

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

**BEYOND RHETORIC: CHINA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN KENYA
THROUGH A POLITICAL-ECONOMIC LENS (2013-2020)**

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Abstract

This article explores the evolution of China-Kenya relations within the context of China's broader public diplomacy strategy, focusing particularly on the period from 2013 to 2020. The foundation for these bilateral relations was laid as China opened up to developing countries and African nations gained independence. While formal diplomatic relations between China and Kenya were established in 1963, it was during the 2000s that these relations diversified significantly under the leadership of Chinese President Hu Jintao and Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki. This diversification spanned commercial, cultural, and political domains, becoming a notable example of public diplomacy.

With the ascension of Chinese President Xi Jinping, China's public diplomacy experienced a strategic shift towards a more assertive and politically oriented approach. This study argues that under Xi Jinping, new initiatives and strategic plans were introduced, enhancing the existing framework of China's public diplomacy. A key element of this transformation was the increased emphasis on foreign aid, which gained momentum through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Between 2013 and 2020, China's foreign aid to Kenya played a pivotal role in reshaping the structure of Chinese public diplomacy. This period saw a continuation and expansion of activities in culture and media, established in earlier phases, alongside a growing focus on infrastructure development, humanitarian aid, healthcare assistance, and educational and cultural projects.

The study begins by examining traditional public diplomacy tools such as cultural exchanges, high-level visits, and educational initiatives. It then discusses specific projects implemented between 2013 and 2020, analyzing their contributions to public diplomacy efforts. Finally, the article provides an overview of these projects, as documented in AidData, highlighting their impact on the bilateral relations between China and Kenya.

Keywords: China, Kenya, Public Diplomacy, Foreign Aid, AidData.

JEL Codes: F5, F35.

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RETORİĞİN ÖTESİNDE: SİYASİ-EKONOMİK MERCEKTEN ÇİN'İN KENYA'DAKİ KAMU DİPLOMASİSİ (2013-2020)³

Öz

Bu makale, Çin-Kenya ilişkilerinin gelişimini Çin'in daha geniş kamu diplomasisi stratejisi bağlamında incelemekte ve özellikle 2013-2020 dönemine odaklanmaktadır. Bu ikili ilişkilerin temeli, Çin'in geliştirmekte olan ülkelere açılması ve Afrika devletlerinin bağımsızlıklarını kazanmasıyla atılmıştır. Çin ve Kenya arasındaki resmi diplomatik ilişkiler 1963 yılında kurulmuş olsa da, bu ilişkiler 2000'li yıllarda Çin Devlet Başkanı Hu Jintao ve Kenya Devlet Başkanı Mwai Kibaki'nin liderliğinde önemli ölçüde çeşitlenmiştir. Bu çeşitlenme ticari, kültürel ve siyasi alanları da kapsayarak kamu diplomasisinin kayda değer bir örneği haline geldi.

Çin Devlet Başkanı Xi Jinping'in göreve gelmesiyle birlikte Çin'in kamu diplomasisi daha iddialı ve siyasi yönelimli bir yaklaşıma doğru stratejik bir kayma yaşamıştır. Bu çalışma, Xi Jinping döneminde Çin'in kamu diplomasisinin mevcut çerçevesini geliştiren yeni girişimler ve stratejik planlar ortaya konduğunu savunmaktadır. Bu dönüşümün kilit unsurlarından biri, Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi (BRI) ile ivme kazanan dış yardıma yapılan vurgunun artmasıdır. 2013-2020 yılları arasında Çin'in Kenya'ya yaptığı dış yardımlar, Çin kamu diplomasisinin yapısının yeniden şekillenmesinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu dönemde, altyapı geliştirme, insani yardım, sağlık yardımı ve eğitim ve kültür projelerine artan bir odaklanmanın yanı sıra, daha önceki aşamalarda kurulan kültür ve medya alanındaki faaliyetlerin devamı ve genişlemesi görüldü.

Çalışma kültürel değişimler, üst düzey ziyaretler ve eğitim girişimleri gibi geleneksel kamu diplomasisi araçlarını inceleyerek başlıyor. Ardından 2013-2020 yılları arasında hayata geçirilen belirli projeler ele alınmakta ve bunların kamu diplomasisi çabalarına katkıları analiz edilmektedir. Son olarak makale, AidData'da belgelendiği şekliyle bu projelere genel bir bakış sunmakta ve Çin ile Kenya arasındaki ikili ilişkiler üzerindeki etkilerini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çin, Kenya, Kamu Diplomasisi, Dış Yardım, AidData.

JEL Kodları: F5, F35.

“Bu çalışma Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.”

1. INTRODUCTION

Before the mid-1950s, the development of African countries was interrupted by the colonial powers' cultural, economic, and political intervention that also subjugated China for a period. Nonetheless, China-Africa relations did not develop in-depth

³ Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet, makalenin sonunda yer almaktadır.

regarding political, economic, commercial, and cultural exchanges. From the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 until the 1955 Bandung conference, China's engagement with African countries was mainly nongovernmental, with limited commercial ties. Despite their limited influence, the Chinese delegation significantly impacted the development of modern Sino-African relations during the week-long Bandung Conference in 1955. Through dialogue with representatives of African participating countries, the Chinese delegation laid a solid foundation for the future development of China-Africa relations across various aspects (沐涛, 2015, 24).

The Bandung conference helped consolidate the relationship between China and African countries. Following Kenya's independence from British rule, Mzee Kenyatta was appointed as the first Prime Minister of self-governing Kenya in 1963 (Nyangena, 2003, 4). Subsequently, diplomatic relations were established between China and Kenya on December 14, 1963 ("Making China-Kenya Partnership," 2023). This marked the start of China's official diplomatic relations with Kenya and represented a vital step in China's efforts to expand its engagement with African states by improving its soft power, especially in dealing with Kenya. Over the years, China has shown an improved understanding of public diplomacy and the significance of its reputation and image in its international affairs. Chinese scholars and government have been working on processes to enhance China's image and reputation through media, culture, politics, and financial aid, focusing on soft power to win public support (Wang, 2008, 257).

Culture occupies a critical role in China's public diplomacy in Kenya. The cultural exchange programs between China and Kenya have been of great importance as they promote cooperation and mobilization of resources (Owaki, Kathina, Khayeka-Wandabwa, Maina, and Amimo, 2019, 170–171). China has implemented various communication activities to expand awareness and garner support for its principles, policies, and priorities among African countries. It uses platforms such as CCTV/CGTN for television, radio channels like CRI, media offices in recipient countries, Xinhua for print media, and collaborates with local media in recipient countries. At the same time, the Confucius Institutes opened by China in Kenya as a part of public diplomacy activities are believed to legitimize China's commercial and industrial implantations and showcase Chinese culture's appeal (Huang, 2020, 197). Lastly, foreign aid, such as scholarships, cultural hubs, and humanitarian aid, serves as a critical tool in public diplomacy by fostering cultural exchanges and goodwill, which media can boost to shape positive perceptions of the donor country. Through these efforts, China not only addresses immediate developmental needs but also strengthens cultural ties and influences public opinion in Kenya, enhancing its soft power and diplomatic influence.

1.1. Literature Review

Perception surveys can be used as research tools to measure public attitudes and beliefs about particular issues or countries. Some studies have used these surveys to evaluate the trajectory of China's public diplomacy activities in Kenya. According to a survey conducted in 24 countries by the Pew Research Center, Kenya has a generally positive perception of China. More specifically, Kenya was categorized as one of the "countries that trust Chinese President Xi Jinping to do the right thing in world affairs" within the same survey (Silver, Huang, and Laura, 2023). The improvement and positive situation in perception surveys cannot be considered only as a result of public diplomacy, but the result of an effective public diplomacy is the improvement of the country's image. However, Falk Hartig calls attention to certain recurring themes and some contested areas regarding description, conceptualization, and measurement of image management practices and its audiences as stagnation in China's capability in knowledge production (Hartig, 2019, 68).

According to the other explanations, China's public diplomacy can be a set of communication efforts and a considerable array of activities led by governments, used to affect images among foreign publics (d'Hooghe, 2005; Gurgu and Cociuban, 2016, 136; Kejin, 2015, 171; Melissen, 2005). Many scholars also highlight the role of culture as a public diplomacy tool to create effective image of China through cuisine, language, martial arts, and traditional health and medicine practices (d'Hooghe, 2005), the assertive use of economic tools, including the BRI project and state-owned enterprises, to support its foreign policy (Yüce, 2024, 655). On the other hand, some scholars have tended to ignore key dimensions of China's public diplomacy objectives, emphasizing the vague definition of 'soft power' that has grown out of China's concept of 'major country diplomacy' (Smith, 2021, 9–10) and limited impact on students' information habits in recipient countries (Wasserman and Madrid-Morales, 2018). Nevertheless, several studies suggest that China's increasing public diplomacy activities, especially in areas such as health, trade, intergovernmental diplomacy, and investment, have contributed to China's growing public image, even among European countries, despite some setbacks regarding legitimacy and credibility (d'Hooghe, 2011; Godement, 2020; Sydoruk, Tymeichuk, and Kukalets, 2020; Wang, 2012).

There is also an extensive literature on China's investments in Kenya and Africa. Studies describe China's investments as multi-vector "spatial fix" (Carmody, Taylor, and Zajontz, 2022) or acknowledge the favorable effect of China's public diplomacy on Chinese foreign investment in recipient countries (Ye, Wu, Gu, and Zhao, 2023). On the other hand, a number of studies approach China's economic presence as a risk for Kenya to sustain its debt (Onjala, 2017) or argue heavy conditions of China's demand in return of its financing projects on African infrastructural development, including mining concessions, rights to various uses of natural resources, or political privileges (Huang, 2021). The purpose of this study is not to measure the impact of Chinese foreign aid and projects on Kenya, but rather to provide an introduction to how they have been used as public diplomacy tools in the

case of Kenya. In this sense, the study claims to offer a new perspective to the existing literature.

1.2. Theoretical and Methodological Framework: China's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

This article employs a descriptive method guided by the process tracing tool of qualitative analysis to elucidate China's public diplomacy activities in Kenya during the Xi Jinping era. Process tracing is a method used to understand how a particular event or policy developed and what factors contributed to that development. The use of this method allows for a more detailed analysis of the impact of China's public diplomacy strategies in Kenya. The descriptive method is enriched by several data collection methods. These methods include a review of media outlets such as Xinhua and analysis of official reports from AidData, an international development research laboratory. This data provides an important source for understanding the scope and impact of China's public diplomacy activities in Kenya. In addition, other qualitative data such as local media reports, government statements and academic studies are used to assess the impact of China's public diplomacy activities. These data help to understand the perception of China's cultural, economic and political activities in Kenya and their impact on Kenya-China relations.

This article draws on theoretical approaches of international relations and public diplomacy to understand China's public diplomacy activities in Kenya during the Xi Jinping era. Public diplomacy refers to the efforts of states to increase their influence on other states and publics by utilizing soft power elements. Joseph Nye's soft power theory emphasizes that culture, political values and foreign policies are the main sources of these elements of power (Nye, 2003). This theoretical framework provides a useful perspective for assessing China's public diplomacy activities in Kenya. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, China's public diplomacy has accelerated the process of ending the one-sided flow of information and adopting a more interactive, reciprocal and cooperative approach. This process is fueled by China's rapid rise in the global economic, political and security spheres and its growing awareness of the importance of its public image. China's public diplomacy activities are particularly concentrated in the areas of culture, high-level visits and foreign aid. As an expression of China's soft power, these activities aim to deepen its relations with Kenya.

The theoretical foundation of China's public diplomacy activities is based on soft power resources. Tools such as cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and media utilization play an important role in China's public diplomacy strategies in Kenya. In particular, initiatives such as Confucius Institutes, education and scholarship programs reflect China's efforts to promote its cultural heritage and values to African countries and increase mutual understanding. In this context, China's media activities through international outlets such as CGTN and Xinhua have also played an important role. However, there are limitations in the reach of these activities to Kenyan audiences (Guyo and Yu, 2022). Therefore, cultural and economic tools, which this study will discuss next, are crucial to the dissemination

of Chinese public diplomacy activities. The primary objective of Chinese foreign aid, combined with public diplomacy, was to contribute to its internal development and to create a peaceful international environment to further enhance its public image.

2. CHINA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ACTIVITIES IN KENYA

2.1. High-Level Visits

In 2013, the first elite visit during President Xi Jinping's term was from President Uhuru Kenyatta. President Xi Jinping and President Kenyatta met on 19 August 2013 during a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. This visit can be seen as a step towards deepening not only diplomatic relations between the two countries, but also economic and environmental cooperation. President Kenyatta's call for Chinese and Kenyan businessmen to adopt strategies to revitalize the economy and increase employment reflects the aim to put China-Kenya economic relations on a broader and sustainable basis. ("President Kenyatta Urges China," 2013). Another important aspect of President Kenyatta's visit was the support for the fight against poaching in Kenya. By recognizing that poaching is a problem, China has shown its determination to cooperate with Kenya on this issue. When evaluated in the context of environmental diplomacy and conservation strategies, this cooperation can be seen as an example of China's use of soft power. Furthermore, China's capacity building support to the Kenya Wildlife Service is an important contribution to Kenya's efforts to conserve its natural resources and achieve its sustainable development goals. ("Kenya Gets China Support," 2013).

President Uhuru Kenyatta's second visit to attend the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit in 2018 further consolidated and diversified China-Kenya relations. The bilateral meetings and negotiations in areas of common interest, such as trade, infrastructure, investment, education and technology, demonstrate the two countries' willingness to deepen economic and technological cooperation. ("President Kenyatta Heads to Beijing," 2018). The agreements signed following the visit include concrete steps towards the realization of major infrastructure projects, in particular the financing of the second phase of the Standard Gauge Railway (Wissenbach and Wang, 2016, 1).

Additionally, the high-profile visits during this period helped to further institutionalize bilateral cooperation between China and Kenya. Compared to the pre-2003 period, there has been a marked increase in visits between ambassadors and other high-profile officials. These visits contributed to the strengthening and more systematic conduct of diplomatic relations between the two countries, as public diplomacy practices became more comprehensive and frequent. Furthermore, under the presidencies of Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping, China has moved from merely playing the role of host country to becoming an active participant in bilateral visits. This shift is indicative of a shift in public diplomacy from a traditional approach to a more contemporary one. Since 2004, Chinese ambassadors have actively

participated in various events, programs and meetings in Kenya, making China's public diplomacy strategies more interactive and dynamic.

Important forums and initiatives such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have greatly contributed to an increase in the scope of elite visits and a better understanding between the two countries. Such platforms have not only strengthened diplomatic relations but also deepened economic, cultural and educational cooperation. Finally, one of the most effective outcomes of high-level visits is people-to-people exchanges. In 2016, more than 50,000 Chinese visited Kenya, and more than 1,100 Kenyan students had the opportunity to study in China, contributing significantly to strengthening cultural and educational ties between the two countries ("Speech by Liu Xianfa," 2017). Such exchanges reinforce the understanding and cooperation between the peoples of the two countries and, in the long run, provide a more solid foundation for diplomatic relations.

2.2. Culture

Education programs, especially exchange programs and language training, integrate cultural contexts while enhancing the learning process. Such programs not only increase the knowledge and skills of individuals, but also strengthen ties between countries through cultural interactions. Students act as ambassadors to spread the cultures of the recipient and donor countries, while technical trainings and courses contribute to capacity building in the recipient country. Therefore, China's efforts to strengthen education infrastructure and expand Confucius Institutes in Kenya are highly relevant.

Between 2013 and 2020, the educational cooperation between China and Kenya expanded with the continued implementation of various projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Chinese government, in partnership with the Kenyan government, the Kenyan Ministry of Higher Education, the Chinese Embassy in Nairobi, and Hanban, provided Kenyan students with opportunities to learn about the Chinese language and culture. These collaborations strengthen cultural and academic ties between the two countries and enhance mutual understanding. Scholarship programs, Confucius Institutes, vocational training projects and academic exchange programs are the cornerstones of this cooperation.

In addition, China has also taken steps to improve Kenya's educational infrastructure. Between 2003 and 2020, public diplomacy practices in education were effectively implemented, contributing to institutionalization and diverse projects. Kenyan authorities have shown enthusiasm for Chinese language learning, as Dr. Julius Jwan, the director of the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD), states that "Chinese will be taught in primary education in Kenya" (Owaki et al., 2019, 170). This breakthrough is closely linked to China's active role in Kenya and the revision of the Kenyan school curriculum via bilateral agreements. Moreover, since 2011, a successful cooperation project for vocational training in Kenya upgraded and transformed 144 universities and colleges in 47 counties,

benefiting more than 200,000 students (Pingjian, 2024). In 2014, the Ministries of Education and Science of China and Kenya signed an MoU to establish the China-Kenya Joint Laboratory for Crop Molecular Biology. This laboratory has the potential to make significant contributions to Kenya's molecular biology, gene cloning and discovery, and biotechnology breeding (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022a).

Confucius Institutes play an important role in promoting Chinese language and culture. These institutes enable Kenyan students to learn about Chinese culture while building cultural bridges between the two countries. The first Confucius Institute in Kenya, opened in 2004, was renovated and upgraded in 2014 at a cost of 1.2 billion Kenyan Shillings (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022b). In addition, public diplomacy activities in education, which are progressing towards institutionalization, are more prominent with the qualification of education transfer under President Xi Jinping. One example is the educational assistance provided to African countries, including Kenya, through the FOCAC. For instance, Machakos University in Kenya, in cooperation with Huawei Technologies, is hosting a workshop focusing on cloud computing starting in December 2019. It does not only serve as a public diplomacy practice to empower young people with crucial skills but also aligns with Kenya's 2030 vision for national development (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007). The Kenya-China Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) project, for example, has yielded results such as the provision of modern teaching equipment, which has led to quality employment. Furthermore, opportunities for cooperation between TVET institutions and Chinese industry have expanded, eroding the stereotypes of Chinese investment as 'fake' in the 2000s (Musyimi, Malechwani, and Luo, 2018, 370). Furthermore, the fifth China-Africa Youth Festival, which took place in Beijing in October 2020, brought together 42 African and Chinese youth representatives for a week-long event promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding. These initiatives are crucial for fostering cooperation and knowledge exchange between China and Africa, especially in Kenya (Otieno et al., 2022, 9).

Cooperation in sports activities may be utilized to influence diplomatic, social, and political relations, leveraging sports to improve a country's cultural existence, encourage international goodwill, and promote political and social pursuits. China significantly supported Kenya on sports issues by providing technical assistance, training Kenyan athletes, and organizing cultural activities. More specifically, Kenya sent a team of 25 table tennis players to China for training. The team, from Kenya's Oshwal Sports Complex Table Tennis Club, returned to Nairobi after a month of professional training at the Zhengding International Table Tennis Training Center in China's Hebei Province ("Kenya Eyes China," 2018). Discussions on sports development were also held in 2018 during the FOCAC meeting, with President Uhuru Kenyatta leading the Kenyan delegation to China.

3. CHINA'S FOREIGN AID IN KENYA AS A TOOL OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The fact that Kenya was classified as a “lower middle-income economy” as of 2014 and therefore ineligible for conditional loans from international financial institutions was one of the most important factors that made it possible to evaluate China's aid from a public diplomacy perspective (Carmody et al., 2022, 65–66; “Kenya Eyes China,” 2018). Kenya's classification as a “lower middle-income economy” presented an opportunity for China to increase its influence in the region and realize its strategic objectives. Since President Xi Jinping took office, China has been increasingly engaged with foreign aid deliveries, specifically in the areas of development, infrastructure, construction, and health. For example, in August 2013, construction began on the Chinese-funded a 5300 square meter expansion of Gatundu Level IV Hospital in Kenya which includes a five-storey, modern medical wing with four lifts, outpatient services, emergency department, 12 intensive care beds, 84 beds, medical laboratory, maternity unit, operating theatre, wards and various medical equipment units including CT scanners and X-ray scanners. Moreover, the Chinese Government has allocated 380 million Kenyan shillings to improve several district-level hospitals in Kenya, such as Kakamega Hospital, Nyamira Hospital, Nyeri Hospital, and Malindi Hospital (Gikiri, 2017, 14). China's investments in the health sector through such projects not only strengthen Kenya's health infrastructure, but also positively affect China's image in the region.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects play a paramount role in bolstering China's presence in Kenya, contributing considerably to the country's development in transport, communications, and finance. These projects helped elevate Kenya's position as a major economic hub in the East African region. Notably, The China Exim Bank funded 90% of the US\$3.6 billion for the 485-kilometer Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) that connects Nairobi, the capital, with Mombasa, Kenya's largest port (Munda, 2019). This railway has provided a crucial transport link for both domestic and international traders (Jing, 2024). It should also be underlined that this railway project is an important factor in the increase in Kenya's debt to China from USD 756 million in 2014 to USD 6.47 billion in 2019 (Olander, 2020). BRI projects also facilitated the flow of China's foreign aid to Kenya, contrasting the predominantly small-scale approach of Western donors with China's emphasis on large-scale initiatives (Filcan, Huang, Yim, and Nielson, 2024, 10).

This high level of economic interaction between China and Kenya fosters corporate cooperation and job opportunities. To demonstrate this, in 2018, almost 400 Chinese corporations were actively operating in Kenya, providing over 130 thousand work opportunities (Nyamai, 2018). One of the most striking aspects of Chinese public diplomacy practices in Kenya during the Xi Jinping era has been the role of companies. These companies are engaged in a broad range of activities and projects that extend beyond mere economic relations, encompassing infrastructure projects and aid provision. This approach suggests a critical shift because China is trying to enhance its influence in Kenya. For instance, China Communications Construction

Co. (CCCC) provided two 800-cubic-meter water tanks to the Kajiado County Government for the Kimuka Community Water Project. CCCC, a majority state-owned enterprise of the Chinese government, undertook the project as a corporate social responsibility initiative alongside the Kenya Railway Corporation (Xia, 2018). China Railway 21st Bureau Group Co. Ltd, a branch of China Railway Construction Corporation, provided trucks and equipment to help fix the Athi River Bridge (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022c). This assistance, including infrastructure and construction investments, provided by large-scale Chinese companies in Kenya can be considered a sign of a change in China's post-2000s public diplomacy dynamic (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022d).

On March 8, 2018, the Chinese Embassy in Kenya donated 130,000 USD worth of medical equipment through Beyond Zero Charity (超越零点”基金会), which was initiated by the First Lady of Kenya. The donated medical equipment included beds, operating tables, infusion pumps, syringe pumps, and baby incubators and was planned to be distributed via the Beyond Zero Charity to Nairobi and Tana River Counties to improve maternal and child health. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese government marked the occasion with a 5-year commitment to the charity (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022e). In addition, in December 2019, the Chinese government signed an agreement to donate \$1 million to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the procurement and distribution of medical equipment and medicines in Kenya through the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund (SSCAF) until 31 December 2021 (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022f). This agreement is an example of China's foreign aid through international organizations and the institutionalization of public diplomacy. On June 30, 2022, the Chinese Embassy in Kenya and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) held a ceremony to celebrate the completion of this "maternal, newborn, and children's health project". The project offered medical materials and training to 159 health facilities in 8 counties across Kenya, which was reported to benefit more than 3 million people, especially in the remote parts of the country. Similar projects were launched in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Zimbabwe (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022g).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China's health assistance to Kenya was remarkable and could be assessed from the public diplomacy perspective. During this period, medical equipment such as surgical masks, protective gowns, and respirators became a primary need in Kenya. Nairobi Hospital has received 500 KN95 masks from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Kenya to assist hospital staff in COVID-19 cases. Kenya received approximately 20,000 test kits and 100,000 face masks (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022h). Moreover, with the initiatives of Peng Liyuan, First Lady of China, China donated a batch of anti-epidemic supplies to Kenya. The donation was organized by the Organization of African First Ladies for Development, which has turned its attention to helping mothers and children in the fight against COVID-19 (Dreher, Fuchs,

Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022i). This was followed by a second batch of anti-pandemic supplies to Kenya for supporting its fight against COVID-19 (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022j). In the context of public diplomacy, these donations symbolize China's solidarity and friendship with Kenya and send a strong message of support and unity to the recipient country, strengthening bilateral relations.

Figure 1 China's Projects in Kenya Between 2013 And 2020⁴

Year	Projects' Details
2013	China Offers 48 Scholarships for Kenyan Students To Study In China
2013	China Donates 80 million Ksh Worth Of Equipment To Kenya To Fight Poaching
2013	Chinese Government Provides \$11 Million Grant for Gatundu Level Iv Hospital Expansion Project
2013	Icbc Loans Usd 80 million For Athi River Medium Speed Diesel (Msd) Power Plant
2013	Chinese Government Provides Grant Worth Ksh 3 billion For China-Africa Joint Research Center Construction Project
2013	China Eximbank Provides \$103 Million Commercial Loan for Phase 2 Of Technical and Vocational Training Laboratories (Tivet) Project (Linked To #46982)
2013	China Development Bank Loans \$109 Million Usd to Kenya Airways for Lease Of Aircraft
2014	China Eximbank Provides Rmb 660 million Government Concessional Loan for Phase 2 Of Nairobi 132kv And 66kv Network Upgrade And Reinforcement Project (Linked To Project Id#36048)
2014	China Eximbank Provides \$1.6 Billion Preferential Buyer's Credit for Phase 1 Of the Standard Gauge Railway Project (Linked To Project Id#37103, #47025)
2014	Chinese Government Provides Grant Worth Kes 1.09 billion To Establish International Language and Culture Center At Kenyatta University
2014	Chinese Donated \$20,000 Usd Anti-Poaching Equipment to Kenya
2014	Chinese Donated 8 Infant Incubators to Pumwani Maternity Hospital
2014	China Eximbank Provides \$1.903 Billion Buyer's Credit Loan for Phase 1 Of Standard Gauge Railway Project (Linked to Project Id#31777 And

⁴ Author's calculations from AidData, Project Home China.aiddata.org, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://china.aiddata.org/>.

	#47025)
2014	China Donates Wildlife Conservation Materials to Kenya (Linked to Project Id#36051)
2014	China Grants "Chinese Ambassador Scholarship" Worth 2 million Shillings To 20 Kenyan Students (Linked To #59751)
2014	Chinese Embassy Donates Teaching Devices to A Primary School in Kenya
2015	Chinese Embassy Contributes to Donation Of \$64,094 To Terrorist Attack Survivors at Moi University
2015	China Grants Kenya 102 million Ksh to Assist Kenya in Hosting Wto Conference
2015	China Eximbank Provides Rmb 867.2 million Government Concessional Loan For 54.66 Mw Garissa Solar Power Plant Construction Project
2015	China Eximbank Provides \$1.39 Billion Buyer's Credit Loan for Phase 2a Of The Standard Gauge Railway Project (Linked To Project Id#37103, #31777)
2015	Confucius Institute and Donghua University of China Student And Faculty Bodies Donate 720,000 Kenyan Shillings To Garissa University College Attack Victims (Linked To #37474)
2015	China Donates \$537,000 Worth of Equipment to Kenyan Wildlife Service
2015	Chinese Government Provides Industrialization Education and Training to Senior Kenyan Officials
2015	Chinese Government Donates Supplies for Somali Refugees in Kenya
2016	China Eximbank Provides \$181.8 Million Buyer's Credit Loan for Nairobi Inland Container Depot (Icd) Yard and Access Road Project
2017	China Development Bank Provides \$67.3 Million Buyer's Credit Loan for Supply Of Computed Tomography (Ct) Scanners To Gok Hospitals Project (Linked To Project Id#52926)
2017	Chinese Government Grants 800,000 Usd for the 800 Villages Digital Television Project (Linked To #57618)
2017	Chinese Embassy Contributes to Donation Of \$154,664 Worth of Food Supplies to Kenya For Drought Relief
2017	Chinese Government Donates 150 million Rmb in Food Assistance to Kenya for Drought Relief
2017	Chinese Government Grants \$5 Million To Wfp in Kenya for Food Aid to Refugees
2017	Chinese Government Grants Scholarships To 128 Kenyan Students In 2017
2018	Stecol Corporation Donates Water Storage Tank to Kitoo Primary School in Kenya
2018	China Communications Construction Company Launches Kimuka

	Community Water Project
2018	China Railway Construction Corporation Branch Offers Emergency Assistance to Reopen Road in Kenya
2018	Cccc Sends Workers and Equipment
2019	According To the University of Nairobi, 19 Students Had Received A Scholarship Worth 1.5 Million Kenyan Shillings, And Press Photos From The Chinese Embassy In Kenya Showed The Ambassador Presenting Scholars From The University Of Kenyatta With A 1.5 Million Kenyan Shilling Check, Scholars From Moi University With A 1 Million Kenyan Shilling Check, And Scholars From Egerton University With A 1 Million Kenyan Shilling Check.
2020	China Donates Ventilator to Kenya in September 2020 To Combat Covid-19
2020	China Donates Second Batch of Covid-19 Medical Materials to Kenya
2020	China Donates 10 Baggage Scanning Devices to Airports in Kenya
2020	China Donates Anti-Epidemic Supplies to Kenya in April 2020

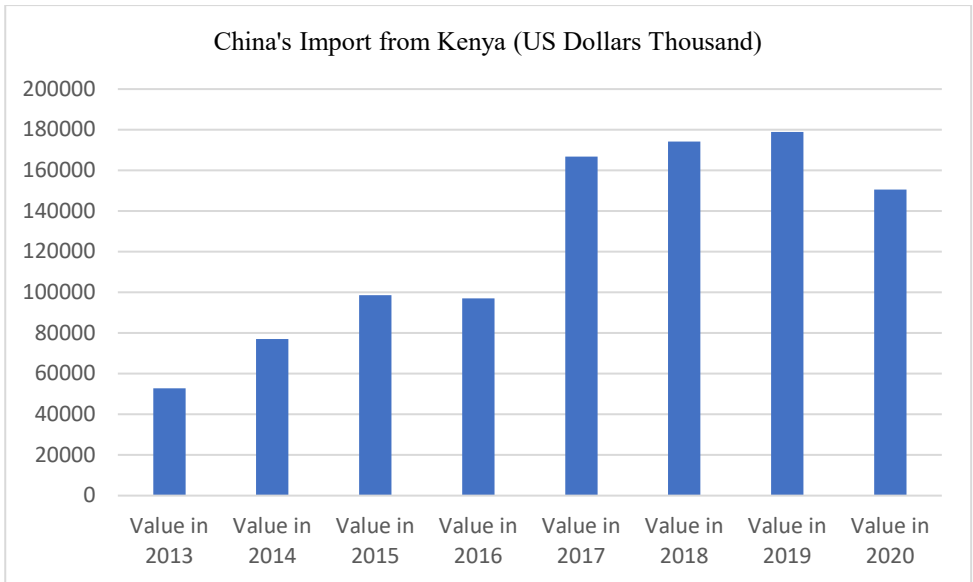
According to AidData publications, China's investments in Kenya in 2013 and 2020 were mainly focused on education and cultural exchange, health care, infrastructure development and humanitarian aid. Under the education pillar, by 2013, China provided scholarships to 48 Kenyan students to study in China. In 2014, grants worth KES 1.09 billion were given to establish the International Language and Culture Center at Kenyatta University and 20 Kenyan students were awarded scholarships worth KES 2 million under the “Chinese Ambassador Scholarship”. This kind of educational assistance has increased interest in Chinese culture and language in Kenya and strengthened cultural ties between the two countries.

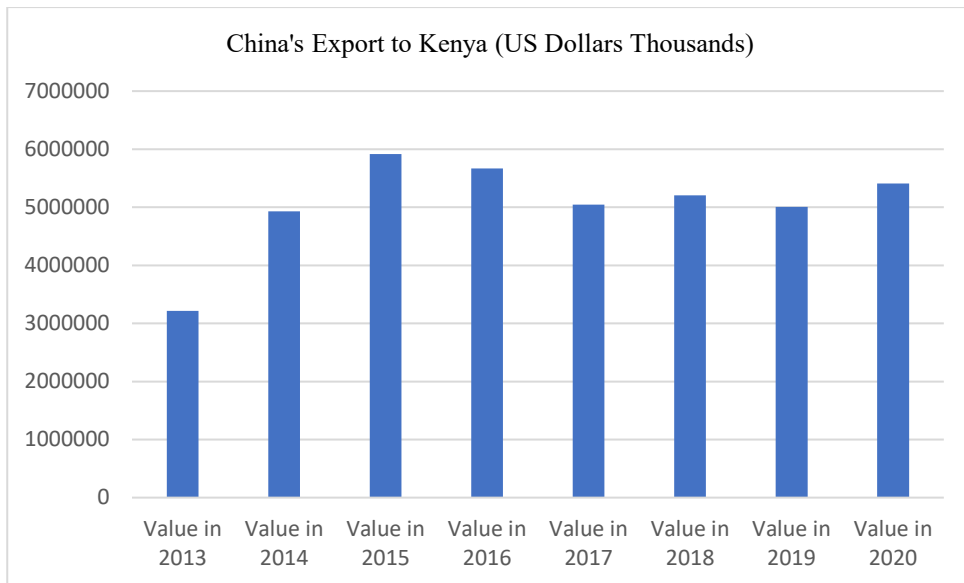
In terms of health aid, the 5300 square meter expansion project of Gatundu Level IV Hospital, which started in 2013 with a grant of \$11 million, continued the same year when China allocated KES 380 million to upgrade various district hospitals in Kenya. Health assistance continued with the donation of 8 infant incubators to Pumwani Maternity Hospital and donations of ventilators and medical supplies to Kenya to combat COVID-19 during the pandemic.

In terms of infrastructure and development projects, since 2013, it continued with an \$80 million loan for the Athi River Medium Speed Diesel (MSD) Power Plant, a KES 3 billion grant for the construction of the China-Africa Joint Research Center, a RMB 660 million loan for Phase 2 of the Nairobi 132kv and 66kv Network Upgrade and Strengthening Project, a \$1.6 billion priority buyer's loan for Phase 1 of the Standard Gauge Railway Project, and a \$1.39 billion buyer's loan for Phase 2A of the Standard Gauge Railway Project. These Chinese-funded infrastructure projects are making significant contributions to Kenya's economic development. These investments in transportation, energy and research infrastructure are boosting

Kenya's trade and logistics capacity. Major projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway facilitate trade and support Kenya's potential as a regional trade hub. These projects strengthen China's public diplomacy and reinforce trade relations between the two countries. Similarly, projects like the highway between Nairobi and Thika, built by China, at a cost of US\$ 353 million, not only connects industrial zones but also attracts local tourists, contributing to China's image and boosting its activities ("Road Construction Projects," 2013). Vocational and technological investments such as the \$103 million commercial loan for the second phase of the Technical and Vocational Education Laboratories (TIVET) Project and the \$67.3 million loan for the supply of Computed Tomography (CT) Scanners to hospitals in Kenya are important investments that demonstrate China's potential to improve Kenya's capacity development. Supporting efforts to combat poaching, providing donations to victims of terrorist attacks, offering food aid during droughts, and providing food aid to refugees, as seen in the reports of AidData, were some of the initiatives that significantly improved China's reputation in Kenya.

Figure 2 China's Import and Export with Kenya Between 2013-2020





Source: International Trade Center, Trade map - Bilateral trade between China and Kenya, <https://intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics#import-of-goods>.

While Chinese investments create significant development opportunities for Kenya, their impact on Kenya’s commercial capacity is also a subject of considerable debate. Large-scale projects such as hydrocarbon facilities, road construction and the Lamu port project increase public satisfaction and support China’s public diplomacy activities. However, this raises questions about Kenya’s dependence on foreign donors and data on imports from China (Oyugi, Okoth, and Odhiambo, 2023). Looking at the graphs, while there are some fluctuations in China’s exports to Kenya, the steady growth in Kenya’s exports to China is a positive sign. Especially after 2013, there has been a significant increase in Kenya’s exports to China, and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has played an important role in this increase. This growth shows that Kenya’s trade capacity and export potential are strengthening. However, Kenya’s dependence on external donors needs to be reduced and its local production capacity needs to be increased.

China’s investments in Kenya, infrastructure projects, and trade relations contribute significantly to Kenya’s economic growth. However, the impacts of these investments on sustainable development and local production capacities should be carefully assessed. The future of China-Kenya relations depends on careful planning of local development policies as well as economic and trade strategies. Increasing Kenya’s foreign trade capacity, supporting local production, and reducing external dependency are critical to long-term economic sustainability and are also of great importance to China’s public diplomacy activities.

CONCLUSION

The diplomatic relations between China and Kenya were formed in the 1960s. During the era of Xi Jinping, public diplomacy tools such as culture and media were actively employed, along with a more assertive use of foreign aid through projects like BRI. High-level visits between China and Kenya have facilitated discussions on critical issues, leading to bilateral negotiations on education, investment and technology, and pursue a more proactive foreign policy approach. These endeavors have eventuated in over 1,000 Kenyan students studying in China by 2016. The cultural dimension of public diplomacy, especially through language learning and exchange programs, takes a crucial role in promoting a better understanding of China in Kenya and helped to consolidate relationship between the two countries. Large investments in Confucius institutes and China's influence on the Kenyan education system were closely related to public diplomacy activities. Therefore, the education landscape, with over 144 universities and colleges across 47 different regions of Kenya has been modified, benefiting more than 200,000 students. Additionally, the TVET project, has strengthened Kenya's international visibility and expanded satisfaction with Chinese products and projects within Kenyan society.

Since 2014, China's foreign aid has been at the center of public diplomacy activities in Kenya as Kenya has experienced limitations in accessing preferential foreign aid channels from international financial institutions. Chinese foreign aid to Kenya has concentrated on a number of leading areas, including health, especially hospital upgrades, infrastructure projects like the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and support with vaccines and medicines during the pandemic. These efforts helped China promote its country image in Kenya. Despite more than 20 Chinese projects and development cooperation initiatives in Kenya since 2013, Kenya's exports to China have experienced marginal growth. This suggests that the relationship between the two countries is mainly operated by pragmatic considerations and public diplomacy efforts.

RETORİĞİN ÖTESİNDE: SİYASİ-EKONOMİK MERCEKTEN ÇİN'İN KENYA'DAKİ KAMU DİPLOMASİSİ (2013-2020)

1. GİRİŞ

Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti'nin 1949'daki kuruluşundan 1955 Bandung Konferansı'na kadar Çin'in Afrika ülkeleriyle olan ilişkisi çoğunlukla hükümet dışı ve sınırlı ticari bağlara sahipti. Çin'in Kenya ile 1963 yılındaki resmi diplomatik ilişkilerinin başlangıcı, Çin'in özellikle Kenya ile ilişkilerinde yumuşak gücünü geliştirerek Afrika devletleriyle ilişkilerini genişletme çabalarında hayati bir başlangıç adımı teşkil etmiş oldu. Yıllar geçtikçe Çin, kamu diplomasisi ve uluslararası ilişkilerinde itibar ve imajının önemini daha iyi anladığını göstermiştir. Çinli akademik ve siyasi çevreler, diğer devletlerin ve insanların desteğini kazanmak için yumuşak güce

odaklanarak medya, kültür, siyaset ve mali yardım yoluyla Çin'in imajını ve itibarını geliştirmeye yönelik süreçler üzerinde çalışmaktadır. Kültür, Çin'in Kenya'daki kamu diplomasisinde kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Çin ve Kenya arasındaki kültürel değişim programları, iş birliğini ve kaynakların seferber edilmesini teşvik ettiği için büyük önem taşımaktadır. Aynı zamanda, kamu diplomasisi faaliyetlerinin bir parçası olarak Çin'in Kenya'da açtığı Konfüçyüs Enstitülerinin Çin'in ticari ve endüstriyel uygulamalarını meşrulaştırdığına ve Çin kültürünün cazibesini sergilediğine inanılmaktadır. Son olarak, burslar, kültürel merkezler ve insani yardım gibi dış yardımlar, kültürel alışverişleri ve iyi niyeti teşvik ederek kamu diplomasisinde kritik bir araç olarak hizmet etmekte ve bu da medyanın donör ülkeye yönelik olumlu algılarını şekillendirmek için destekleyebilmektedir.

2. ÇİN'İN GELENEKSEL KAMU DİPLOMASİSİ FAALİYETLERİ

ARAÇLARI

2013 yılında Başkan Xi Jinping dönemindeki ilk elit ziyaret Başkan Uhuru Kenyatta'dan geldi. Başkan Xi Jinping ve Başkan Kenyatta 19 Ağustos 2013 tarihinde Pekin'deki Büyük Halk Salonu'nda düzenlenen bir imza töreni sırasında bir araya geldi. Başkan Uhuru Kenyatta, Kenyalı ve Çinli iş adamlarını her iki ülkede de ekonomiyi canlandırarak ve istihdamı arttıracak stratejiler benimsemeye çağırdı. Başkan Kenyatta'nın Çin'e gerçekleştirdiği ilk devlet ziyareti, Kenya'da kaçak avcılıkla mücadeleye verilen destek de dâhil olmak üzere birçok olumlu gelişmeyi içeriyordu. Bu dönemdeki yüksek profilli ziyaretler, ikili iş birliği ve artan kurumsal bir şekilde resmi anlaşmalar gibi bir dizi kayda değer gelişmeye yol açtı. 2003'ten önceki dönemle karşılaştırıldığında, büyükelçiler ve diğer yüksek profilli yetkililer arasındaki elit ziyaretlerde bir artış olmuştur. Kamu diplomasisi uygulamalarına paralel olarak bu ziyaretler daha kapsamlı ve sık hale gelmiştir.

Eğitim programları, özellikle değişim programları ve dil eğitimi, öğrenme sürecini geliştirmekte ve kültürel bağları bütünleştirmektedir. Öğrenciler, alıcı ve donör ülkelerin kültürlerinin yaygınlaştırılması için elçi görevi görürken, teknik eğitimler gibi kurslar alıcı ülkede kapasite geliştirilmesine yol açmaktadır. Ayrıca Çin, Kenya'nın eğitim altyapısını geliştirmek için de adımlar atmıştır. 2003-2020 yılları arasında eğitimde kamu diplomasisi uygulamaları etkin bir şekilde uygulanarak kurumsallaşmaya ve çeşitli projelere katkı sağlanmıştır. Bu atılım, Çin'in Kenya'daki aktif rolü ve ikili anlaşmalar yoluyla Kenya okul müfredatının revize edilmesiyle yakından bağlantılıdır. Ayrıca, 2011 yılından bu yana Kenya'da mesleki eğitime yönelik başarılı bir iş birliği projesi, 47 ilçedeki 144 üniversite ve yüksekokulu geliştirip dönüştürerek 200.000'den fazla öğrenciyi fayda sağlamıştır.

3. BİR KAMU DİPLOMASİSİ ARACI OLARAK ÇİN DIŞ YARDIMLARI

Çin'in yardımlarını kamu diplomasisi perspektifinden değerlendirmeyi mümkün kılan en önemli faktörlerden biri, Kenya'nın 2014 yılı itibariyle "alt orta gelirli ekonomi" olarak sınıflandırıldığı için uluslararası finans kuruluşlarından şartlı kredi almaya uygun olmamasıydı. Bu tarihten sonra başlayan Çin yardımları, Çin'in stratejilerini hayata geçirmek için bir fırsat sağladı. Başkan Xi Jinping'in göreve gelmesinden bu yana Çin, özellikle kalkınma, altyapı, inşaat ve sağlık alanlarında dış yardım teslimatlarıyla giderek daha fazla ilgileniyor. Örneğin, Ağustos 2013'te Kenya'daki Gatundu Seviye IV Hastanesi'nin Çin tarafından finanse edilen 5300 metrekaarelik genişletme inşaatına başlandı ve Çin Hükümeti birkaç ilçe düzeyindeki hastanenin iyileştirilmesi için 380 milyon Kenya şilini tahsis etti.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi (BRI) projeleri, Çin'in Kenya'daki varlığını güçlendirmede önemli bir rol oynayarak ülkenin ulaşım, iletişim ve finans alanlarındaki gelişimine önemli ölçüde katkıda bulundu. Bu projeler Kenya'nın Doğu Afrika bölgesinde önemli bir ekonomik merkez konumuna yükselmesine yardımcı oldu. Özellikle başkent Nairobi'yi Kenya'nın en büyük limanı olan Mombasa'ya bağlayan 485 kilometrelik Standart Hat Demiryolu (SGR) için harcanan 3,6 milyar ABD dolarının %90'ı Çin Exim Bank tarafından finanse edilmiştir. Ancak bu demiryolu projesinin Kenya'nın Çin'e olan borcunun 2014 yılında 756 milyon ABD dolarından 2019 yılında 6,47 milyar ABD dolarına yükselmesinde önemli bir etken olduğunun da altı çizilmelidir. Xi Jinping döneminde Kenya'daki Çin kamu diplomasisi uygulamalarının en dikkat çekici yönlerinden biri şirketlerin rolü olmuştur. Bu şirketler, sadece ekonomik ilişkilerin ötesine geçen, altyapı projelerini ve yardım sağlamayı da kapsayan geniş bir faaliyet ve proje yelpazesinde yer almaktadır.

AidData verilerine göre Çin'in 2013 ve 2020 yıllarında Kenya'ya yaptığı yatırımlar ağırlıklı olarak eğitim ve kültürel değişim, sağlık hizmetleri, altyapı geliştirme ve insani yardım konularına odaklanmıştır. 2013 ve 2015 yılları arasında eğitim değişim programları, sağlık yardımı ve SGR gibi büyük projelerin temelleri atılırken, 2016 ve 2018 yılları arasında artan seviyelerde toplumsal ve insani yardımlar bunu takip etti. Bu projeler özellikle ekonomik ve diplomatik ikili bağları güçlendirirken, eğitim, kültür ve insani yardım Çin'in kamu diplomasisi faaliyetlerini pekiştirme çabaları olarak öne çıktı.

SONUÇ

Xi Jinping döneminde kültür ve medya gibi kamu diplomasisi araçları aktif olarak kullanılmış ve BRI gibi projeler aracılığıyla dış yardımın daha iddialı bir şekilde kullanılması sağlanmıştır. Çin ve Kenya arasındaki üst düzey ziyaretler, kritik konularda tartışmaları kolaylaştırarak eğitim, yatırım ve teknoloji konularında ikili müzakerelere yol açmış ve daha proaktif bir dış politika

yaklaşımı izlemiştir. Bu çabalar 2016 yılı itibariyle 1,000'den fazla Kenyalı öğrencinin Çin'de eğitim görmesiyle sonuçlanmıştır. Kamu diplomasisinin kültürel boyutu, özellikle dil öğrenimi ve değişim programları aracılığıyla, Kenya'da Çin'in daha iyi anlaşılmasını teşvik etmede önemli bir rol üstlenmiş ve iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin pekiştirilmesine yardımcı olmuştur. Konfüçyüs enstitülerine yapılan büyük yatırımlar ve Çin'in Kenya eğitim sistemi üzerindeki etkisi kamu diplomasisi faaliyetleriyle yakından ilişkilidir. Bu nedenle, Kenya'nın 47 farklı bölgesinde 144'ten fazla üniversite ve yüksekokulun bulunduğu eğitim ortamı değiştirilerek 200.000'den fazla öğrenciye fayda sağlanmıştır. Ayrıca, TVET projesi Kenya'nın uluslararası görünürlüğünü güçlendirmiş ve Kenya toplumunda Çin ürün ve projelerinden duyulan memnuniyeti arttırmıştır.

Çin'in Kenya'ya yönelik dış yardımları, başta hastane iyileştirmeleri olmak üzere sağlık, Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi (BRI) kapsamındaki Standart Ölçü Demiryolu (SGR) gibi altyapı projeleri ve pandemi sırasında aşı ve ilaç desteği gibi bir dizi önde gelen alana yoğunlaştı. Bu çabalar Çin'in Kenya'daki ülke imajını geliştirmesine yardımcı oldu. 2013'ten bu yana Kenya'da 20'den fazla Çin projesi ve kalkınma iş birliği girişimine rağmen Kenya'nın Çin'e ihracatı marjinal bir büyüme gösterdi.

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Fikir veya Kavram / <i>Idea or Notion</i>	Araştırma hipotezini veya fikrini oluşturmak / <i>Form the research hypothesis or idea</i>	Cengiz Mert BULUT Esra SARIOĞLU
Tasarım / <i>Design</i>	Yöntemi, ölçeği ve deseni tasarlamak / <i>Designing method, scale and pattern</i>	Esra SARIOĞLU Cengiz Mert BULUT
Veri Toplama ve İşleme / <i>Data Collecting and Processing</i>	Verileri toplamak, düzenlenmek ve raporlamak / <i>Collecting, organizing and reporting data</i>	Esra SARIOĞLU Cengiz Mert BULUT
Tartışma ve Yorum / <i>Discussion and Interpretation</i>	Bulguların değerlendirilmesinde ve sonuçlandırılmasında sorumluluk almak / <i>Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings</i>	Cengiz Mert BULUT Esra SARIOĞLU
Literatür Taraması / <i>Literature Review</i>	Çalışma için gerekli literatürü taramak / <i>Review the literature required for the study</i>	Esra SARIOĞLU Cengiz Mert BULUT