

The Confucius Institute at Suez Canal University: A Tool in China's Public Diplomacy

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Abstract

This thesis will analyze the Confucius Institute at Suez Canal University in Egypt. Since 2004 China has been establishing Confucius Institute around the World. The official task of these institutes is to teach Chinese language and culture to foreign publics. However, there are many different opinions about these institutes, and thus superiority of a certain position is absent. Some of the previous literature perceive Confucius Institute as Soft Power instrument while some other argue that the institutes simply aim to teach Chinese language and culture. This thesis, which is an interview study, asks about the power mechanism operating in Confucius Institute at Suez Canal University in Egypt. Its aim is to find out whether Chinese political and economic interests work at this institute. Also, since most of the previous literature lack empirical backgrounds in their studies which make them more abstract, this study by analyzing the Confucius Institute at Suez Canal University adds its result to previous findings as an attempt to make the picture about the nature of Confucius Institutes clearer.

Keywords: Confucius Institute, Public Diplomacy, Critical realism, Political and Economic Interests, China, Egypt

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Abbreviation

CASTTC	China Arab State Technology Transfer Center
CCs	Confucius Classrooms
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CHEC	China Harbor Engineering Company
CI	Confucius Institute
CIs	Confucius Institutes
CIM	Confucius Institute Magazine
COSCO	Chinese Ocean Shipping Company
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAC	Forum On China Africa Cooperation
HRD	Human Resource Development
HSK	Chinese Proficiency Test (The Hànyǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshì)
RQ	Research Question
SCU	Suez Canal University
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
SOC	State Owned Company
SQs	Sub Questions
TEDA	Tianjin Economic-Technological Development Area
TOEFL	Test Of English as a Foreign Language
USD	United States Dollars
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1. Introduction

The idea of establishing Confucius Institutes (CIs) goes back to 2002 when Chinese authorities began to think about setting up an institute which advocates teaching Chinese language and culture in foreign countries (Li 2008; Hartig 2012; Flew and Hartig 2014). In 2004, the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), officially announced the establishment of the first CI in South Korea.

Indeed, the advocacy of Chinese language and culture, which are the formal reasons behind the establishment of CI, occurred in tandem with China's global rise. The roots causes of this rise or re-emergence of China can be traced back to 1980's when then Chinese governments had successfully implemented different trade liberalization policies and political reforms, which have worked as the springboard for the development of China's economy.

These policy changes and reforms have resulted in China's rapid economic growth. Chinese GDP now makes up more than 10% of World GDP (World Bank 2016). In the same context, at the World Economic Forum which has taken place in 2017 at Davos in Switzerland, the Chinese president, Xi Jinping has announced his willingness to contribute more to the world by taking the current role of the USA as a leading player in free trade and globalization (Xi 2017).

Parallel to its economic growth, China's expenditure on the military sector has increased too. By the end of the Cold War, China began to spend more on the defense and security sectors. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, in reality, China is spending almost twice of what it officially reports. These official reports show military and security spending has increased from 10 billion USD in the 1990's to 114 billion USD in 2012. The report estimates that China's actual expenditure is about 216 billion USD. Also, China has been able to modernize its security defense, and it invests in advanced missiles and cyberspace capacities (United States Department of Defense 2013). Consequently, the amalgamation of rapid economic growth and military development in the view of some scholars have intensified international concerns about China's rise and the prospect of seeing it as a possible threat (Bernstein and Munro 1997; Tkacik 2006:2010; Cole 2010).

In addition to economic and military power, China has realized its need for the additional type

of power, namely 'Soft power'.¹ The critical juncture in Chinese efforts to accomplish soft power was in 2007 when then Chinese President Hu Jintao related the idea of rejuvenation of China to the ability of the country to deploy soft power. This approach reflects the Chinese perception of its position in the world and how it is moving from being a regional power to be a global power. The Chinese authorities have realized that being a super power would entail new methods when traditional political and economic means are not sufficient (Shambaugh 2016; Economy 2016; Nye 2016). Subsequently, Chinese authorities have developed a strategy for their soft power and have determined what it constitutes. These various elements of Chinese soft power include 'Confucianism' and the 'One Belt One Road' policy (Economy 2016).²

Given the fact that sometimes the line between China's public diplomacy and its soft power is blurred the two terms have been used interchangeably. In fact, some scholars argue that China lacks true soft power because the authorities construct its alleged soft power and it is not organic (Economy 2016; Shambaugh 2016). Nevertheless, it has been argued that public diplomacy is a precondition and an instrument for inducing soft power (Hartig 2016:49). Since China has realized the need for achieving soft power, its general diplomacy has intensified too. In 2012, Hu Jintao stressed the need for public diplomacy and cultural exchanges (Hu J. 2012), and two years later Xi Jinping (2014) has asserted that although many people greet China's performance, some others are afraid of this issue. Therefore, he has stated the importance of public diplomacy for China's economic growth and its rapid development (Xi J. 2014). (Xinhua 2014).

One part of China's public diplomacy concerns working with its language and culture. The previous Chinese presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao have expressed this matter by notifying the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in their respective reports in 2002 and 2007. They have highlighted the importance of language and culture in serving China's national

¹ Joseph Nye raised the term of Soft power, and it means, the ability of an actor to receive what it craves by attraction and through setting the agenda and shaping the preferences of the others (Nye 2004:5). The idea of China's soft power will be discussed more in the section on China's foreign policy.

² This policy is China's new slogan, and it was presented by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. This strategy is about establishing a Maritime Silk Road and reviving the ancient Silk Road which connects China to the Europe. Additionally, it resembles China's attempt to widen its global economic activities in a multipolar world (The State Council of China 2015).

interests and enhancing its capacity to play a major role in the world (Jiang 2002; Hu 2007). Subsequently, China has set up CI which officially is concerned with teaching Chinese language and culture. However, previous literature disagrees upon nature of CI and the role they play in China's foreign policy. One reason is that information about CIs are vague, as CIs lack a solo model and detailed rules and regulations for what and how they should act. As stated by Liu Yandong, then Vice Premier, the CIs should be diverse, take different roles and adapt themselves to local circumstances (Yandong 2009 cited in Vermaak, 2010:8).

Furthermore, CIs are some of China's most ambivalent Institute, since it is unclear what project of CI implies and what it implements on the ground. On the one hand, CIs have been criticized for being a tool of China's foreign policy for exercising soft power (Larsson 2008). On the other hand, CIs has been perceived as educational institutes, which are only concerned with teaching China's language and culture. This position adds that CIs cannot be soft power tools because they are demand driven and thus the risk of being part of a propaganda project is too low (Hartig 2016).

Today, there are approximately 500 CIs, and 1000 Confucius Classrooms (CCs) in the world, of them 46 CIs and 23 CCs are in Africa. Since 2008, Hanban has established two CIs in Egypt, one at Cairo University and another one at Suez Canal University (SCU). The increase in the number of CIs in Africa comes at a time where China improves its public diplomacy with Africa through different projects, like 'Social Development Cooperation' where one part of it is about establishing of CI (FOCAC 2015).

1.1 Aim and Research Question

Because of disagreement about the nature of CIs, the results of previous literature cannot be generalized. This thesis aims to study one of these non-studied CIs and which is at SCU in Egypt. So far, there has been a few studies done on CIs, and our knowledge about this Institute is inadequate. Also, based on previous literature, the disagreement on nature of this Institute becomes evident. Furthermore, some other preliminary evidence and facts, like the strategic position of Suez Canal, make one suspicious about real nature of this Institute. Therefore, because a large part of previous literature takes a critical position toward CIs and because of China's overall political and economic engagement in Africa, this thesis adopts a questionable position toward CI at SCU and identifies CI as a potential actor in

China's public diplomacy. In addition, China's 'One Road One Belt Policy' which includes Egypt and specifically Suez region to the plan strengthen this idea. Furthermore, primary considerations make this thesis assume that CI at SCU is more than an institute which only teaches Chinese language and culture, even though cultural and language activities benefit China's national interests. The thesis assumes that in addition to cultural and language activities, CI accomplishes other activities.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to find out whether there are hidden mechanisms, namely political and economic interests operating at CI in SCU in Egypt. Consequently, this thesis makes two assumptions about role and nature of this CI and which can be substantiated by finding evidence. The assumptions are: 1) CI at SCU serves China's political interests, and 2) CI at SCU supports China's economic development. In this thesis, I seek to find evidence, which can either substantiate or discredit the assumptions. A research question (RQ) is formulated and presented below, followed by sub-questions (SQs) which will be discussed extensively in the operationalization section.

- RQ: What kind of Chinese power mechanisms are operating at and through the Confucius Institute at Suez Canal University?
- SQ: What realms are impacted by activities of this Confucius Institute?
- SQ: Are these events driven by Chinese Political and Economic interests? If yes, then how?

1.2 Why This Thesis?

Overall, the establishment of CIs around the world has been followed by criticisms. One of the critics concerns the issue of power asymmetry which characterizes Sino-African relations. These alarms take place where the number of studies done on CIs in Africa are very few and lack empirical backgrounds. Therefore, this study can provide concrete data about one of the non-studied CI in Africa. One of these non-studied CIs is located at SCU in Egypt.

Sino-Egyptian relations go many years back, and in 2016 the two countries celebrated their 60 years of diplomatic relations, and as a sign of these ties, they renamed the year of 2016 as a cultural year. Egypt is one of the biggest Muslim countries and an influential actor both in the Arab world and in Africa. Indeed, the presence of China in Egypt is significant. During my

stay in Cairo, I have met many places, which announce their readiness to provide Chinese language courses. In addition, Chinese books and flags have also been abundant.

Also, CI at SCU is in a region which has a strategic position, as Suez Canal plays a crucial role in global trade and shipment (Miniesy and Adams 2013). Recently, China has announced ‘One Belt One Road Policy’ which is thought to boost China’s economy. As it is commonly understood, maintaining economic growth is extra important for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since to a large extent, the legitimacy of CCP to hold power relies on economic growth (Shirk 2007; d’Hooghe 2005:90). Consequently, establishing CI, especially in Suez region might resemble China’s attempt to invest in this region. Therefore, this thesis aims to uncover the power mechanisms which operate at this Institute at the backdrop of China’s extending political and economic growth in Africa.

2. Method and Methodology

By reading the previous literature, I have reached the conclusion that there is no consensus about the nature and operations of CIs, and that it relatively depends on each case. However, since this thesis takes a suspicious position toward CI at SCU, it uses a critical realism approach. This method enables the thesis to penetrate the real nature of CI. Though, this thesis is not concerned with measuring how much the activities of this CI can influence the Egyptian people.

2.1 Ontology and Methodology

Since this research has a critical standpoint toward CI at SCU, it leans toward a ‘Critical Realism’ ontology. This ontology differentiates between the Real, the Actual, and the Empirical (Bhaskar 1975). What both critical realism and empirical realism (empiricism) have in common is that both argue that human being has access to reality. The different between them is that empirical realism (empiricism) claims that all dimensions of objects (reality) are observable and there is no object with the hidden feature. While, critical realism as it is shown in figure 1 below claims that the world consists of observable and non-observable aspects and that even though we observe an event, we might not be able to observe all its structure (Bhaskar 1978; 2008).

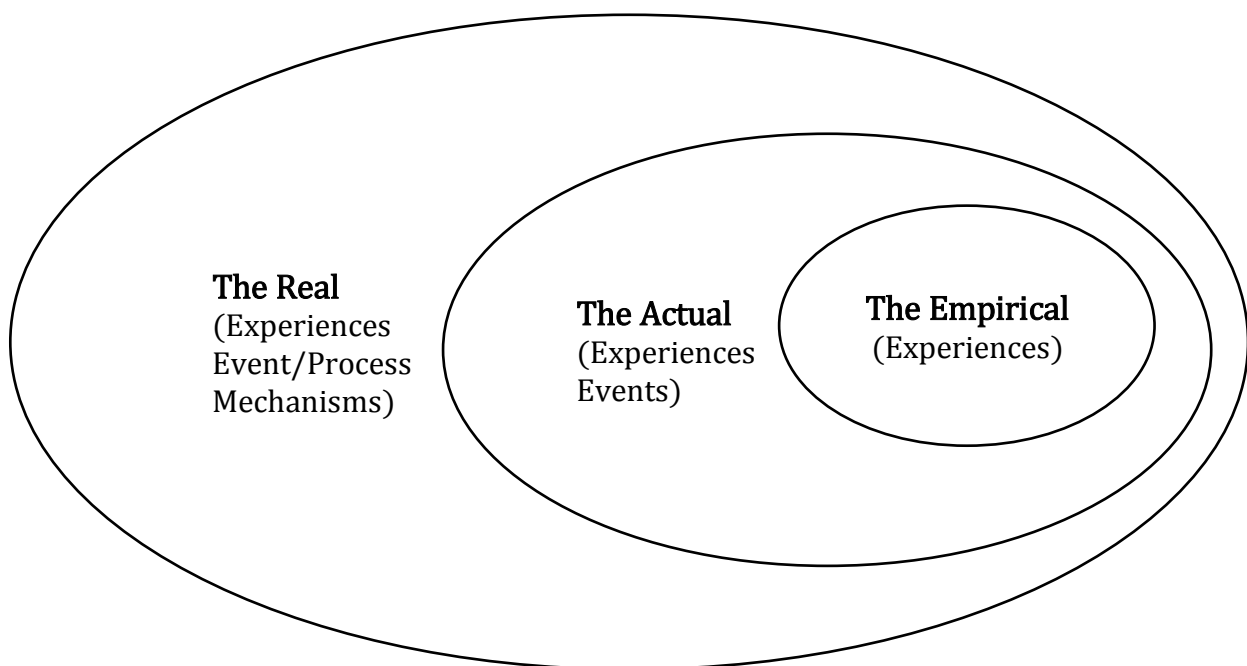


Figure 1. Different ontological conceptions of Reality (Based on Wuisman 2005).

In the domain of real, which includes both domains of actual and empirical, there are unobservable capabilities and mechanisms, which cannot be observed directly, but we can observe their effects. Thus, when these mechanisms and capacities are activated, the changes take place in the domain of ‘actual’ and which includes both observable and unobservable processes and changes. Lastly, the domain of empirical refers to a field where we can observe and experience reality directly (Bhaskar 1978; 2008).

Therefore, what is necessary for critical realism in explaining the social world is by disclosing the mechanisms that generate those events (Archer 1995). This means that the researchers should through causality and structures in the domain of real explain experiences and incidents in the realm of actual (Ayer 2011:348). The domain of real can be reached, and a profound theoretical understanding of them can be developed by being critical about experience and events (Selboe 2002). In this thesis, I seek to explain activities of CI at the domain of actual, through causality at the domain of real and to see whether this causal mechanism is compatible with and benefits China’s economic and political interests.

The adopted methodological approach for critical realism is called Retroduction. It is an approach of reasoning in which researchers can identify mechanisms that can create events (Sayer 1992:107). This strategy begins with detecting relations between events within the domain of actual. In this step, the task is to identify how such relationships happen and to hypothesize from contextualized data, non-observable structures, and mechanisms in the domain of real, which can cause these events.

The second step in retroduction is about suggesting a theoretical module. This means that the researchers postulate predictions about power mechanisms situated within the domain of real, by which if it could function in the suggested way, would explain the interesting event. The third step is the deduction, which means a search for evidence, which can either support or reject already established assumptions by analyzing the empirical findings. At this level, the result from the research should confirm whether the results confirm the hypothetical model or not (Lopez and Potter 2005:170; Leca and Naccache 2006:634-635).

2.2 Operationalization

As discussed earlier, the strategy of retroduction consists of three steps. As a first step, this

research has started in the domain of actual by focusing on different but related facts about functions of CI at SCU. So, the research has begun to connect different phenomena. The first fact is about strategic position of CI at SCU and how this post can be substantial for China. The second fact is the role of CI in China's public diplomacy, which aims to achieve its foreign policy goals. The obligation of China's foreign policy can be summarized to fulfill two tasks. The first task is to safeguard country's national interests abroad, such as enhancing China's international political role and position, and the second task is to provide a conducive environment to maintain a stable economic growth. The third fact is the previous literature which itself consists of different experiences and facts about functions of CI.

The second step in retrodution is to come up with an assumed structure in the domain of real for those phenomena. Thus, I have formulated two assumptions about functions of CI at SCU. The assumptions argue that activities of CI at SCU are to support China's political and economic interests and development in Egypt. By political and economic interests, I mean all possible advantages that in any manner can benefit politics and economics of Chinese governmental and private sectors. The third step is to seek to uncover whether the postulated type of power mechanisms exists and operates at the CI by collecting data through interviews and published documents and analyzing them through content analyze method.

Therefore, the research will examine activities of CI to search for evidence, which can either validate or dismiss the assumptions and will look for some indicators like political and economic intentions inherited in activities of CI, among other things making the commercial agreement, participating in economic activities. Thus, the research question will be divided into smaller questions, so they can be applied to the empirical findings and to capture the indicators. These questions are:

- Why is CI established at Suez Canal University? Since the reasons behind the establishment of CI can highlight political and economic interests.
- What and why are the activities done by CI and what doesn't CI do? The answers will tell me about nature of those activities and what these events mean for China and whether these activities or inactivity serve China's economic and political interests.
- How does CI operate in general and what is the power relation to the university? The answer helps to indicate any power asymmetry in the decision-making process within the management of CI or CI link to Suez Canal University. Although the research is not about 'Power' directly, however, power is there and reflects in the relation of CI to its

environment.

- What is the Institute's outlook? The answer uncovers staff's perceptions and dominated ideologies privileged in the Institute. The answers will tell me about overlooked ideas in the Institute. Hence, one can conclude whether those beliefs and aims support China's politics and economic interests.

Then, all answers in addition to other materials will be analyzed by a theory to explain different concepts, main dynamics, and the presumed relationship among them (Miles and Huberman, 2013:20). In this thesis, the collected material will be analyzed through the lens of public diplomacy to explain different activities of CI.

2.3 Method

A research design reflects a plan that guides the implementation of data collection method and data analysis method (Bryman, 2012:46-50). In this thesis, the research design is the Atheoretical type of case study where the primary research method is semi-structured interviews and analyzing method is a qualitative content analysis. Based on the research question, case study research design has been chosen as case studies to investigate the cases in question intensively and can reveal the causal mechanism and highlight the unexpected patterns in those cases. This means that researchers can pinpoint and study the indicators that best represent the hypotheses or the ideas that they are interested in (George and Bennett 2005).

Thus, by adopting a case study research design, a comprehensive study of CI at SCU will be achieved, and specifically in-depth knowledge about its aims directly and indirectly observable mechanisms and interests operating at this Institute will be gathered. This will enable me to find evidence for either substantiating or discrediting assumptions about the Chinese interests and power mechanisms working at this Institute.

However, using a case study has some limitations. The first limitation is the issue of external validity or generalization. Case studies are often criticized for being tentative to generalize their results. Even though this atheoretical case study does not aim to generate theory, however, a theoretical case study can be used in future studies for generating theories (George and Bennett 2005:75). In fact, by adding the result of this research to previous small

qualitative works, some generalizability can be derived, since some scholars accept generalizability inherited from qualitative studies (Duff 2006:70-95; Stebbins 2001:16). Another limitation concerns the freedom given to the researcher to decide what materials can be used throughout the research to support particular position (Guba and Lincoln 1981:378). To overcome this problem, I have utilized a wide range of different data.

I visited Egypt in February 2017 and conducted seven semi-structured interviews, taking in consideration Kvale's recommendation in performing interviews (Kvale 1996). I have interviewed three officials at the CI on two occasions and students of CI once. One reason behind choosing semi-structured interview is that my research question is asking about mechanisms in the domain of real. Based on critical realism the answer should be reached through intensive research methods instead of extensive ones. Then, qualitative semi-structured interviews in this thesis have been used, because they are intensive methods, which focus on interactions of different complex mechanisms in the domain of real, which cause the events within the realm of actual (Layder 1990). So, by qualitative semi-structure interviews, the reason for activities of CI will be revealed. Additionally, semi-structured interview suits my research well since my research deals with sensitive topics, such as discussing different views about purpose and functions of CI.

However, a semi-structured interview has also weaknesses since the character of the interviewee might be unique and the answers become biased (Kvale 1996). To ensure quality research, scholars have come forward with following criteria. These criteria are reliability and internal-external validity. Reliability means to which extent a study can be replicated. It can be difficult for the researcher to replicate this research because it is hard to 'freeze' the social site and maintain same circumstances and conditions which have surrounded CI. External validity refers to the ability of generalization of the findings and which is not strongest feature of qualitative research. However, this study can be useful for future studies on other CIs. Internal validity is about how correct is the conclusion which depends on how good a relation is between observation and developed theoretical idea (Bryman, 2012:389-393). Therefore, to obtain high validity and reliability in this thesis triangulation in data collection process has been used. Triangulation means using more than one method or source of data in a research and which make the study accurate, credible and precise since data are collected from more than one individual and more than one type of data (Bryman 2012: 392; Creswell 2002:280). So, in addition to conducting interviews with different people in CI, other primary sources

such as official documents and books in addition to secondary sources, like research articles and media have been used.³

Apparently, CI at SCU and individuals who will be interviewed are chosen based on a purposive sampling method. Usually, this method is used in qualitative studies where the objects of studies are selected because of their relevance.

The analyzing method is a qualitative content analysis. In this approach, the data are searched for hidden meanings and possible explanations (Bryman 2012:565). The process begins with coding or indexing, which is a procedure for reflecting the sense of collected data and put them into categories. After coding, the data is scrutinized to find themes and to draw sub positions, and in the meanwhile, the emerged issues connect to the sub-questions.

2.4 Self-Reflexivity

Reflexivity means to be critical about materials, which will be used. It is about considering what and how something will be written (O'Reilly 2005:211). Thus, by giving the findings enough space to demonstrate themselves freely and construct a portrait of the reality, I have given a chance to the CI at SCU to defend itself.

Also, since I have conducted interviews, I have been careful about how might I influence the perception of the interviewer. Also, because I look like an Egyptian, and I understand their culture and language, to a large extent, I have been perceived as an insider. I see it as an advantage because it has been easier for the staff at CI to open themselves and talk about the Institute since my research topic is a sensitive subject.

Of course, there have been some limitations, which can influence the research. The most glaring weakness is my inability to read Chinese language materials and which I tried to overcome it by using Google translate and by increasing number of research literature and number of interviews. Another limit is about the time that I have spent in Egypt. Even though I have been there for almost ten days, still it has been a short period to conduct a full

³ In the same vein, I have considered some criteria to ensure the quality of research articles. The first point is about authenticity and which considers genuinely and authorship of material. The second aspect is credibility and the awareness which should be paid to neutrality and objectivity of the publisher (Bryman 2012: 390-393).

comprehensive exam of Institute. An additional issue is the lack of a real diary for activities of CI, which could facilitate the research somewhat. What is known for me is mostly what my interviewees have told me. This could make some activities go without notice. Since most of the materials have been gathered from the trustworthy and known publisher and downloaded through LUBsearch, the issue of authenticity and credibility has been obtained.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations in this thesis will follow recommendations of the Swedish Research Council (The Swedish Research Council 2002). I have informed the participants about the aim of the research, and they have given their consent. Since I have recorded the interviews, I have asked participants for their approval. Besides, since my interviewees have high positions in CI's managements, and management of SCU and departing from no harm



policy and to avoid any problem for them in the future, their real names are not used in the thesis. Instead, their names have been changed to Li, Tang and Shi. Their gender also have been neutralized with a single gender and which will be used throughout the thesis. I have not asked for written consent because written consents are not common in Egypt and thus to ask about a such would make the participant uncomfortable and would affect the interview. The gathered data are only used for this thesis, and confidentiality is ensured. Also, all data assembled from interviews are saved in a safe place, and

only I have access to them.

3. Confucius Institutes

3.1 The History of Establishment of Confucius Institute

In 2004, the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), which operates under the supervision of the Chinese Ministry of Education, officially announced the establishment of the first CI in South Korea. Some author connects the idea of the establishment of CIs at the beginning of the new century to rise of the new generation in CCP, like Hu Jintao who has emphasized the concept of ‘Harmonious world’ (Hartig 2016:100). Some scholars argue that the idea of naming these Institutes ‘Confucius Institute’ had been suggested by Chen Zhili, previous state councilor for education, as Confucius represents Confucianism, which is a symbol of China’s traditional culture (Hartig 2016:102). Nevertheless, the name Confucius has been selected not for the sake of Confucianism (Siow 2011:1). Also, because the top Chinese leaders have realized that Mao Zedong thoughts and Marxism-Leninism principles are inefficient in persuading the Chinese public anymore (Hartig 2016:103), Also, these principles are not valued by foreign citizens. Therefore, the name Confucius has been selected.

According to Hanban, CI is a non-profitable organization which operates under Hanban supervision under the Chinese Ministry of Education (Hanban 2010). There are both CI and CC which is smaller than CI, and it is Chinese language classroom at primary and secondary schools. In addition to CI and CC, there is Confucius teaching point which is a minuscule source for teaching Chinese as it organizes lessons in Chinese language, culture, and history (Hanban 2010).

3.2 Procedure for Establishment

There are different ways for establishing CI (Hanban n.d.), and there are different modes of operations for CI (Starr 2009). However, the most common way of setting up a CI is the joint venture. In this regard, a Chinese organization, which is a university, cooperates with a foreign institution, which also tends to be universities to establish a CI (Yang 2010; Hartig 2016). The Chinese side takes the first informal step by asking foreign institutes and universities to host a CI. Nevertheless, officially the project begins when the foreign part hands in a requesting letter to Hanban and asks for the establishment of CI. If Hanban approves the request, then an agreement between the foreign part and Hanban is made and

which usually is a five-year plan. Then, the Chinese part supplies the teaching staff and course materials, while the foreign part stands for facilities and administrative staff. The management of CI is divided equally by the two parts (Zhao and Huang 2010).

The establishment of CIs in Africa, including CI at SCU, are formally linked to China's foreign aid to Africa. This fact is mentioned in almost every FOCAC summit. In the sixth FOCAC summit's action plan (2016-2018), China has announced its willingness to support the establishment of more CIs in the continent (FOCAC 2015). This fact is a direct and definite sign of how CI is one part of China's foreign policy.

3.3 Aim and Activities of Confucius Institutes

According to Hanban the main aim of CIs is to fulfill the needs of people from different countries who want to learn the Chinese language. Moreover, CIs seek to improve their understanding of the Chinese language and culture, to enhance educational ties and cultural collaboration between China and other countries, and to help to build a harmonious world (Hanban n.d.).

Then the constitution of CI and By-laws of CI provide the procedure for how CI can work to realize these aims, explicitly by doing following activities. First, teaching Chinese language and culture. Second, educating Chinese language teachers. Third, conducting the Chinese Proficiency Test Known as (HSK) test which is the translation of The Hànyǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshì and which equalizes Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Fourth, promoting and exchanging cultural activities and teaching resources with other countries. Sixth, providing information and advisory service about China's education and culture and so on (Hanban n.d.).

Today, there are 15 teachers at CI at SCU Institute and who are responsible for performing different activities.⁴ Cultural activities in this Institute consist of different activities, which come up to 55 activities per annum (Tang 2017). These activities include managing exhibitions, seminars, competitions in speeches, poems, dance, the art of Kong Foo,

⁴ Of the 15 teachers, there are 13 female teachers and only two male teachers at CI. The management told me that they have asked Hanban to have more male teachers and when I asked about the reason they said that first because the society around CI is a patriarchy society, and they should take care of female teachers. The second reason is that sometimes CI needs to get something done outside of the Institute, and male teachers are more capable of performing those tasks.

Acrobatics, cooking, and other cultural events. In addition, CI holds HSK test during March of every year. HSK test is so popular that students from all over Egypt come to take this test. Interestingly, CI sends the exams to China to be corrected by specialists.

Also, Hanban states that “CI shall not involve or participate in any activities that are not consistent with the missions of Confucius Institutes” (Hanban n.d.). However, this definition is a vague and an obscure definition because it does not explicitly determine the duty of CIs about the lines and how far can CIs go when they do their cultural activities.

Another important issue concerns the issue of funding of CIs. This issue is somewhat vague, but the official rule is equal financing (Starr 2009). Some studies estimate that Hanban’s expenditure at CIs has reached 295 million USD in 2014 (Xu Lin 2015:12), where German Goethe Institute has spent 215 million euro in 2015 (Hartig 2016:106). When I discussed this issue with management of CI, they refused to answer me and argued that CI at SCU receives money in advance based on the preliminary numbers of activities, as Hanban pays per activity. At the end of the year, both parts go through activities done by the Institute and reset the account (Tang 2017).

4. Literature Review

4.1 Different Perspectives on Confucius Institute

At Lund University's library, precisely LUBsearch, there are 757 publications which contain the words Confucius Institute in their titles. By adding the phrase Soft Power to Confucius Institute the number decreased to 133, and the number decreased to 29 when the word Africa was added to Confucius Institute. By adding the word Egypt, the result reduced to 10 while it did not find any publication when the word Suez was added. Therefore, a snowball method has been used to find and review more literature on CIs.

The discussions on CIs in previous literature stay at a macro level, and the discussions are abstract. Nevertheless, there are also case studies which focus on specific CI, but even though, many of the selected CIs are either located in Europe or in the USA (Hartig 2016).

What is clear from previous literature is that there is no consensus among scholars about nature of CIs and what these institutes imply. In fact, the standpoints in previous literature can be divided into two blocks. The first block criticizes CIs for being a tool in China's foreign policy for exercising soft power (Chey 2008; Ding 2008; Gil 2008), while the second block sees CIs as merely language and cultural institutes (Wang and Lu 2008; Starr 2009; Rawnsley 2009; Hartig 2012b: 2015; Pan, 2013; Wheeler, 2014).

The opinion of most of the Chinese scholars belongs to the second block. They perceive CIs as a good ambassador of Chinese culture (Wu 2012:144), or as a successful initiative of China's public diplomacy (Zhang W. 2009:13), or a combination of both China's public diplomacy with its traditional culture (Ji 2012:329). Of course, other Chinese scholars see CIs as corrupt and insufficient institutes (Xu 2012, Li R 2008, Wangchao Zhi Shang 2013 cited in Hartig 2016:107).⁵

Admittedly, a large part of this divide and disagreement on nature of CI and what it means for China are ideological and political concerns. These concerns stem from the foundation of CI since CI is funded by the Chinese government and it represents the Chinese state which is

⁵ Also, the project of CI has even been criticized by Chinese Netizens and ordinary people who discuss this Institute in consideration to China's domestic politics and criticize it because they think that such Institute is unnecessary (Hartig 2016).

ultimately ruled by the CCP (Hartig 2016). In their book 'China's Search for Security,' Nathan and Scobell (2012) address this issue by conceptualizing CI as a 'policy' in China's grand strategy which is based on the principle of survival of CCP and security of Chinese state. Accordingly, China is using different methods, including CI, to expand its activities to ensure its interests in the world, all of that to accumulate more power compared to the USA and other powerful states (Nathan and Scobell 2012).

4.2 Confucius Institutes as a Soft Power Tool or Not?

Thereby, the discussion on the project of CI has been drawn into a larger debate over China's soft power. On the one hand, most of the critics argue that CI is, solely, a tool in the hands of Chinese authorities. They argue that CI allows authorities to increase their abilities to exercise soft power over other countries in various ways (Chey 2008; Ding 2008; Nathan and Scobell 2012; Whittaker 2013). In their view, issuing propaganda and spreading China's ideology about critical topics, like human rights and minority rights, resemble a way of exercising soft power (Ding and Saunders 2006; Hsiao 2008; Nathan and Scobell 2012).

Although CI is part of China's grand strategy and a tool in China's foreign policy, Paradise (2009) refuses to perceive it as completely a tool for exercising soft power. Because according to him, if one departs from Nye's definition of soft power, which requires exclusion of payment while exercising soft power, CI cannot be seen as real soft power project since the establishment of CI involves some financial payment from China's part to another part (Paradise 2009:662).

On the other hand, those who reject labeling CI as a soft power project perceive CI as an element of public diplomacy and a language and cultural project. They argue that CI is a demand driven project and thus the risk of being part of a propaganda project is weak. Hence, CI is simply regarded as an institute which only teaches Chinese language and endows with Chinese culture (Wang and Lu, 2008; Rawnsley 2009; Hartig 2012a: 2016; Pan, 2013; Wheeler, 2014).

In the same context, Yang (2010) has discussed CIs concerning internationalization of China's higher education. He claims that, although several researchers (Chey 2008; Kurlantzick 2007; Nye 2007; Ding 2008; Gil 2008) use the theory of soft power to examine

CIs, however, they cannot confirm a relation between CIs and China's global activities, especially in relation to internationalization of China's higher education (Yang 2010:243).

It is worth mentioning that while reviewing the literature, I have met a theme concerning different ways of defining the notion of 'Soft Power' (Kurlantzick 2007). This disagreement leads to various conclusions on nature of CIs. It means that CIs can either be categorized as Chinese soft power project or as institutes that teach Chinese language and introduce Chinese culture. Even though the notion of soft power was founded by Nye in the 1990's and evaluated afterward, Chinese scholars tend to broaden the intellectual definition of soft power to include all types of power except those in military and security sectors (Li, M. 2008). According to Li M. (2008) which concludes the Chinese way of seeing soft power, 'Soft power is a soft way of using the power.' This means using all type of power with care and in a rational way to communicate and attract other nations (Ibid).

Another part of literature has extended the discussion of the soft power to the practice of 'Censorship' and 'Academic Freedom' by CIs. In this matter, CIs have been criticized for having a negative impact on the academic environment in host universities. This position believes that Chinese authorities put pressure on CIs to constrain academic freedoms of the host universities and to prevent them conducting studies in sensitive topics which are not favorable for Chinese authorities (Brady 2008; Chey 2007; Larsson 2008). In the first glance, hosting a CI in a university sounds exciting, but many universities refrain from hosting them because of some secret agreements and consequences.

In a case study, Larsson (2008) has discussed academic freedom at Stockholm University. On the one hand, the staff of University has acquiesced the Chinese embassy in Stockholm for setting up the agenda for the Institute, where on the other hand, Kåre Bremer, the rector of Stockholm University has refused such claims (Ibid). The Institute in Stockholm university was closed in 2014 as the contract between the two parts went out.

In general, lack of in-depth studies on CIs in the previous literature leads to label nature of CI differently. Also, what is noticeable about previous literature is that most of them are weak and superficial. Because they are neither based on empirical studies nor grasp the essential power mechanisms operating through these institutes. Indeed, these studies departures from daily practices of CIs (Sharp 2010).

5. China's Foreign Policy

A review of China's foreign policy and recent developments are necessary to understand the project of CI as the latter is part of China's foreign policy.

5.1 Economic Aim

The main tasks of China's foreign policy are ensuring security and sovereignty, and supporting economic development. In fact, assisting economic growth and domestic modernization is a significant aim of China's foreign policy as it maintains internal political stability. Because China's top leaders have realized that legitimacy of CCP to rule the country is dependent on ensuring economic growth (d'Hooghe 2005; Hartig 2016). At the sixteenth CCP Congress in 2002, a national plan for China has been constructed. The primary objective of the program was about transforming Chinese society to a well-off society. This program has meant that China's GDP would have increased four times by 2020 (d'Hooghe 2005:90). Then, one important element for reaching this goal has been to have a stable international environment, by the foreign policy which would work hard to maintain stability within and outside of China as well as to improve China's international relations (d'Hooghe 2005:90). Against this backdrop, China has modernized its foreign policy and has adjusted it to the global trend.

5.2 Changes in China's Foreign Policy

Apparently, China's foreign policy has been adapted to the globalized world, and the essential alteration is that the core concepts do not inherit from pure Marxism-Leninism ideologies anymore. Hence, the theoretical foundations of China's foreign policy have extended to include many modern international values and traditional Chinese norms (Vance 2010). One of these newly incorporated model into China's foreign policy is 'Confucianism'.⁶

Incorporation of these new patterns has occurred simultaneously with the reforms taken place in China in last decades and which has accelerated the changes in China's foreign policy. One critical juncture in China's foreign policy is accession of China in 2001 to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international agencies. These turning points in China's foreign

⁶ Indeed, they do not go introduce the ancient norms of Confucianism to foreign policy and 'Confucianism' is constructed and used as a label.

policy have led to increasing of China's interactions with other countries and simultaneously having more impacts on other nations (Rumbaugh and Blancher 2004; Jiang 2008). Until the early 2000's, China's foreign policy has been guided by the idea of 'Peaceful development' which stresses China's readiness for cooperation with other countries and highlights its willingness to build a 'Harmonious' region and World (Hartig 2016:100). This pattern in foreign policy has been demonstrated clearly about Southeast Asia, where China sought to reassure the regional countries that China does not intend to go to war and it shares same objectives with them (Lynch 2015:155).

However, after the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, China's foreign policy has changed and begun to reflect 'Forward policies' (Nye 2011; Thayer 2011; Economy 2012). Some analysts believe that 2007-2008 global financial crisis has revealed China's real position in the world and has shown how China is more robust compared to the US and other developed countries (Lynch 2015:158). Zhao Suisheng (2011-2012) claims that China has begun speaking and protesting loudly, in particular against the US and its maneuvers in the South China Sea. In 2010, for the first time, China had menaced to impose sanctions on the US' companies implicated in an arm selling to Taiwan (Zhao 2011-2012:40-41). Nye (2011) claims that China's foreign policy has shifted as it has begun to make 'bolder' claims compared to its previous performances (Nye 2011). Among such Chinese claims is a belief that China is strong enough to lead the globalization in the world instead of the US. In fact, Xi Jinping has explicitly stated this position during the World Economic Forum in 2017 as he has argued that China is willing to take over the global role of the US in the world and become a pioneer in globalization (Xi 2017).

The sense that China is strong is shared by many Chinese analysts who acknowledge and support China's position in a multipolar world. However, an increase of China's power or 'China's Rise', which reflects in its foreign policy, has made other countries feel uncomfortable. Therefore, some Chinese politicians, like Hu Jintao, prefer to use the notion of 'Development' instead of 'Rise' in their political dictionary (Wang 2017:28), because Chinese government thinks that using the word 'Rise' might make other countries feel worried about this change and might bring hostility. In other words, it might create a 'Security dilemma' which already characterizes the Sino-American relations (Nathan and Scobell

2012:12).⁷

Nonetheless, attention to China's rise and what it might imply for other countries in the world has increased their concerns. Apparently, these concerns rely on a 'Realist' theoretical perspective and precisely on a 'Zero-sum game' principle (Nathan and Scobell 2012). As a realist scholar, J. Mearsheimer (2014) in his articles, 'Can China Rise Peacefully?', argues that in the longer term, China's rise will pose a threat to the international order and makes the world unstable and insecure (Mearsheimer 2014).

Indeed, 'China threats' narratives, which is mainly dominated in the US, has been confronted by Western and Chinese scholars like Nye (2005) and Zhang (2015). Also, Chinese President Xi Jinping has opposed this perception and has argued that China's economic rise has benefited the world and that China will be a source of trouble for the world if it remains undeveloped and does not rise (Xi 2013).

Then, one of the principal aims of China's foreign policy becomes to reassure different countries that rise of China will remain peaceful. Thus, China has sought to work on how it wants to be perceived by other nations (Shambaugh 2016). In this respect, China has brought in the project of 'Soft power' and strengthened its activities of 'Public diplomacy' as part of its foreign policy (Shambaugh 2016; Economy 2016). In the same vein, China's foreign policy has been inspired by the idea of producing a positive image of China (Zhu Z. 2010:6).

Some scholars claim that the idea of China's soft power developed by some Chinese scholars during 1990's, but David Shambaugh (2016) argues that the idea started at the beginning of 2000. He claims that the idea began with the translation of Josef Nye's book to Chinese, and also when the Chinese authorities found 'China threats' narratives in the US and which opposed China's 'Peaceful Rise' theory (Shambaugh 2016).

However, some scholars, like Elizabeth Economy (2016), disagree on the existence of China's soft power and argue that China's soft power is not organic as it is not entirely happening on the ground. She claims that there is a gap between Chinese domestic reality and

⁷ The notion of 'Security Dilemma' was developed by R. Jarvis (1978) and means that, when interests of states intersect, increase of power of a state raises the fear and insecurity of another states (Jarvis 1978).

what is perceived to be China's soft power (Economy 2016). Another reason that weakens the idea of China's soft power is China's political system, which is neither valued nor attractive for other countries (Shambaugh 2016).

5.3 Sino-African Relations

Political relations

China's political relationship with Africa goes back to early 1950's. In the 1950's and 1960's China's foreign policy has predominantly been about spreading communism and revolutionary ideologies in the continent (Kurlantzick 2007; Zhang 2011; Wang 2011). By supporting Africans' anti-colonialism movements on the continent, China has sought to show that those struggles resemble some extent Mao's revolutionary fight and universality of Mao's thought since they have reached the whole world (Kurlantzick 2007; Zhang 2011). In the 1980's, China's foreign policy toward Africa changed, and the number of activities decreased. It is mainly because China's foreign policy shifted toward economic cooperation with other countries due to reduced radical thinking by Deng Xiaoping which illustrates by political and economic reforms. By the end of the 1990's and beginning of the new century, China's foreign policy has shifted where it has begun to strengthen old and establishes new ties with African countries (Christopher 2011; Garver 2016).

Recently, China has shaped its African foreign policy in a way that in a short time, it has been able to construct economic and diplomatic relations with many African countries (Kurlantzick (2007). In general, experts have evaluated China's foreign policy for Africa negatively and criticized its increased influence in the continent. Much of the critics focus on 'China's soft power' in Africa, where China utilizes resources to produce attraction and efficiency in the continent (Kurlantzick 2007; Brautigam 2015).

Today, China is one of the biggest overseas partners for many African countries. A study done by Kim Yi Dionne (2016) has shown that 63% of people in 36 African countries believe that China is doing something positive in their countries. In his book, 'Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World,' Kurlantzick gives some explanation for China's positive image among African countries. He points out how demands for China's model of development, successful diplomacy and Human Resource Development (HRD) programs are utilized by China as methods to make China attracted for African countries

(Kurlantzick 2007). Among these methods are the non-conditional aid and the non-interference policy.

In fact, HRD has been mentioned in the sixth FOCAC action plan (2016-2018), as China announced its willingness to support capacity building of the African countries through offering HRD. One part of HRD program includes the establishment of CI. China has encouraged the foundation of more CI in as it has welcomed the inclusion of Chinese language education as part of national education systems by some African countries (FOCAC 2015).

These HRD programs have been doubted by different scholars. One of them is Kenneth King (2013) who is a prominent scholar in Sino-African relations and who discusses China's HRD in his book, 'China's Aid and Soft Power in Africa: The case of Education and Training' that China's HRD. He argues that China wields soft power through its HRD programs (King 2013). Like King, Peter Kragelund (2014) has come to an almost same conclusion where he focuses on CI as one component of China's HRD program in Africa. He has found out that China exercises soft power through this Institute by training future political and economic leaders of the country. However, he does not neglect the fact that CI benefits the university and the country in general (Kragelund 2014).

Economic Relations

The Sino-African relationship has resulted in the establishment of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, (Kurlantzick 2007; Brautigam 2015). However, the most crucial task of China's foreign policy toward Africa is to manage economic relations with Africa where China has become the biggest trading partner with this continent in 2009 (Kurlantzick 2011). Today, China has several special economic zones in Africa, like Chinese Economic Zone in Suez region in Egypt (Antonio and Ma 2015). The Suez region is almost 120 km and located along the Suez Canal.

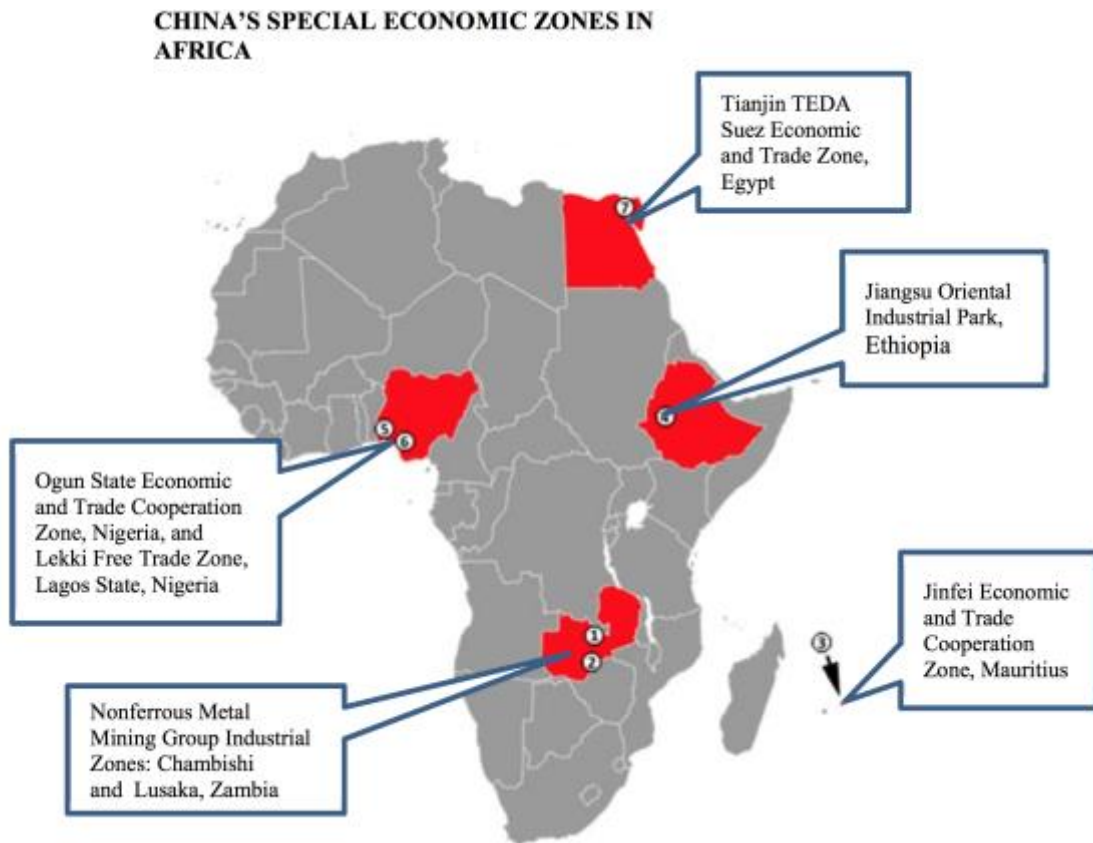


Figure 2. China's Special Economic Zones based on Antonio and Ma (2015)

The reason for establishing these special economic zones can boil down to three reasons. The first reason is to explore new markets. China seeks to expand its access to new markets in Africa to include new places where people's purchasing power is expected to increase in the future. Also, China's market seeking goes beyond Africa, as China seeks to enter the European market benefiting from advantages provided by the African markets, like cheap labor and short distance. China's investment already increased from 5 million USD in 2000 to 50 million USD in 2008. The second aim is to secure access to natural resources. Because China relies heavily on the oil produced in Africa as an act to ensure its continuous access to natural resources with low price which is privileged for a stable economic growth (Taylor 2006; Corkin 2008; Lee and Shalmon 2008). Also, China is interested in raw materials too, as it explores and exports them to China and rest of Africa. The third reason is about improving its strategic and logistic position in Africa. By having different special economic zones connected by infrastructure, an industrial network will be created. This system will reduce the investments risks and attract more Chinese investors into Africa.

Some researchers have a different opinion and argue that the reasons are somewhat to do with China's soft power in Africa. They claim that by these special economic zones, China seeks to demonstrate its power and development to African and western countries. Also, these special economic zones help economy of China to get rid of labor intensive industries which are not profitable in China (Brautigam and Tang 2011).

China's aid to Africa

Another pole in China's African relations is concerned with China's 'aid' to Africa which can be divided into three periods. The first time is related with China's ideology exportation to Africa and which increased from 52 million RMB in 1952 to 337 RMB in 1972. The second period was between the mid1970's to 1990's and which witnessed a decrease in aid given to Africa, partly because of reduction in China's GNP. The third phase in China's aid to Africa has begun since the 1990's and which continues to reflect different principles, such as win-win strategy, common political interests and China's responsibility as a 'Global power' (Li Xiaoyun 2010).

Since China is not a member of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) the nature and the number of aid given to Africa is not clear. Brautigam is a pioneer scholar who discusses this issue in her books, 'Will Africa Feed China?' (2015), and 'The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa' (2009). She and another scholar like Mohan (2015) are suspicious of this activity and argue that since China is a state where transparency is weak, it becomes difficult to acknowledge that China is granting Africa aid. Brautigam claims that not all the numbers reported by Chinese authorities are correct and much of financial supports provided by China seems to be a different type of loans (Brautigam 2008; 2009; 2015). She adds that the number can't be measured in the same way as it is done by Development Assistance Committee (Glosny 2006; Lancaster 2007; Jacoby 2007; Mohan 2015). Also, one critical difference between China and other DAC donors is that China grant aid to all countries unconditionally, without considering the type of governments in recipient countries (Brautigam 2015).

5.4 Sino-Egyptian Relations

China has had a good relationship with different African countries, and one of them is Egypt which is one of the first African countries that have recognized the independence of China.

China-Egypt relations are mostly characterized by the economic activities and cooperation between the two nations (Hatab 2012; Looy 2006).

During the past few years, Egypt has turned to China to meet its economic demands that could not be fulfilled with its relations with other foreign countries, such as European countries due to the financial crisis. Recently, Egypt has emphasized its economic ties with China in different sectors, such as infrastructures and investment.

As it has been mentioned earlier, one of China's exclusive economic zone is in Egypt. Area of the zone is 6km and it has been granted by Egypt for Chinese companies. The responsible developer for this zone is Tianjin Economic-Technological Development Area (TEDA). This developer is a Chinese State Owned Enterprise (SOE) and has signed a 45-year contract with the economic authority of this region. This economic zone can benefit Chinese companies in several ways, for instance by making them pay fewer taxes than in China and giving them Egyptian certificate of origin. The latter enables them to export their goods to more destinations benefiting from Egypt's international trade agreements. Chinese companies can use these economic zones as a departure point to the rest of Africa as well as to the Middle East. Until 2014, there have been 32 projects registered in this area with an investment estimated at more than 90 million USD.

Recently, bilateral relations between the two countries have strengthened, especially after the announcement of 'One Belt One Road' policy (Sudeshna Sarkar 2016). Since 'One Belt One Road' plan goes through Suez Canal, Ismailia city becomes one of the most important stations for this policy. Another importance of Egypt for China is Egyptian market for Chinese firms. Thus, it seems logical that China is investing in Egypt in a different sector (Magdy Amer 2016; Miniesy and Adams 2013). One of this investment is establishing CI at SCU and Cairo University.

6. Theoretical Framework

In this part, public diplomacy as a theoretical lens will be presented followed by a definition of 'Power.'

6.1 Public Diplomacy

The term of public diplomacy is used in different disciplines, and obviously, there is no single definition for it. Public diplomacy means serving national interests through affecting foreign governments by influencing their citizens through communication and involvement (Frederick 1993:229). Therefore, concerning CI at SUC, public diplomacy as a theory is used to point to the hidden aspects of reality and to highlight the power mechanisms operating within the domain of real.

The content of public diplomacy works in three domains, namely in the domestic and international domains to ensure the security of a country, in the economic sector to facilitate economic goals by enhancing trade, and the cultural domain to increase mutual understandings and non-governmental diplomacy (Leonard et al. 2002:10).

6.2 Old and New Public Diplomacy

Throughout the last decades, there has been a general paradigm shift from governmental public diplomacy to a new public diplomacy which has drawn in a vast number of new actors in the field of public diplomacy (Hocking 2008; Pamment 2013). In the previous era, especially during the cold war, public diplomacy has meant to be a way of persuasion, (Melissen et al. 2005). The state, and predominantly foreign ministry, has been the leading actor for coordination of communication between the audience in internal and international domains. Thus, the focus has been on the fulfillment of state's expectations and exchange of information in a single direction from the sender to the receiver where the senders determine the message they want to send. The involved actors often utilize the available methods in a logical manner and which leads to a low number of interactions between the sender and the recipient (Pamment 2013:3). The old public diplomacy is characterized by its governmental, top-down structured features (Hocking 2005:65-66).

In contrast to old public diplomacy, the idea of new public diplomacy is more about

producing desired understanding and image about oneself (Melissen et al. 2005). The new public diplomacy moved from being a state-centric form of communication towards a diplomacy which aims to strengthen the connection between non-traditional actors at home and abroad. This means that a vast number of new actors, such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which encourages dialogue and cooperation has emerged (Hocking 2005:38-39; Melissen 2005:12). In the case of China's public diplomacy, CIs are good examples of these new actors. Also, the new public diplomacy encourages two ways of communications as a way of understanding each other (Zaharna et al. 2013:1). This point is essential for China since it can send and receive messages with foreign publics to reduce the misunderstandings about itself and the way it has been represented in international media (Su S. 2008; Yu Y. 2014 cited in Hartig 2016:59).

In sum, both old and new public diplomacies in foreign affairs are mediation to maintain and to promote national interests. In this thesis, public diplomacy is understood as a means for countries to enhance communication networks, to make more friends and to reduce the numbers of enemies. Also, it is recognized as an approach to develop political and economic relations, to encourage export and foreign investment, to found relationships with NGOs and public sector and to work for winning both hearts and minds of foreign publics (Hartig 2016:35). In this regard, public diplomacy is one dimension of political communication and incorporates all forms of dialogue and interaction initiated by governmental actors for seeking particular aim (Melissen 2005). Also, public diplomacy includes the communications between on one hand media and non-political actors and the other hand the politicians about these activities (McNair 2011). Both new and old public diplomacy approaches are relevant for studying CI since this Institute fits into both approaches due to its hybrid features. On the one hand, CI is not an entirely autonomous organization, and it is supervised by the ministry of education, and on the contrary, for most of the time, CI functions as an NGO.

6.3 Importance of Image and Reputation in Public Diplomacy

Image, in studies on public diplomacy, refers to profile and information in people's thoughts. The image becomes necessary because of the very fact that reality is so complicated which makes the people simplify the reality by saving it as images (Lippman 1922 cited in Hartig 2016:5). Hence, images are intellectual pictures in people's mind and which can be constructed and influenced through communication and the messages sent by foreign actors

(Manheim and Albritton 1984:645).

China seeks to create a positive image in the world. It seeks to present itself as a reliable economic actor and politically stable country which develops peacefully (d'Hooghe 2011:24). Due to the speed of communication in a globalized world, the possibility of a country's image affecting the international position of that country has intensified. Therefore, image brushing becomes necessary in tandem with ever increasing of the importance of foreign citizens (Hertz 1981:184).

In addition to the image, reputation of a country is also a crucial factor in public diplomacy. Both image and reputation are nations' assets which can produce either supportive or incapacitate conditions for a country's unique arrangements (Leonard et al. 2002:9). Thus, countries with positive images and good reputations can forge coalitions and expand their international influence, using their what perceived to be 'Soft Power' (Kinsey and Chung 2013:6).

6.4 Cultural Diplomacy, Soft power, and Propaganda

The main reason behind interchangeable between the cultural diplomacy and soft power is due to the paradigm shift in public diplomacy. This development has led to the emergence of new actors and sharing new areas of responsibilities with other approaches. One approach is cultural diplomacy which is about government's effort to promote national interest abroad by utilizing cultural resources and activities (Aguilar 1996). Cultural diplomacy can be seen either as an element of public diplomacy (Cull 2009) or as a distinct but interlaced approach to public diplomacy (Melissen 2005:22). Both cultural diplomacy and (new) public diplomacy stress engagement instead of dictating the message and two-way communications with the foreign public which aim to establish long and stable ties rather than short policy driven relations. What distinct cultural diplomacy from public diplomacy is that the former should only be performed by non-governmental actors, where the latter can be carried out by any player (Melissen 2005:21-23).

In academic communities, soft power is a contested term. However, what is clear about soft power is that it is not same as public diplomacy. Even though soft power and public diplomacy belong to the communication sphere, they refer to different parts of

communication and have various functions (Rawnsley 2012:123). Public diplomacy is the means of communicating with foreign countries and a precondition to soft power, while soft power is an end in communication (Hartig 2016:49). Simply, soft power is the capacities of society to attract others to itself, because of existing characteristics within that country, while public diplomacy is the tool to do that (Shambaugh 2013:209).

As a term, soft power has established itself in the Chinese politic discourse since the Chinese politicians began to use it frequently (Hayden 2012). For instance, it has been utilized by both Hu Jintao in 2007 and 2012, and by Xi Jinping in 2014 (Hu J. 2007:2012; Xi J. 2014). For Nye, soft power is the ability to get what one wants using attraction instead of coercion and payment (Nye 2005). For Chinese, soft power is accepted to be one part of China's comprehensive national power and which seeks to defend China's effort to become a great power again (Hartig 2016:64). Guo X. (2009) explains the soft power as things like competence of politicians, quality of politics and the ability to create international supportive conditions (Guo 2009).

Another near term to public diplomacy is propaganda. Even though public diplomacy is not concerned with only activities of state anymore, it is still the chief organizer. Therefore, public diplomacy is usually accused of being part of the official propaganda and which open a discussion on whether every state act should be perceived as propaganda or public diplomacy (Zaharna 2004:219). In China's case, distinguishing the two terms becomes more difficult as China's activities are so fuzzy and which lead the skeptics to think that public diplomacy is only an indirect term for propaganda (Ranwesly 2013:148). Both propaganda and public diplomacy seek to influence the perception of the foreign public, but what distinct the two approaches are that in public diplomacy actors listen to the foreign public wherein propaganda the states do not do that and only seek to persuade the international public (Melissa 2005:18).⁸

6.5 China's Public Diplomacy

In tandem with China's ever increasing interaction with the rest of the world, its dependency on other foreign countries has grown too, and vice versa. Hence, public diplomacy has

⁸ It is worth mentioning that in China's political dictionary propaganda and soft power are used openly and mean something positive.

become crucial for China's foreign policy and its general diplomacy. In general, China's public diplomacy has three intertwined aims. The first objective is to enlighten the world that China should not be feared. This purpose is mostly related to China's threat narratives and which some scholars argue that it is caused by lack of understanding and misinterpretation of China's behavior by foreign publics (Han Z. 2011:18; Zhou H. 2012). Subsequently, China seeks to produce a correct image about itself, which can replace the widespread image in the world that is created by western media (d'Hooghe 2005:93; Kejin 2012). The second goal is the attempt to create a positive image which presents China as a stable and reliable economic international partner that work on making all Chinese achieve prosperity. The third aim is to show that China is a trustworthy and responsible member of the international community. It wants to show the world that it can participate to maintain peace and stability in the world (d'Hooghe 2005:93).

6.6 Definition of Power

Even though my main research question is not about power per se, from a critical realist point of view possibility of management of CI to affect other parts to accomplish certain results exists. Then, it is useful to define what 'Power' is perceived to be.

Although 'Power' can be defined in different ways, those terms used for describing power are interchangeable and often overlap, which makes it difficult to draw clear boundaries among the various definitions. In this thesis, the definition of power is an amalgamation of both 'Productive Power' (Foucault 1983) and 'Institutional power' (Keohane 1988; Finnemore and Barnett 1999) due to their necessity for the research. Because each definition applies to a certain domain and it highlights different manners for social relations to shape and constrain the capacities of actors to decide their fortunes (Barnett and Duvall 2005:68).

In general, power is conceptualized as the creation of effect by and through social relations which these social relations can later form and control actor's capacity to decide its fate (Barnett and Duvall 2005:39). Power has two dimensions, the first one is the type of social relations which shape actor's ability, namely interaction, and constitution and the second dimension is about the features of those social relations, in other words how direct or diffuse those relations are (Barnett and Duvall 2005:45).

Productive power is the creation of all social subjects with different social powers by use of knowledge and discursive praxis. This form of power functions through diffused social relations which produce actors' social capacities, and which also influence its interests and self-understanding (Barnett and Duvall 2005:48). According to Foucault, even though actors do not control social processes, still, these social processes are affected by actors' meaningful practices (Foucault cited in Gaventa 2003:3). Therefore, productive power is also concerned with what goes beyond the structure and which is about meanings and network of social forces and which lead to consider that power is present everywhere (Foucault 1978:93). Among these social forces are discourses and process of knowledge production by which explanation and interpretation are created, existed and reshaped (Barnett and Duvall 2005:48). Here, discourse is not defined as Habermas definition, which is about dialogue and communication between actors, and rather it is understood as settings of social relations of power because they determine everyday traditions of life and the social spheres of action (Foucault 1983).

Institutional power works in a way to enable an actor to influence and exercise power on other actors because of institutional relations between the two parts (Barnett and Duvall 2005:5 1). The power is applied by actors' indirect control over other actors through both official and unofficial institutions that mediate between the two parts. In this regard, an actor operates through the regulations and policies that set up those institutions and which lead and control the conditions which shape either activity or passivity of others. Thereby, an actor can through institutional agreements forms the policy process in a way that can remove every subject of disagreement between the two parts.

7. Results and Discussion

This section will answer the research question by analyzing the evidence to either substantiate or discredit already established assumptions about CI at SCU. Departing from critical realism ontology, which explains the social world by unveiling the mechanisms that generate the events, this thesis seeks to reach the reasons behind activities within the domain of real to see whether they benefit and are compatible with China's economic and political interests.

The discussion consists of two sections, one section for political activities and another section for economic activities. It is worth mentioning that the findings for economic parts have been more conclusive compared to the political part where the evidence have been more evasive and harder to highlight. Also, some of the activities overlap and fit in both sections, which make drawing a sharp line between the two sections difficult.

7.1 Activities Promoting Political Interests

In this section, different interrelated activities of CI, which are driven by China's political interests will be discussed. Some of the activities motivated by political interests are providing scholarships and exchange of students, broadcasting of programs, image brushing tool, initiation, and mediation. Another political action is about influencing the decisions of management of SCU and interfering and affecting the autonomy of SCU.

7.1.1 Influential Role of Confucius Institute at Suez Canal University

As CI at SCU is an actor in China's public diplomacy, it seeks to serve China's national interests. A substantiation on this statement can be seen in how the management of CI has succeeded to influence the management of SCU through social relations. CI has succeeded to convince management of SCU for establishing different institutes and programs at the university.

One of these established institute is the faculty of languages at SCU in 2016. CI has succeeded to persuade management of university that there is a need for the establishment of this new faculty, which teaches the Chinese language besides few other languages (Li 2017). In addition to previous sources for teaching the Chinese language, this new department of Chinese literature makes SCU the first university in Egypt and probably in Africa that

provides three different sources for studying the Chinese language.

In 2016, CI has convinced management of SCU to establish a Chinese cultural club and a museum for Guo Moruo, a famous Chinese poet at SCU (Tang 2017). Also, CI plans to create a center for teaching Chinese acupuncture at the University. Tang said that “The[acupuncture] center will work as propaganda for Chinese traditional medicine even though our [CI] first and last task is cultural” (Tang 2017).

This power to convince is partly because some of the management of CI has a high position at SCU and also because of close personal relationship with the managements. Additionally, the teachers at CI are employees at SCU. They work as Chinese teachers in the faculty of language and faculty of literature at SCU. One interviewee argues that an important reason for the success of CI is due to acceptance of many requests of CI by the management of SCU, as managements of CI occupy important positions at SCU (Shi 2017).

Undeniably, the evidence on how CI has freedom and space to outline itself and use its power in the realm of the university is not concerned only about these activities, and further activities will be described throughout the discussion.

7.1.2 Facilitating of Teaching Arabic

A confirmation on the operation of Chinese political interests at CI is about facilitating of teaching Arabic to the Chinese which is something that goes beyond the official aim of CI. CI has convinced SCU to establish a section for teaching the Arabic language at Beijing Language and Culture University. The reason for this move has been to help Chinese ministry of education to overcome its lack of education resources in Arabic teaching. Because in China, the number of Ph.D. programs is few since there are only a few specialists who have the right to supervise Ph.D. students. Consequently, studying Arabic at an advanced level inside China has become involved. Simultaneously, CI has convinced management of SCU in establishing a special program for teaching Arabic which mainly directs itself Chinese and foreigner students (Tang 2017). This program teaches Arabic at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Interestingly, one of the CI officials is already enrolled in this program and is studying Arabic at Ph.D. level (Li 2017).

Further evidence which substantiates the Chinese interests operating at CI concerns language lessons. CI holds Arabic Lessons at TEDA in Ain Sokhna to teach Chinese staff Arabic. Establishment of Arabic classrooms for Chinese businessmen and women in TEDA is a result of a protocol signed between CI and management of special economic zone in Ain Sokhna (Ibrahim 2010). In fact, the establishment of Arabic classrooms by CI is astonishing, because this Institute should not teach a foreign language at all. The motive behind providing Arabic lessons in Ain Sokhna is to facilitate works of Chinese businessmen and women and which also aim to reduce barriers facing investment of Chinese companies in Egypt (Li 2017; Shi 2017).

7.1.3 Language Activities as Communication Channels

Based on findings, which present in this thesis, CI does more than basic language and cultural activities that aim to make Egyptian people speak Chinese, even though speaking the Chinese language still benefits China in various ways, such as improving China's image and reputation and facilitating trade between people of the two countries. A substantiation for this claim is a statement by the management of CI which says that, although the aim of CI at first place is to spread language and culture, still cultural activities of CI can serve politics and economy goals (Li 2017; Tang 2017).

Also, the fact that establishing new institutes at SCU, which has been discussed in previous part, are in themselves advantages for China, they also function as communication channels between China and Egypt. The increase of interactions and engagement, which is a technique in the new public diplomacy, helps to reshape China's image and reputation in mind of Egyptian people. In this regard, CI has submitted a request to open a CC in the city of Helwan, and which has been approved by Hanban. Also, CI plans to establish a CC in one of Ismailia's high school. When I was in Egypt in February, CI was communicating with British University in Cairo to establish a teaching point there. One interviewee said that if the teaching point succeeds, management of CI will try to convince management of the British University to open Chinese language section at the University (Shi 2017). In 20 Mars 2017, the two parts agreed upon opening a Confucius teaching point. Establishing Confucius teaching point reflects CI aim to expand.

CI frequently visits different high schools to encourage rectors and students to teach and

respectively learn Chinese. During my stay, I have witnessed how various agencies, mostly educational actors, visit this CI. One example is when a rector of a high school in Ismailia visited CI. Apparently, this high school has been visited by CI previously, and the rector was back to ask CI for a second visit. The CI has welcomed the idea and has even suggested establishing a Chinese teaching point at the high school.

In sum, an increase in the number of Chinese teaching sources would increase communication channels between China and Egypt. Adding a new source for teaching the Chinese language supports China's political and economic interests. Because the exercise of language can transfer forces that create attraction among people (Bially Mattern 2005). Subsequently, increasing in the number of communication channels means the increased in the likelihoods of Egyptian people to learn more about China and which results in the creation of an encouraging environment for mutual understanding. Consequently, China would be able to reshape its image in mind of people of Egypt.

7.1.4 Confucius Institute as an Image Brushing Tool

As it has been pointed in the previous part, another aim of public diplomacy is to increase mutual understanding and to improve the image of a country by different means. Even though both Chinese and Arab people belongs to the east or orient civilization, Egyptian people has lacked a detailed image about China because of the distance between the two countries (Tang 2017). However, by establishing CI, the misunderstandings and lack of knowledge about China have been reduced, since CI has been a significant source of spreading information about China (Tang 2017; Li 2017). The distributed information has created a new image and profile of China in the mind of people.

When I discussed the ambition of CI at SCU with Tang, who has one of the highest positions at the Institute, she has argued that one main reason behind the establishment of CI has been needed of China to improve its image in the mind of people of the world (Tang 2017). This explanation is a clear sign of how CI is a tool in China's public diplomacy and how political interests are operating at CI. According to Tang (2017), China has understood that to change its image in the mind of Egyptian people as well as in the mind of people of other Arab countries using its 'Smooth power' such as cultural power is essential. In real view, language and culture are soft power elements and which "China is investing its cultural power to

change the wrong image about itself, which summarizes China as only Mao Zedong and workers who wear blue work suits” (Tang 2017).

In the same vein, the discussion on the aim of CI has dragged importance of China’s image for its foreign policy especially considering its image as a global (economic) partner. Tang (2017) has added that image of China becomes important as “[China] seeks to penetrate in Africa and Persian Gulf states to ensure its access to power resources so it can maintain a steady economic growth rate.” (Tang 2017). Thus, to break through different countries, China seeks to improve its global image and reputation. Penetrating in various countries, especially in Arab Countries comes as a precondition for implementing its ‘One Belt One Road’ Policy. Then, CI at SCU is a necessity to enable China implements its foreign policy.

Consequently, the history of the establishment of CI at SCU is partly related to an image brushing project and which also can be found in Sino-Egyptian relations. In 2006, the Chinese premier, Wen Jiabao, has visited Egypt and stressed the need for increasing cultural ties with Egypt to increase ‘common understanding’ (Jiabao 20 06). In the same year, the two countries have celebrated their 50th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations by ratifying several cultural agreements, where they have agreed upon enhancing cultural exchanges, in which CI is one of the results (Tang 2017).

In 2009, Chinese Premier inaugurated China- Arab Cooperation Forum at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo. In the meantime, Wen Jiabao gave a speech about China’s role in the future and which has focused on dialogue and cooperation as the way to reach a mutual understanding. Jiabao said: “Cultural exchanges will help deepen mutual understanding ..., strengthen the bond of friendship and build strong public support for our friendship.” As CI is an outcome of the cultural agreement, it continues to reflect the development in Sino-Egyptian relations (Tang 2017). In this regard, CI is a tool in China’s foreign policy seeks to realize its public diplomacy goal, which by cultural activities are spreading knowledge about China and improving its image in front of Egyptian publics.

7.1.5 Political Censorship

Through its public diplomacy, China is making a lot of efforts to improve its political and economic image and reputation in the mind of people, including Egyptian publics. One of

these activities is the distribution of Confucius Institute Magazine (CIM), which is issued by Ministry of Education in China. Although CIM states clearly that its ambition is to spread Chinese language and culture, still it covers economic and political subjects.

In addition to participating in publishing and distribution of CIM, political censorship is among other activities of CI which seek to reshape China's political image and reputation. Political censorship is one of CI seldom clear political endeavors. Political censorship concerns topics like 'Human Rights in China,' 'One China policy' (regarding Taiwan) and 'Falun Gong.' China's foreign policy is characterized by non-intervention policy which also is preferred this strategy in Egyptian foreign policy. This shared approach has created an invisible agreement between Chinese management at CI and its Egyptian counterparts not to discuss these topics.

As CI has declared its reluctance to intervene in Egypt's domestic politics, Egyptian parts do not push CI to address these sensitive issues. One of the interviewees argued that not only Egypt respects CI policy as one part of China's foreign policy, but also it supports China in the League of Arab States (Li 2017; Tang 2017). Consequently, no one discusses these non-preferable topics for China and which are perceived by Egyptian as issues concerning China's domestic politics. These topics are 'dead' themes and are not attractive for the entire management of CI. In the CI classrooms, maps of China are hanging on the wall and which apparently include Taiwan, the disputed Islands and contested border for local water.

Distribution of information and knowledge about politics of China through different sources on the one hand and abandoning information, on the other hand, is reshaping China's political image and seek to present it as a powerful state. In fact, these activities have had some impact on Egyptian society even though I have not conducted a survey to measure the impact. Still, I have observed how CI has corrected their previous perception about China. For instance, some students have claimed that they did not know about China's new global position where some other mentioned China's role in the UN and other world organizations. All this change in perception has been caused by activities done by CI.

7.1.6 Scholarship

Another advantage for China's politics comes about Scholarship and students exchange

programs. Although a scholarship is an educational event, but still, it has been a key factor in spreading information about China and a reason for improving China's image in Egypt.

There has been a consensus among management of CI that China's public diplomacy is better than the US on making other people follow it. The main reason is that the US uses hard power in threatening or convincing other countries, while China uses 'Soft power' (Tang 2017; Li 2017).

Management of CI perceives China as a smart country as it uses Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), aid and cultural ties, like scholarship and student exchange, to win both hearts and minds. Each year China grants almost 200 awards on Master level and Ph.D. level to Egypt. CI at SCU is one of the places which awards more scholarships to students than any other institutes in Egypt. Interestingly, the slogan of CI at SCU is "Confucius Institute at SCU in Ismailia, your gateway to getting a scholarship in China" (CI site). Because to be eligible to get a Chinese scholarship, the students need to pass an HSK. CI at SCU is one of the two places which provides HSK in Egypt. Further, CI has assisted SCU and Chinese Academy of Sciences in signing a letter of intent which includes, among other things, exchange of students. It means that each university can send and receive approximately 80 students every year.

The role of Egyptian students who come back from China is significant. Naturally, when these students return to Egypt, they will be cultural ambassadors for China (Tang 2017; Li 2017). They will be a source of spreading Chinese knowledge and experience when they return. Based on perception of management of CI the scholarships are essential for enhancing the friendship relation with Egyptian publics. One interviewee stated that "[CI] We want that [Egyptian] students reflect the real China to Egypt when they are back" (Shi 2017). She continued with saying that when she had been studying in another Arabic country, she had been asked by people of that country whether she had TV at her home in China. She said that one reason for asking such a question was few communication channels with China which resulted in the lack of knowledge and information about China (Shi 2017).

Against this backdrop, one reason for CI to grant a scholarship and enhance exchanges of students is that students can improve China's image and reputation in mind of people.

Fortunate students who have got a scholarship and which usually go to universities in big and

developed cities or those who study at CI are an amplifier for China as they distribute and share information about China. Each student is a mobile source of information which can share its experience and knowledge about China.

7.1.7 Media

Broadcasting

Another element of public diplomacy is broadcasting and which is a vast means of communication. This activity can be found among things done by CI. Broadcasting of Chinese programs will enable China to reach a large part of Egyptian population with different class and backgrounds. Through broadcasting, CI can send different preferred messages about China to Egyptian people and which will mean a lot for China's image.

In this issue, CI is cooperating with an Egyptian TV channel to perform a Chinese cooking competition. By introducing Chinese food to Egyptian society, the latter familiarity with Chinese people and culture will increase too. According to one of the interviewee, “[Cooking food] is not only about preparing food, since its effect can reach beyond this simple aim...[L]earning how to cook Chinese food will make Egyptian people also ask about how Chinese people dress and even how Chinese people think” (Shi 2017).

CI seeks to improve knowledge of people about China by any possible means. It plans to expand its broadcasting to foreign publics even more as it is negotiating with Nile TV channel to establish a ‘Confucius program’ to broadcast all its language and cultural activities (Shi 2017; Amin 2016). Recently, a delegation from Hanban has visited Chairman of Nile TV group and discussed this issue with him.

In fact, these programs will not only reach Egyptian society, as they can be received in all Arabic countries and be watched by all Arab populations. Concerning this fact, one can argue that China's public diplomacy utilizes CI at SCU as a base to communicate and to engage with people of Arab countries in Africa and the Middle East. The reason for the need of reaching influence these people have been mentioned at the beginning of the discussion, as China has realized its necessity to improve its image and reputation, especially in Arab Oil-rich countries. Also, as it will be discussed in the economy section, China needs to find new markets for its goods. Thus, broadcasting which is a cheap and efficient technique enables

China to fulfill this aim.

China Radio International Film Festival

China Radio International has held film festival called “Getting to know modern China-Chinese film open day” at CI. In this festival, CI has helped China Radio International with facilities and other resources to present this festival (Hanban 2016). As the name of the festival discloses, the festival has aimed to introduce contemporary China to Egyptian people. During the festival, several Chinese films and Chinese Drama were screened and which all of them have had the same story as in Egyptian movies, as an attempt to send a message that Chinese society and Egyptian society are very similar. Also, the presented films could be watched by everyone as China Radio International has translated most of them into Arabic. The film festival has a been very active channel to send different messages to the audience, and it can enhance mutual understanding between Chinese and Egyptian people. Also, by screening translated films as requested by publics, CI seeks to send a message to the audience that it is listening to their demands and it is engaged with Egyptian society.

Establishment of Newspaper

As it has been mentioned in section 7.1.1, management of CI has succeeded to convince management of SCU to establish an Arabic section at Beijing Language and Culture University. Also, another outcome of cooperation between the two parts has been agreement on publishing a newspaper in both Arabic and Chinese. The newspaper will cover political, economic and cultural news from both China and Egypt and aim to introduce both countries to each other’s people (Canal Newspaper 2016; Atef 2016). Since the newspaper is one of biggest sources for gathering knowledge and news about the world, the news it provides perceived to be accredited. It will play a crucial role in shaping China’s global image and reputation by providing or abandoning certain information and data about China.

7.2 Activities Promoting Economic Interests

As it has claimed by Hanban CI is supposed to do only cultural and language activities. However, these activities in addition to other activities of CI seem to serve China’s national interests.

There are several activities of CI which counts to be economic activities or at least support

economic interests of China. Indeed, another main reason behind the establishment of CI has been to serve economy of China as the geo-economic position of CI is vital in commercial accounts. Discussing cultural institutes in relations to economic issues, the first activity that might come to mind is an increase in tourism, selling of books or other cultural products. However, CI has served economy of China by cooperating and assisting with Chinese companies, seeking to improve China's economic reputation, exporting Chinese technology and establishing the technological Institute.

7.2.1 Geo-economic Factor: A Driving Force Behind Establishment of Confucius Institute

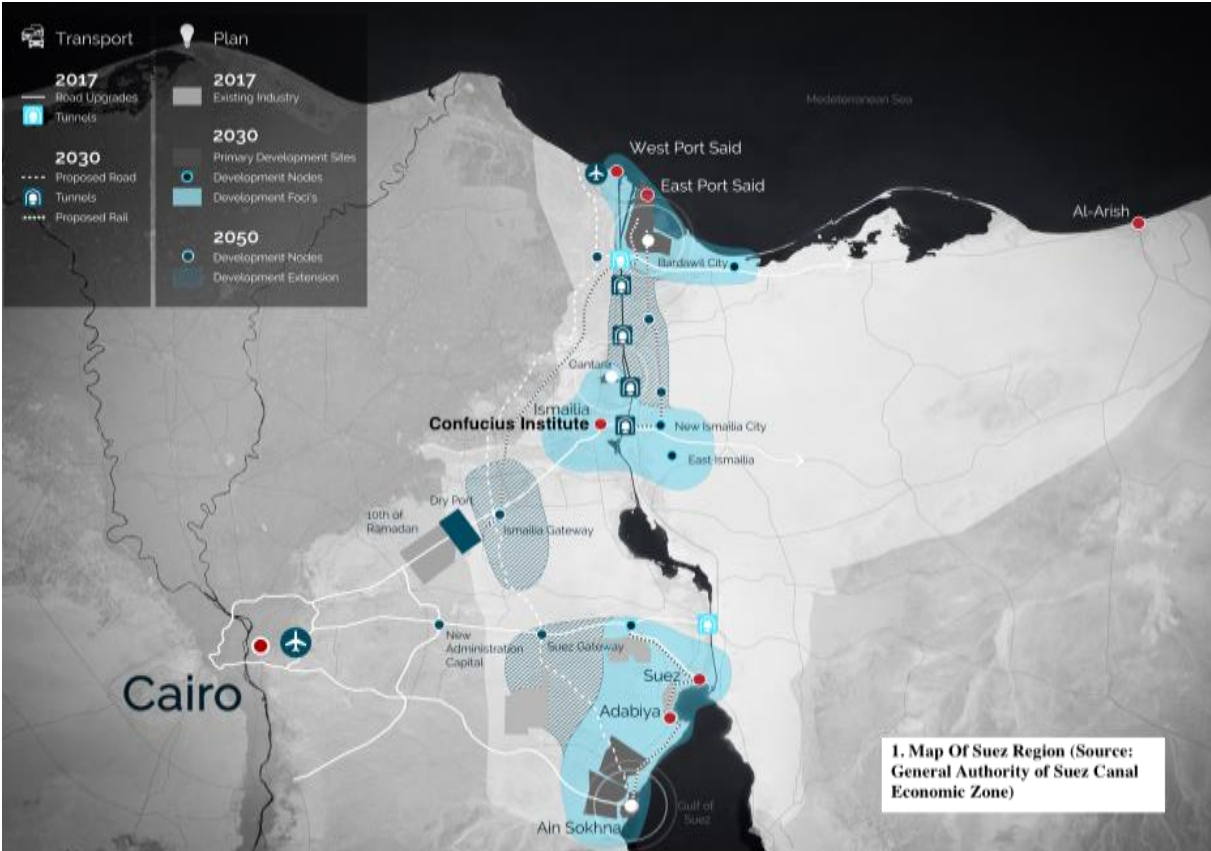
By discussing why this CI has been set in this region, it becomes clear that one main reason has been to serve China's economic interests. This fact has been confirmed by different sources as the same argument could be deducted from the answers. The interviewees have agreed that economic particularity and geo-economic position of this region has been the main reasons behind establishing CI at SCU in Suez region (Li 2017; Shi 2017; Tang 2017). The answers are not surprising since this area counts to be significant for China as it hosts a huge amount of investments and economic activities. Therefore, one of CI's role has been to coordinate between different parts to facilitate the performance of Chinese firms in this region.

One interviewee said that "This city [Ismailia] is vital for China as it is beside the Suez Canal" (Shi 2017). Another respondent stated that "The future of Egypt is here... It is the new Singapore. It is in the heart of Delta, and it is the capital of North while Cairo is the capital of South" (Tang 2017). According to one interviewee "China's government has had precognition to decide to have a center for cultural radiation in this region" (Tang 2017). Egypt has granted China space to encourage Chinese firms to come and invest in this area to produce and export to entire Africa and other Arabic countries. In fact, China's special economic zone is in Ain Sokhna port.

In 2008, Chinese Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) Pacific, which is biggest Chinese shipping State Owned Company (SOC), has invested more than 185 million USD in building a container terminal in Port Said, northern Suez Canal (COSCO Pacific Announcement, December 11, 2008). Also, China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC), which is another

Chinese SOC, has invested 219 million USD in building dockside (CHEC Press Release, November 8, 2008). The Same company has already finished a project valued 1 billion USD in the same region (CHEC, 2009). China has continued to invest 416 million USD for construction of a cargo terminal at Adabiya port southern Suez Canal (Chinese Embassy in Egypt 2012).

Consequently, one important issue which can reveal the operation of Chinese economic interests at CI is the geo-economic factor. In 2013, Hanban selected CI at SCU as the most important CI in the world because of its geo-economic position (Shi 2017; Li 2017; Tang 2017). This factor has played a significant role in the establishment of CI in this region as this region is economically viable and surrounded by several ports. Port of Ain Sokhna southern Suez Canal and Port Said in the northern of Canal and which each of them is only 70km away from CI. Also, Damietta port is 140 km away from the Institute. These ports, which are shown on the map, are in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea and connect Asia with Europe and make an important part of China’s ‘One Belt One Road’ plan.



This area, Suez region, is important for the economy of China because as China gradually incorporates into the world system, developing a maritime power become vital for its economic and political influence (Zheng and Xin 2017:17). Also, as China's national development is primarily relying on maritime commerce, Suez Canal becomes significant as more than 8% of global trade goes by this Canal every year. Therefore, China has realized its need to increase its occurrence in this region by establishing CI to assist different Chinese companies to invest in this region and push the Chinese economy forward.

7.2.2 Improvement of China's Economic Reputation

Another means of public diplomacy to assist economy of a country is by improving its economic reputation. In this respect, CI seeks to influence people's perception regarding the economy of China by spreading information about its economic development. One way of doing this is through managing economic seminars for Chinese firms and businesspeople to meet Egyptian companies and people. In addition to other economic benefits which can be inherited, these workshops aim to send messages that economy of China is mature and has developed. The maturity of the Chinese economy is confirmed by the special economic zones in Africa and Egypt, and other economic activities in rest of Egypt. For Shi (2017) seminars show how China is proud of its high global economic position in the 21st Century (Shi 2017).

Another way that CI aims to improve China's economic reputation is by distributing economic information about China through the distribution of CIM. When I discussed the issue of distribution of CIM at CI with the management of CI, the conclusion has been that role of CI not only about culture and language. One of the interviewees said that: "Its [CI] role is a mixture of both educational and economic roles" (Li 2017). This perception was shared by another interviewee who argued that "It is tough to separate culture from economic" (Shi 2017).

Undoubtedly, distribution of information and knowledge about the economy of China aims to improve its economic reputation as a developed country in the mind of people. A good Chinese reputation would produce the supportive environment for China's economic activities. These activities have some impacts on Egyptian society. One of the results is how CI has corrected students' past reputation about China. For instance, some students have claimed that they did not know about China's global economic position where some other

mentioned China's strong economy and its technological development.

7.2.3 Economic Advocacy for the Chinese Companies

In addition to economic reputation, public diplomacy advocates different parts of economy and trade of China. As an actor in China's public diplomacy, CI has benefited economy and commerce of China by supporting China's economic engines abroad, namely Chinese companies and investments.

The evidence shows that CI has supported Chinese businesses in different ways. It has facilitated their access to Egyptian educated appropriate workers who speak Chinese and offer them Arabic classes to reduce the miscommunications with Egyptian. Also, CI has functioned as an employment office to meet Chinese in labor demands in addition to providing them consultation in different areas (Li 2017; Shi 2017).

Xu Nanshan, Chinese General consular in Alexandria has stated that cultural communication and cooperation will be a springboard for political and economic cooperation between China and Egypt (Xu 2016 cited in Hanban 2016). When I inquired the management of CI whether CI does economic activities, I received different answers. Two of three interviewees confirmed that CI at SCU has relationships to China's economic interests in this region (Li 2017; Tang 2017). One of them clearly said that: "Yes ... For instance, CI does economic seminars to make Chinese firms familiar with the investment opportunities available in Egypt and to provide them with essential assists that every company needs" (Tang 2017).

In contrast to the two interviewees, another interviewee (Shi 2017) stated that CI does not do any economic activity. However, her answer was contradictory as she said that "No there are not [Economic activities]... We [CI] organize only economic seminars" (Shi 2017). Then, I asked her whether economic seminars did not count to be economic activities, but she did not answer clearly and alleged that "We [CI] only help them [Chinese firms], we only provide the place" (Ibid). Last economic seminar has been in the previous year where Chinese companies have attended intensively. Undoubtedly, economic seminars are clear economic activities as they support Chinese companies directly by strengthening their foothold in Egypt. These seminars aim to make Chinese companies familiar with Egyptian market, as they are also a place for Chinese businesspeople to meet their Egyptian counterparts and a meeting point for

people of the two countries to meet each other.

In addition to economic seminars, CI facilitates the necessary conditions for Chinese firms to grow in several ways. One way of helping Chinese companies is through helping a Chinese SOC called TEDA and which is one of the biggest Chinese company operating in this region. This company, which is a real estate developer, is responsible for marketing the Chinese special economic zone assigned by the Egyptian government to Chinese firms. The role of CI is that it cooperates with TEDA in its task in developing Chinese special economic zone. While Chinese TEDA is responsible for marketing the district to Chinese companies and which has attracted 68 Chinese enterprises until 2016 (TEDA), CI helps those companies to establish a company in Egypt by offering them courses in Egyptian investment law and other necessary information. Further, CI assists and provides consultation to Chinese enterprises in any interested area (Li 2017).

Another economic support for is TEDA is by qualifying specialists in translation and interpreting in addition to establishing Chinese classrooms for TEDA in Ain Sokhna (Li 2017; Shi 2017). Usually, Chinese firms employ Egyptian labor who cannot speak Chinese, then CI helps to solve this problem by teaching Egyptian labor Chinese language and culture (Shi 2017). Although, teaching the Chinese language is one of CI aim, the establishment of Chinese Classrooms in the Chinese economic zone are economic activities because these classes aim to fill the lack of human resources needed by Chinese firms since these companies rely on Egyptian labor force who cannot speak the Chinese language. Previously, miscommunication between Chinese bosses and Egyptian labor force has made the work for Chinese firms challenging (Li 2017; Shi 2017). Then, Chinese classrooms for Egyptian workers has solved some of the problems. Still, CI is asked by companies to translate the manuals of machines from Chinese to Arabic.

Also, CI works as employment office for Chinese companies. In April 2017, CI and SCU together have held a recruitment conference for Chinese companies settled in Egypt. There have been 15 Chinese companies participated in the meeting where four of them are big companies, like Jushi Egypt which has invested 500 million USD, XD-EG MAC with 300 million USD investment, FAM Sun and Hengshi (Confucius Ismailia 2017; Haraji 2017). In addition to 15 Chinese companies Economic and Commercial office of the Chinese embassy in Egypt has been presented. Frequently, Chinese companies need interpreter or translator. So,

these companies call and ask CI for interpreter or translator, and in its turn, CI provide them to the appropriate employee. In the meanwhile, students leave their CV at the CI to be sent to the companies (Ibid).

Li Zhenhua, the previous Chinese director of CI at SCU has met a delegation from Hanban in 2016. During the meeting, Li Zhenhua has argued that CI attempts to increase its power through collaboration with Chinese companies settled in this region. Also, she has confirmed that CI seek to enlarge its internship program with local based Chinese companies to create more opportunities for students (Li Zhenhua 2016). In fact, when I talked to the students at CI, I found that the main reason for them attending CI is to get a job after graduation. This perception enhances China's image and reputation as a global power which its development is helpful for others. This attitude is favored by Chinese as it confirms that China's rise is peaceful and beneficial for other countries.

7.2.4 Education as Support to Economy

In 2017, a delegation from TEDA has visited CI to discuss orientations of studies. The main topic which has been considered by the two parts is the graduation of necessary human resources for Chinese firms (Shi 2017; Li 2017). In other words, this means that the education courses provided at CI need to be adjusted in a way that can answer the needs of Chinese firms and graduated human resources should meet the demand of the market. Last year, there had been more than 700 students studying at CI where most of the courses have had business orientation.

Also, as it has been mentioned earlier CI holds a CC for TEDA in Ain Sokhna to teach Egyptian workers Chinese language, and simultaneously it has established Arabic classrooms to teach Chinese staff Arabic.

7.2.5 Transferring Chinese Science and Technology

Another aim of public diplomacy is to make foreign public familiar with that country as much as possible. One significant way of reaching this objective is through transferring technology of that country to other nations. Indeed, transferring technology is principle number seven in

China's aid policy, and which has been followed by CI at SCU.⁹ CI has helped in transferring Chinese technologies in three ways by establishing: The China-Arab States Technology Transfer Centre, Beijing Institute of Technology and knowledge on Aquaculture (Fish Farming).

Use of Chinese high technology by other countries is simply best propaganda that can serve economic and politics of China. As Chinese technology begins used by Egyptian people, people to people diplomacy between the two countries and people engagement with China would increase too. Also, transferring of technology means that China is a developed country where its people live a comfortable life and which reflect a concrete domestic reality of China. It would improve China's image in the mind of Egyptian people and would enhance its global status.

Transferring of technology to Egypt and other countries would increase these countries dependency and reliance on China and which consequently increase China's economic power compared to other countries. Again, exporting Chinese technology will increase the demand for Chinese products. It will benefit Chinese firms in producing and exporting technological commodities to other nations, which also can enhance the position of Chinese currency in the global market. Besides, transferring Chinese technology to Egypt will support local Chinese companies and reduce supremacy of western companies over them.

The China-Arab States Technology Transfer Centre

One source of transferring Chinese technology has been China-Arab States Technology Transfer Centre (CASTTC).¹⁰ This center belongs to the China's Ministry of Science and Technology and is part of larger Chinese project, which seeks to be the leading network for transferring technology and scientific cooperation between, on the one hand, China and on the other hand, Egypt and other Arab countries. This center aims to play a significant role in transferring high Chinese technology to Egypt, and at the same time, it works as a

⁹ In 1963, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai announced eight aid principles which later become known as Zhou Enlai's principle. These principles stress the importance of self-reliance of receiving countries, non-interference of China's foreign policy and non-conditionality of aid.

¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that CASTTC has its office in Ningxia, which is an Islamic Chinese province. Also, by this act, China seeks to send a message to Arabic Muslim people that China has something in common with Egypt and other Arabic countries. Indeed, this is the primary task of public diplomacy in which China seeks to persuade Arabic publics that it is very close to them.

technological foundation for "One Belt and One Road" policy (Wang, J. 2015).

CI has worked as a communication channel between CASTTC and Egypt, and it has paved the way for CASTTC to share Chinese technology with Egyptian people. CI has organized a visit for CASTTC to visit Egypt as CASTTC and an accompanying delegation was scheduled to visit CI in April this year. The delegation plans to include different Chinese agencies and actors like universities and companies, which aim to hold seminars, conferences, and exhibitions to present the latest Chinese high-technology to Egypt (Shi 2017). Furthermore, CI is helping CASTTC by reducing the obstacles such as providing the place and coordinating and inviting different Egyptian universities and companies to come to the planned fair. The main reason behind all this support is to marketing and promoting Chinese technologies (Shi 2017; Li 2017) and which will have real economic and even political returns for China.

Beijing Information Technology College

Another source for movement of Chinese technology in Egypt and Africa is Beijing Information Technology College. Recently, SCU and Beijing Information Technology College have agreed upon establishing a new technological Institute at SCU where CI has designed and produced the agreement. This deal comes at a time when CI has been the link between the two parts and has been working to convergence their views and make them agree upon establishing this Institute. In November 2016, CI could manage that the two parts sign a protocol in which the new Institute would be inaugurated later this year. In April 2017, Beijing Information Technology College has visited SCU to activate and develop plans for study programs. Most of the Institute will be driven by Chinese experience and staff. This center aims to transfers Chinese high-technologies to rest of Africa and to other Arabic countries in the future (Li 2017).

The main reason for establishing this Institute is to support economic activities in this region by seeking to provide the technological demands of this region in a best possible way. The most important thing is that this Institute will provide a technical degree in technology, which is unique in Egypt (Li 2017). This means that the Institute will graduate labor force who has a professional degree in technology. This type of labor force is essential for the development of this region considering different types of businesses operating in economic and industrial areas close to the ports, for instance, in Chinese economic zone.

Among the specialties that this Institute will work with is shipbuilding, fishery, heavy industries, mining, power generation, automation, manufacturing of industrial robot and other high technologies industries (Tang 2017). Interestingly, these specialties are related to Chinese firms investing in this region. For instance, as it has been mentioned in the previous section, COSCO and other Chinese companies investing in this region will need qualifications to operate and grow. Only this Institute aims to response to all development and technological demands that might rise in this region. In fact, instead of bringing all type of necessity human resources and equipment from China and which are both times consuming and expensive, this technological Institute will provide the necessary labor force and equipment to make the wheel of Chinese investment, and business revolves.

Aquaculture

Remaining in the world of technology, another technological activity of CI has been importing Chinese Aquaculture to this region by establishing an institute of fish breeding at SCU. This Institute has started a fish farming project at the university worth 5 million USD sponsored by the Chinese government and which later on has been used as a model by the Egyptian government for a similar project outside of university (Li 2017).

The fish farming project has become the stepping stone and mentor for Egypt national fish farming project, which has been opened by the Egyptian president in 2014. The national project is 72 km long and will be implemented in phases besides the Suez Canal in El-Qantara 50 km north of Ismailia where CI is located. Of course, using Chinese aquaculture technology as the module by a foreign country like Egypt for its national project means a lot for China's technology reputation. Also, it means that China is a developed and belongs to technology-exporting countries, which benefit their economy by exporting technology.

8. Conclusion

Departing from critical realism ontology, this thesis has been able to find evidence that substantiates the proposed assumptions about CI at SCU. The thesis has shown that in the domain of real, there are mechanisms, namely Chinese political and economic interests, resulting in political and economic activities within the domain of actual. By analyzing activities of CI at SCU, it becomes apparent that the power mechanisms which operate at this Institute have shaped by China's national interests. Even though CI is a center for teaching Chinese language and culture, but still its cultural and language activities in addition to other activities have been motivated by political and economic interests, and China's public diplomacy has worked through this Institute. CI has been a producer and a nexus between Egypt and China, and it has sought to open different horizons for cooperation between on one hand Chinese universities and companies and on the other hand, their Egyptian counterparts.

Nonetheless, it has been harder to substantiate the political assumption compared to the economic one. Among the evidence that substantiates political assumption are the influential role of CI. Management of CI has served China's national interests by influencing the management of SCU in establishing different institutes. CI has functioned as an image brushing tool and maintained some political censorship. CI has started teaching Arabic lessons and provides the scholarship to students, aiming to make them cultural ambassadors for China. CI has sought to increase understanding of Egyptian people about China by distributing information through different sources, employing media. Also, it has intensified Chinese teaching sources, like language and cultural activities. In sum, an increase in the number of communication channels between China and Egypt means improving China's image and support for China's political interests.

In contrast to political part, it has been easier to find evidence that supports the economic assumption. Apparently, CI has helped China's economic interests in this region in various ways. Foremost, it has been confirmed by the management of CI that the main reason behind the establishment of CI at SCU has been the geo-economic factor. Furthermore, similar to political reputation, some of the activities attempted to improve China's economic reputation. CI has supported Chinese companies in several ways, like providing special labor force and other necessary information about Egyptian market and investments' law. CI has been a reason for exporting Chinese technology, which would serve economic of China in different

ways, like improving China's economic reputation. CI has convinced SCU to cooperate with Beijing Institute of Technology to establish a new technological institute. In the same context, it has paved the way for China-Arab States Technology Transfer Centre to come to Egypt for transferring Chinese technology. These activities are to facilitate the development of Chinese firms in this region.

A consideration is that China's economic and political interests travel with its language and culture since it's hard to separate them. However, this does not mean that this thesis aims to generalize its findings on other CIs since each CI has its cause and particularity. Despite my short stay in Egypt, I have been able to collect valuable information and evidence about activities of CI. However, it does not mean that I have reached all power mechanisms dominate the domain of real and some events might have gone unnoticeable.

This thesis has resulted in exclusive findings of CI at SCU which can be a springboard for future researchers. Since Egyptian society is welcoming the role played by CI and look at it as a useful player, the future researchers can examine to what extent this CI has influenced the Egyptian society.

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Name of Interviewee	Position	Date of Interviews
Shi	Director of CI TV program presenter	2017-02
Tang	Director of CI Dean in Suez Canal university	2017-02
Li	Public Relations Officer	2017-02
Group of students	Students at CI at SUC	2017-02