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*Emerging Research and Trends in Public Diplomacy  
and Nation Branding*

**China's renewal public diplomacy strategies in its  
“Major-Country” Diplomacy practice:  
A case study in Confucius Institute in Kenya**

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## Objectives of my participation in Ph.D. Pre-Conference

- To make sure that my research is meaningful outside the French academic context in terms of theoretical scope;
- To make sure that my reflection related to the Chinese communication characteristics in public diplomacy is valuable for this research field;
- To discuss fieldwork research method, our fieldwork provided an **ethnographic way**: to participate in all activities organized by the CI and Chinese embassies, to observe in different classes, to discover all interactions between Chinese teachers and their students, to interview with Chinese teachers, directors and queries with students;
- To discuss some potential ethical issues on fieldwork
- Since studying lobbying and influence processes is so complex and still taboo, I believe I would benefit from methodological discussions and advices on my questionnaires, interview guidelines, relation with the interviewees.

# Confucius Institute : organizational structure, missions, critiques

## Confucius Institute

- › Created in 2004 by Confucius Institute Headquarters (*Hanban*);
- › Non-profit educational organization, like the *Alliance Française*, the *British Council*;
- › By the end of 2017, 525 Confucius Institutes and 1 113 Confucius Classrooms have been opened in 146 countries

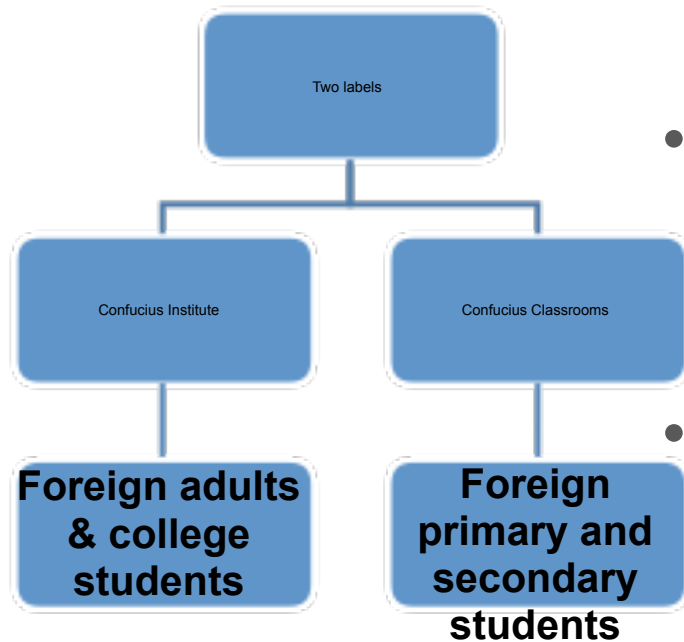
## Official objectives:

- to internationalize Chinese culture, promote inter-social and intercultural understanding and initiate educational cooperation with foreign countries (Kurlantzick, 2007, Lo & Pan, 2014, pp. 512, Ministry of Education)

## Chinese politicians and political scholars' views :

- › a platform to tell China story, to spread the Chinese voice (Xi, 2013) and to to establish so called "harmonious" international relations

# Confucius Institute : organizational structure, missions, critiques



- Sino-foreign cooperation in the creation and management of the Institutes;
- During the incubation phase, a grant between \$100,000 and \$ 150,000 will be sent to the foreign host institutions each year (Hubbert, 2014 ; Starr, 2009).
- The Chinese pedagogical teams dominate the daily management, academic activities and local communication activities.



## Confucius Institute : organizational structure, missions, critiques

- Hanban's chair, Liu Yandong, is a **member of the Chinese Communist Party's Chinese Politburo** since 2007 and has worked on the ideological and propaganda missions of the united front.
- Confucius Institute has been seen as a "Trojan horse" (Pierrebourg & Juneau-Katsuya, 2009, pp. 160-162) because it allows the Chinese government to realize a part of its political agenda;
- Confucius Institute could potentially interfere the academic freedom (Schmidt, 2013, p. 650) , such as sensitive issues : Tiananmen Square massacre, Tibet, Taiwan.
- Confucius Institute faces also to the dilemmas between its rapid expansion and its limited educational resources (Ren, 2012, Siow, 2011).

# China's Public Diplomacy : a hybrid conceptual framework...

## Soft power – The core concept of China's foreign policy

Vision	The concept of the soft power
American vision	<p>“Power is seen as the ability to get others to do what they otherwise would not do” (Nye, 1991, pp. 25–26)</p> <p>The ability to “influence others through agenda setting, attraction or co-optation” (Nye, 2004, p. 8)</p>
French vision	<p>Through the use of various intercultural communications and practices, a variety of cultures, history, lifestyles, values and even ideologies could be disseminated in order to bring about a mutual understanding between different principal parts in the intercultural context (Huyghe, 2011; Martel, 2013; Tenzer, 2013).</p>
Chinese vision	<p>“(…)whether a power resource is soft or hard depends on the feelings and perceptions of various actors in specific situations” (Zheng &amp; Zhang, 2012, p. 21).</p> <p>The “soft power with Chinese characters” (H. Wang, 1993), includes diplomatic exercises and political domestic activities, to spread <b>an admirable culture and ideological system.</b></p>

# China's Public Diplomacy : a hybrid conceptual framework...

Approach	Public diplomacy could be seen as...
<b>General definition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies”(Tuch, 1990, p. 3);</li><li>• “the art of communicating with foreign publics to influence international perceptions, attitudes and policies”(Waller, 2007, p. 19).</li></ul>
<b>Political science</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• an achievement model of the Track-II diplomacy (Desmoulins &amp; Huang, 2017);</li><li>• a political communication practice participates in in the Nation-State’s soft power consolidation (Keohane &amp; Nye, 2012; Melissen, 2008; van Ham, 2008);</li><li>• a practice for “building relationships with civil society actors in other countries and about facilitating networks between non-governmental parties at home and aboard.(...)In order to safeguard their interests in a globalized word, countries need ‘permanent friends’ in other nations”(Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 188; Melissen, 2008, pp. 22–23).</li></ul>

# China's Public Diplomacy : a hybrid conceptual framework...

Approach	Public diplomacy could be seen as...
<b>Public relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a country's dissemination efforts in the international arena in order to affect foreign audiences and the attitude of foreign voters in a very gentle and covert manner; to strive to build a favorable public opinion environment in the international arena for strengthening a positive national image while achieving mutual cross-cultural and cross-border understanding. (Arcos, 2016; Buhmann &amp; Ingenhoff, 2015; Fitzpatrick, 2007)</li></ul>
<b>China's academic viewpoints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the exercise of international public relations and strategic communication (Chen &amp; Liu, 2015; Zhou, 2010) for <i>promoting traditional culture and value and acting as a responsible great power on the world stage; advocating a harmonious world and peaceful rise; demonstrating the virtues of the Chinese path of economic development; expanding its foreign assistance; and developing own discourse in world affairs</i>"(Y. Wang, 2006, pp. 134–140)</li><li>• the effort in which the “personal diplomacy” at the elite level and people to people level, which relies on people-to-people exchanges, scholarships, bilateral and multilateral cultural programs and increasing contacts, leads to build the “<i>high level of trust</i>” (Yu, 2009, pp. 10–11, 18).</li></ul>



# China's Public Diplomacy : a hybrid conceptual framework...

H. China's public diplomacy mainly refers to two different dimensions : Strategic dimension & Social dimension

# China's Public Diplomacy : a hybrid conceptual framework...

## Strategic dimension:

Public relations and public diplomacy are both “**strategic communication** functions and process of either organizations or nations-states” (Signitzer & Wamser, 2010, pp. 41–43).

The concept of **strategy** focuses on the conscious action “in development of building the future decisions” (Arcos, 2016, p. 1; Mintzberg, 1978, p. 935).

Five aspects of “strategy” in the public diplomacy (Huyghe, 2010, pp.103-108):

- a fortress strategy to prevent information breaches to keep high-value information secure;
- a strategy based on propaganda and believes as key factors of mobilization;
- a strategy based on image framing through the worldwide promotion of a given cultural model more basically said of a given way of life;
- a strategy strengthens the importance of “channels” both new and old: propaganda flyers and real-TV shows shouldn't be underestimated in the digital age;
- a strategy focuses on attention rather than on access or profusion of messages

## China's Public Diplomacy : a hybrid conceptual framework...

### Strategy in the Chinese philosophy :

«是故百战百胜，非善之善也；不战而屈人之兵，善之善者也»

- “Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting”.

(Juillien,2011, p.41)

«天下之至柔，驰骋天下之至坚。无有入无间，吾是以知无为之有益。不言之教，无为之益，天下希及之。»

“In this world below the sky. The gentle will outdo the strong, and the nonmaterial are able to enter the impregnable.” (Robert & Laozi, 2001,p.118)

→ «天时不如地利，地利不如人和。»

“Favorable weather is less important than advantageous terrain, and advantageous terrain is less important than unity among the people.”

# China's Public Diplomacy : a hybrid conceptual framework...

## Social dimension:

*Guanxi* (Relationship) (Tsui & Farh, 1997):

- 1) the subjects of the *guanxi* share a group status;
- 2) the subjects of the *guanxi* has common acquaintance;
- 3) the subjects of the *guanxi* remain interaction frequently or infrequently;
- 4) the common background (job, education, family, etc.);
- 5) the common topics (interests, hobbies, lifestyle, etc.).

The *Guanxi* is a processes of mutual trust building:

The relationship is established on the basis of friendship;

The relationship is potentially based on mutual benefits, and an expectation of reciprocity.

The *Guanxi* and *Renqing* interact each every:

*Renqing* is a form of “social capital”;

A Chinese uses its “*guanxi*” (relations or networks) to ask a favor, he must repay in this favor for restoring the balance in relationships.

## China's Public Diplomacy : a hybrid conceptual framework...

The ideas of strategy and the Guanxi system play a vital role in China's public diplomacy practice :

*“(...)the diffusion of cultures and values must be integrated into social life and create direct communication with the intended audience, so that people at the grass-roots level can perceive and understand”*

(Chen & Liu, 2015,p.25)

## Fieldwork study

- **Phase 1.** Ethnographic observation at the Confucius Institute at the University of Nairobi (the first African-based CI built in 2005) in March 2018;
- **Phase 2.** Ethnographic study at Tianjin Normal University, the competent authority of the Confucius Institute in Nairobi, Kenya; And interviews with officials of *Hanban*. (planned between June.8th to July 20th, 2018)
- **Phase 3.** Observation of annual recruitment meetings and interviews with candidates and the Kenya-based branches of China's Companies at the Confucius Institute in Nairobi, Kenya; And interviews with officials of *Hanban*. (planned in December, 2018)

## Finding from the first phase of the fieldwork study

### Overview of the Confucius Institutes at the UnoN

- Building time : by the end of 2005
- Competent authority : University of Nairobi (Kenya) and Tianjin Normal University (China)
- Status: the First CI in Africa, second CI opened by the Chinese government in the world
- Management team: 20 (2 directors, 3 Kenyan lecturers + 2 Chinese lecturers, 10 volunteer teachers, 3 administrative staff, )
- Students: 300-400 per year (three school terms)
- Public: adults, bachelor's students, other university students, **staff of the UnoU, elite level students** (students from the Kenya Airports Authority, Kenya Revenue Authority and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Kenya)

## Finding from the first phase of the fieldwork study

### **Different roles played by CI's teachers for China's daily public diplomacy practice**

#### 1) International friend

Mission : to establish the mutual professional understanding and the mutual cultural understanding.

- **A. Mutual professional understanding**

Public: professional students (internal teachers and employees of the University of Nairobi)

- **B. Mutual cultural understanding**

Public: local students

#### 2) Cultural ambassador and civil diplomat

Mission : to seek common ground while holding back differences

#### 3) Local events organizer and participant

Mission : to expand the appeal of Chinese culture and establish a Chinese cultural and national brand



## Discussion

**Does China's public diplomacy practice through its Confucius Institute contain a practice of “*people to people lobbying*” ?**

The “people to people lobbying” is to be another form of track-II diplomacy that actors from one country's civil society aim to interact, seduce and influence citizens of foreign countries and defending and/or promoting their proper national interests.

- Building interpersonal relations
- Finding continuously intercultural common grounds
- Establishing mutual understanding and recognition with the target audience
- Influencing for a long-term

### China's institutional censorship and interviews

- The use of *guanxi* / network
- Beautify research objectives to a positive ways
- The censorship of information

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