into an image of a developed country with a strong economy (Nassanga & Makara, 2015). Similarly, the Chinese embassy in Nairobi arranged the travel of one journalist at a Kenyan private media company, Nation Media Group (NMG), to go to Beijing to report on the fifth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2012 (Wekesa, 2013). After attending banquets held for overseas

journalists in China, the journalist published 10 positive articles about the event (Wekesa, 2013). China's attempt to positively influence African domestic media not only aims at individual journalists but they also directly offer content.

In addition, China also offers wire articles, photos, and opinion articles to African media. Xinhua offers wire copy and photos to African domestic media either for free or at a cheaper price than other foreign media wire services such as Reuters, Associated Press, and Agence France Presse (Wekesa, 2013). As a result, the East African newspapers are increasingly using pictures from Xinhua (Wekesa, 2013). During the fifth FOCAC, top Chinese officials also offered opinion articles to the East African newspapers (Wekesa, 2013). Inviting African journalists to China and offering content to African domestic media indicates the Chinese government is attempting to influence African local media to project China in a positive manner.

Furthermore, there were several high level conferences between Africa and China on media cooperation. The third FOCAC in 2006 first made a reference to the cooperation in a media field between Africa and China (Wekesa, 2013), promising the exchange of correspondents and continuation of workshops hosted by China for African journalists (FOCAC, 2006). Subsequently, the first Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation was held in 2012 in Beijing, where government ministers and the heads of media organizations from 42 African countries exchanged their opinions on cooperation in the broadcasting and film sectors (China Central Television, 2012). The second forum followed in 2014 in Beijing, where further cooperation in the media sector was discussed by Chinese officials and 150 delegates from more than 40 African countries (Zhongxi, 2014). In addition, most recently the China-Africa Media Summit was held in December 2015 in Cape Town (FOCAC, 2015a). The latest FOCAC action plan also mentioned media cooperation between Africa and China, which promised training of

1,000 African media professionals by the Chinese side, providing films and TV programs to each other's state media, and so on (FOCAC, 2015b). The increasing number of official conferences on media cooperation and pledge of media cooperation in FOCAC action plans clearly indicate that in recent years the Chinese government has begun to realize how much of an impact media has on people's perceptions of China in African countries.

In conclusion, the findings suggest none of the independent and control variables, from direct/indirect soft power and hard economic power to trade and regime type, show a significant causal relationship to public opinion (people's positive perceptions of China). Instead, the portrayal of China by the domestic media in African countries has more causal effects on public opinion.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In this study I asked the following question. Does China's soft power generate positive perceptions of China among public in African countries? The findings suggest that neither China's direct and indirect soft power is significantly correlated with positive perceptions of China. This study examines whether the percentage of favorable views of China in the public opinion poll is higher in African countries where China invests more in direct and indirect soft power. The results illustrate that the percentage of favorable views is not always higher in the countries where China has a larger amount of soft power investment. I also expect more positive influences from direct than indirect soft power, but the data demonstrates that both direct and indirect soft power are equally insignificant in positively influencing public opinion.

In addition, the current study examines a few control variables to see whether they produce positive perceptions of China in African nations rather than China's soft power. The findings show that all the control variables (hard economic power, trade, and African countries' regime types) have no positive influence on public opinion. The percentage of favorable views of China in the public opinion poll is not always higher in the African countries where China invests more in hard economic power. Similarly, China's popularity is not essentially lower in the countries which import more from China than they export to China. Further, people's perceptions of China are not necessarily positive in the authoritarian countries. In conclusion, the findings suggest none of the independent (direct/indirect soft power) and control variables have a direct causal effect on the dependent variable (people's positive perceptions of China). In other words, none of them produces positive perceptions of China in the selected African countries.

The results of the current study differed from what the existing literature suggested about China's soft power in African nations. While the previous literature demonstrated China's visible

infrastructure construction (Bristol, 2011; Ding, 2008, 2010; Fijałkowski, 2011; Nye, 2012a, 2012b), scholarships (Brautigam, 2009; Ding, 2008; Thompson, 2005; Tingting, 2014; Yang, 2015), and CIs (Bodomo, 2009; Ding, 2008; Kragelund, 2008; Lengauer, 2011; Liang, 2012; Nye, 2012a, 2012b) are effective soft power that produces positive perceptions of China among people, the findings of this study suggested otherwise. The amount of people who perceive China positively was not necessarily larger in the countries China invests more in soft power. This means China's direct and indirect soft power do not significantly produce favorable views of China at least at a national level (nation-wide public opinion); while they may generate positive perceptions of China among people at a micro level.

I present two possible explanations why this study's findings differed from the common arguments made by the previous literature. One is the analysis of the current study was at a national level. Thus, the current study does not discount the arguments made by the previous literature, but suggests that China's direct and indirect soft power is not a significant factor at a national level. There is a high possibility they have a significant positive influence on people's views at a micro level. For example, if China builds a rural primary school in a town with 100 villagers, the villagers might have favorable views of China, but 100 villagers' view will not be largely reflected on national public opinion. Another reason why the current study's findings differ with previous literature is that the current study focuses on the causal relationship between China's soft power and people's positive perceptions of China. Therefore, one contribution of the current study to the field of China's soft power study was to have examined the causal link between China's soft power and nationwide public opinion and have showed there was no strong causal relationship between the two. More focus on a causal relationship between soft power and

its positive influence on people's views of a country may further the development of this field of study, hence more examination is needed.

Yet, it is logical that both direct and indirect soft power do not strongly influence public opinion at a national level, since they have limitations in terms of how many people they can reach. Indirect soft power can be exercised on only a limited amount of people at a time. For example, a donor government such as China, usually gives scholarships to selected people. In that sense, if the scholarships recipients become business traders or government officials in their home country, China might gain benefits from having provided scholarships because the former recipients of scholarships may have favorable views of China and support a trade deal or maintain friendly diplomatic ties with China. Confucius Institute also may have influence only on those who are interested in Chinese language and culture to begin with, which probably is a small sample. The positive perceptions indirect soft power produces could stay longer with individuals than direct soft power. However, it would take a long time for it to be reflected on nationwide public opinion.

The same explanation can be applied to direct soft power. Direct soft power may have a positive influence on people's perceptions of China only within the area, village, or town where infrastructure was constructed. I expected direct soft power to have a stronger influence on public opinion than indirect soft power since a large amount of people can actually see the infrastructure as soon as they are constructed. Yet the ability of direct soft power to be recognized by people that it is China's contribution also depends on some other factors. For example, if the infrastructure was constructed by Chinese workers or it has a name which points to China ("Greatwall Apartments" complex in Kenya is a good example¹⁷), it is easier for the

¹⁷ From AidData (2016).

local people to perceive that it is China's contribution. Another factor is public announcement of the projects. Whether ordinary citizens nationwide can recognize the infrastructure projects as China's contribution depends on whether African domestic media picks it up as a topic on national news. For example, even when China constructs soccer stadiums (e.g. four soccer stadiums in Ghana constructed/renovated for the 2008 Africa cup of nations¹⁸), whether domestic media refers to China positively as a contributor, or they do not refer to China at all creates a significant difference. This leads to the discussion of the last finding of the current study about media influence.

The current study shows how domestic media portrays China is more significant in determining people's perceptions of China, besides it found any hypothesized factors (direct, indirect soft power, hard economic power, trade, and regime type) were not strongly related to people's perceptions of China. The multiple studies examined China's portrayal on domestic media in four African countries and their findings best explained the difference in the level of favorable views of China between the African countries. In countries where domestic media portrays China more positively, the percentage of favorable views of China in public opinion was higher. Although the current study only referred to four African countries, the content analysis of media articles in other countries may provide further support for this explanation that domestic media's portrayal of China most significantly determines people's perceptions of China at a national level. In addition, China's increasing engagement in media sectors in African countries (from establishing Chinese media presence to inviting African journalists to China and offering contents to African media) also illustrates how the Chinese government has become aware of the importance of China's media portrayal in recent years. Therefore, another

¹⁸ From AidData (2016).

contribution of the current study was to find domestic media's portrayal of China to be the strongest factor which influences public opinion.

Domestic media portrayals of China tend to sway public opinion. In turn, the influence of direct and indirect soft power could also be mitigated through the media. Again, this study does not discount the arguments that individual participation or observation of China's direct and indirect soft power projects generates positive perceptions. Especially, at the grassroots level, they might successfully influence individual or even community perceptions of China in a positive manner. However, their effectiveness in producing positive perceptions of China could have a broader impact through regional and national media coverage. For example, the time horizon for remembering that China built a school or helped the country is lengthened through reminders in the domestic media. Further, the effectiveness of China's direct and indirect soft power in producing positive perceptions at a national level also depends on whether domestic national media positively report on them in national news. Furthermore, the media could also present a negative perspective of China's direct and indirect soft power. For example, the media continuously report on the national trade imbalance or union disputes with China. Thus this study suggests China's direct and indirect soft power might be effective in producing positive perceptions of China among the public, but this is mitigated by domestic media's portrayal of China at a national level.

Now an apparent question arises: is media engagement counted as soft power? Some scholars who examine China's engagement in media sectors in African nations refer to it as soft power (Gagliardone et al., 2010; Wekesa, 2013; Wu, 2012). Indeed, few scholars on soft power also mention media as a part of China's soft power (Ding, 2008, 2010; Nye, 2012a, 2012b). Yet there have been smaller amounts of arguments about media engagement compared to

scholarships or Confucius Institute. This brings us back to the issue presented previously about the definition and categorization of soft power. Soft power is such a broad notion that often includes any aspects of a country that attract people in another country through non-lethal and non-forceful means. There has yet to be a complete list of soft power resources. In other words, there is no single definite answer as to which variables should be considered as soft power. What is considered as soft power differs from country to country. However, in order to examine whether one country's soft power is effective in producing positive perceptions in another country, it is a must to determine what is counted as soft power.

Therefore, another contribution of this study was to disentangle the distinction between direct and indirect soft power. Although it is difficult to operationalize soft power due to its broad notion, operationalization of the concept (i.e. determine how to measure the concept) is important especially in the study that examines a causal relationship between soft power and its outcome. This study cleared the boundary between hard economic power and soft economic power based on a previous study (Blanchard & Lu, 2012), and further broke soft economic power down into direct and indirect soft power. Direct soft power is an investment in institutions such as visible and iconic infrastructure of a humanitarian nature (non-industrial and non-military), whereas indirect soft power is an investment in individuals and community cultural development projects. This framework of direct and indirect soft power was proven to function to operationalize the soft power concept in the current study through the case of China's soft power in African nations.

Based on this study's findings and the framework of direct and indirect soft power, I suggest media engagement should be included into soft power, and specifically in direct soft power. Investment in media sectors in another country involves monetary investment, hence it

can be considered as soft economic power. Furthermore, investment in media sectors in another country resembles direct soft power (investment in institutions) rather than indirect soft power (investment in individuals and community cultural development projects) because media engagement is investments in media organizations (institutions) in another country. In addition, exchanges of journalists directly influence the media agencies and may have a more immediate impact on producing positive images of China among the public than academic exchanges. Thus it should be included into direct soft power (investment in non-industrial and non-military institutions) rather than indirect soft power (investment in individuals and community cultural development projects). Consideration of media engagement as a part of direct soft power may enhance the accuracy in determining which aspects of one country's soft power produce positive perceptions among people in another country. In conclusion, a clearer definition and more detailed categorization of soft power, such as direct and indirect soft power, will contribute to further development of this field of study, hence more study is needed.

The findings of the study also suggest some policy implications. If a country wants to immediately generate its positive perceptions among a broad range of people in another country, it should pay attention to how it is portrayed in the media in the targeted country. However, it is a tricky subject for especially democratic countries since they are not supposed to control any media outlets and are expected to conform to freedom of press. Thus many of the media engagement activities China has been investing in, especially through its state-own media, may not be an option for other countries. Nonetheless, under the current world environment where the internet is proliferated, there are numerous ways to produce a positive portrayal of a country through internet media, such as social media. Therefore, governments may take providing

information on various internet media channels into account when considering soft power strategy.

On the flip side, this study faced two major limitations. First, there is a limitation in measuring people's perceptions through public opinion polls. Public opinion polls are a good starting point to grasp a general idea. However, a more detailed survey is required to have a more in-depth look at whether certain factors have an influence on people's perceptions of a country, especially at a micro level. Asking questions about specific factors through a well-designed survey will be able to reveal which factors produce positive or negative perceptions of a country at a grassroots level. For example, in order to examine whether Chinese language and culture education through CIs, or scholarships and infrastructure China funds make people have positive perceptions of China at a personal or local level, a more detailed survey or focus group will be required. A more detailed survey will also be able to examine whether other variables play a role in determining one's perceptions of another country, such as age, gender, income, level of education, or media exposure.

Second, there was a limitation in data availability. China does not publish any official statistics on what kinds of projects it funded, how many projects, how much, and in which country it invested in. *AidData* is currently the only database containing all the information regarding China's aid, from year and amount to description of the projects, by each country. However, the data available in *AidData* also has its limitations, especially for the latest data (2012-2014), funding amount, and scholarships data. According to the database, the latest data is not yet fully comprehensive. As for the funding amount of direct soft power and hard economic power, there was an average of two values missing for both variables per country. Furthermore, there was limited data regarding scholarships China offered to each African country. While some

countries had data of an annual number of scholarships China offered, some countries only had data for a specific year. Even when there is data on an annual number of scholarships, current status is unknown. In addition, scholars have produced content analysis of African domestic media on portrayal of China only in four countries. The limitations described above certainly restricted the comprehensiveness of this study. However, at the same time, there is room in this area for future research.

Based on the limitation that this study faced, there are a few prospects for future research. First, future research can conduct a more detailed survey and interview on people's perceptions of China (or other countries) and soft power impact. For example, in the case of China's soft power in African nations, examining which factors determine people's positive or negative perceptions of China through a detailed survey or interview will provide a more comprehensive perspective on the relationship between China's soft power, other factors (e.g. trade) and people's view of China. Furthermore, it will be interesting to consider other variables such as interviewees' age, income, level of education, political views, or media exposure and examine whether these variables play any roles in determining people's perceptions of China. More detailed surveys and interviews through fieldwork, which this study could not achieve, will not only add in depth viewpoints to the current study, but they may also reveal the influence of China's soft power at a micro level.

Second, it will also be interesting to look at public opinion in one country over time and determining which factors influence the changes in public opinion. For example, the percentage of favorable views of China in Kenya in the Pew public opinion poll had fluctuations over a period of time. It was 86% in 2010, and dropped to 71% in the next year, then went up again to

78% in 2013¹⁹. Examining which factors, such as direct/indirect soft power, hard economic power, or trade, contributed to these shifts in public opinion may provide a more comprehensive perspective on China's soft power influence. However, at the same time, it presents a challenge in that both soft power and other factors might take an uncertain length of time to influence public opinion. As for infrastructure construction, there are also multiple points in a project to be considered, such as the agreement of the deal, the start of construction, and then the end of a project. Determining how and when people perceive or recognize a project as well as how long it takes for people to consolidate their general views of another country will be a challenge in this type of research.

Lastly, future research can conduct more content analysis of African domestic media and examine the relationship between their portrayal of China and people's perceptions of China. This type of study will be applicable to other nations. Furthermore, although most of the content analysis this study referred to was about newspapers, it will also be important to examine contents of other media outlets, especially TV, radio, and internet media, in societies where the majority of people obtain news and information from TV, radio, or the internet. It will also be interesting to see whether people's perceptions of China differ depending on which media outlets they are most exposed to. There might be a significant difference between those who obtain news and information from newspapers and from TV, or from state-owned media and from private media. There are multiple directions this study can lead to for the future research.

In conclusion, this study disentangled the influence of China's hard and soft power investment on African perceptions of China as well as the distinction between direct and indirect soft power. The findings demonstrate China's direct and indirect soft power is not significant in

¹⁹ Data from the Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database.

creating positive perceptions of China at a national level in African countries. Instead, the study suggests that how domestic media in African countries portray China determines people's perceptions of China. In the end, soft power does not necessarily need to result in a zero-sum game. In other words, countries do not have to compete to wield soft power, and there does not have to be a winner or a loser in an effort to produce positive perceptions of one's own country in another nation. In fact, if all the countries are able to attract (i.e., produce positive perceptions of oneself among) people in other countries, it would be a step closer to a more warm and friendly world.

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