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Kenya-China Cooperation and Implementation Actors Amidst Policy Transfer and Learning Processes

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Abstract

Amidst the policy transfer and learning processes in China-Africa relations, pertinent influences have arisen: dimensions of involvement, involved actors and process localization, especially regarding the youth. The presented insights highlight context and dynamics in the Kenya-China cooperation and implementation actors amidst policy transfer and learning processes. Integrative literature review methodology was adopted. Though Kenya-China relations involve state and non-state actors, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are the two core pathways that power development architecture. China's policy toward Kenya significantly manifests in the context of FOCAC and BRI initiatives and bilateral policy frameworks are generally aligned with Kenya's national development strategies. FOCAC drives policy debate and formulation whereas BRI drives its funding and implementation. Challenges like knowledge and skill transfer, processes localization and disparities in bilateral trade and treaties have persisted with notable improvements in sectorial bilateral and/or capacity exchanges engagements. Progressively, more emphasis should be engrained in information and communications technology (ICT) and education for skills capacity besides policy transfer and learning processes localization. This is so because they are the determinants that drive FOCAC and BRI's broader philosophical and ideological framework.

Keywords: China, Cooperation, Development, Kenya, Policy

Introduction

Globally, there has been increased interaction, integration, and interdependence on various fronts, including the economic, political, social, technological, and cultural fields. Borders are no longer impediments for countries, organizations, groups, and individuals to share, learn, and transfer their experiences and lessons learned in order to improve the development and welfare of their states (Azatyan, n.d.). The import and export of policies (literally the dissemination of policy proposals from one location to another) is referred to as policy transfer. It can range from acquiring broad inspiration to importing an entire policy program. On the other hand, policy learning is a valuable concept for gaining new skills to inform policy and policymaking. Knowledge may be focused on facts about a current policy problem, historical lessons, or others' experiences (Cairney, 2012).

In an effort to promote the steady growth of long-term China-Africa relations and bring mutually beneficial cooperation to a new stage, the Chinese government issued the Africa Policy Paper in January 2006, outlining the objectives of China's policy toward Africa and the measures to achieve them (Embassy of China in Ghana, 2006). The general principles and objectives of China's African policy are: sincerity, friendship and equality; mutual benefit, reciprocity and shared prosperity; mutual support and close coordination; and learning from each other and seeking common development. In this regard, to improve overall cooperation between China and Africa, the Chinese government proposed cooperation in various fields, including politics, economics, education, science, culture, health, and social aspects, as well as peace and security. Cooperation in the political field would take the form of high-level visits, exchanges between legislative bodies, exchanges between political parties, consultation mechanisms, cooperation in international affairs, and exchanges between local governments. Economic engagements would occur in trade, investment, financial cooperation, agricultural cooperation, infrastructure, resource cooperation, tourism cooperation, debt reduction and relief, economic assistance, and multilateral cooperation. On the education, science, culture, health, and social aspects, the proposed areas of cooperation are human resource development and education, science and technology cooperation, cultural exchanges, medical and health cooperation, media cooperation, administrative cooperation, consular cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, environmental cooperation, disaster reduction, relief, and humanitarian assistance. With regards to peace and security, the areas touched on include: military cooperation, conflict settlement and peacekeeping operations, judicial and police cooperation, and non-traditional security areas (Embassy of China in Ghana, 2006).

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), established in 2000, provides the foundation for China's policy toward Africa, while the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), established in 2013, focuses more on the multilateral platform and connectivity, implying that the BRI will bring Africa into a larger global market. FOCAC had 53 of the 55 African Union (AU) member states by November 2021, and BRI had 46. FOCAC and BRI are the two engines that power a new China-Africa development architecture. FOCAC is the policy debate and formulation driving force, whereas BRI is its funding and implementation driving force. China has supported projects like the construction of railway lines, roads, and ports that traverse and connect African countries through the architecture (Kagwanja, 2021; Zhiqin, 2018).

Kenya-China development cooperation has expanded further under the auspices of FOCAC and BRI. Kenya is regarded as Africa's focal point in China's BRI policy due to its geographical advantage and comparative strength in political stability and economic development (Wanja, 2022; Xia, 2019). In recent years, Kenya and China have signed a number of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and agreements covering a wide range of sectors. These include agreements in 2014 to boost the number of inbound Chinese tourists to Kenya, increase Kenyan agricultural exports to the Chinese market, and strengthen innovation in 2018. According to Kenyan authorities, participation in the BRI would hasten the implementation of its national development strategies, such as the 'Vision 2030' program. Kenya Vision 2030 seeks to make Kenya "a globally competitive and prosperous country with a high standard of living by 2030." Its goal is to transform Kenya into "a newly industrializing, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all of its citizens in a clean and secure environment." These priorities necessitate significant resources and the modernization of the country's infrastructure, with the BRI serving as one potential mechanism for Kenya to achieve these objectives (Goulard, 2020; Kenya Vision 2030, 2008). China has backed Kenya's national development strategy by investing heavily in infrastructure, boosting the country's status as a regional transportation and communications hub(Wanja, 2022). However, amidst the policy transfer and learning processes, certain pertinent factors have arisen: what are the dimensions of involvement? Who are the actors involved? What is the status of the processes localization, especially with regard to the youth? In this regard, the discourse on context and dynamics sought to:

- Highlight the dimensions of involvement in the Kenya-China cooperation framework amidst the policy transfer and learning processes.
- Highlight the actors involved in the implementation of the Kenya-China cooperation framework amidst the policy transfer and learning processes.
- Highlight the status of the processes localization, especially with regard to the youth.

Methods

The integrative literature review (Souza et al., 2010; Torraco, 2005; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005) study on Kenya-China cooperative engagement and implementation actors, considered targeted analysis of published peer-reviewed journal articles, and grey literature (working papers, reports from credible databases of research institutions e.g. China Africa Research Initiative, World Bank, African Union, Forum for China Africa cooperation, East Africa Community cooperation, African Chamber of Commerce of The Pacific North West, Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as official government documents e.g. the Kenya Vision 2030 development blueprint and cooperation agreements and reports in public repositories like the government printers database and office of the government spokesperson, Kenya). The literature search was mainly conducted using Google Advanced Search and Google Scholar. This was succeeded by an auxiliary search to the credible databases of research institutions and think tank authorities (mentioned above) that emerged through Google search hits with relevant information on China-Africa cooperation. As an interdisciplinary search engine, Google Scholar aided in the broad search for scholarly literature, indexing articles from academic publishers, professional societies, institutional and pre-print repositories, and scholarly articles posted on the web.

Further search for peer-reviewed publications was conducted via Ovid MEDLINE/PubMed, Embase, African Journals OnLine (AJOL) and PsycINFO databases for relevant articles. Database and repository searches were conducted in the English language. The study concentrated on assessing and critically analysing existing literature on China-Africa and Kenya-China discourses in conjunction with the FOCAC, the BRI, policy transfer, policy learning, localization, and the youth. To ensure that the discourses were contextualized, it moved systematically from a China-Africa perspective to a Kenya-China perspective. With the exception of the Chinese government's Africa Policy Paper issued in January 2006 and the Kenya Vision 2030 development blueprint issued in 2008, this study focused on relevant literature sources from the 2012–2022 year period. This was facilitated by using a custom range and sorting by relevance.

Results and Discussion

Kenya-China Belt and Road Initiatives and Developmental Challenges

China's President Xi Jinping announced plans in 2013 to establish a ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ and a ‘21st Century Maritime Silk Road,’ which is now known as the ‘Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).’ The BRI aspires to boost investments, infrastructure, and trade in Africa, Europe, and Asia to allow more significant global growth and development. Currently, the BRI appears to be both an economic initiative and a foreign policy priority for China's leadership. According to some, “it is strategic in scope and an essential component of the Communist Party of China's (CPC's) twin objectives of achieving national rejuvenation and restoring China as a Great Power.”(Githaiga et al., 2019) The BRI was inscribed in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) constitution in 2017, making it a key component of the party's strategic policy. China promotes its ability to deliver economic prosperity to developing and emerging economies through the BRI. More than 120 nations have signed BRI agreements, with Chinese commitments totalling USD1 trillion. While China's investment may not fill the entire predicted infrastructure shortfall, such a large-scale infusion of funding can begin work in thousands of locations and bring much-needed investment to capital-starved regions. According to the World Bank, “if completely implemented, BRI transportation projects [alone] could raise global commerce by 1.7 to 6.2 per cent, raising global real income by 0.7 to 2.9 per cent”(Ye, 2020)

The ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative has laid the groundwork for collaboration across the Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road economic belts since its inception (Li & Li, 2020). Historically, Kenya is significant as the East African destination of Admiral Zheng He's fleets which sailed along the ancient Maritime Silk Road in the 15th century and is likely the only African country continuously featured on Belt and Road Initiative maps produced by the Chinese state media (Demissie et al., 2016). Since Admiral Zheng He's trip to the ‘Western Oceans’, Kenya has had economic and trade interactions with China as an African stop on the Maritime Silk Road and the friendship has lasted for more than 600 years (Li & Li, 2020). Kenya is well-positioned to serve as an international trading hub and a getaway along the Maritime Silk Road; this is attributed to the large-scale infrastructure projects such as the deep water ports of Mombasa and Lamu, as well as the construction of a Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) from Mombasa port to Nairobi opening up a new economic corridor along the railway line. This is consistent with China's selection of Kenya as a demonstration and pioneering country for China-Africa industrial cooperation. Kenya also has strong diplomatic ties with China, and a Bilateral Steering Committee was formed to advance cooperation. Kenyan officials believe that the new Maritime Silk Road will be a game-changer for Kenya since it will allow the country to connect with Asia-Pacific economic powers. Kenya also contributes to the Belt and Road Initiative's financial integration goal by hosting one of the continent's first Renminbi (RMB) clearing houses (Demissie et al., 2016).
Kenya's economy has been one of the fastest-growing in Sub-Saharan Africa, with noticeable improvements in various human development indicators. Kenya received a ranking of 94 out of 157 in the World Bank's Human Capital project assessment based on the first edition of the Human Capital

Index (HCI) published in October 2018 (World Bank, 2020). The HCI project aims to increase the demand for human capital initiatives by raising awareness. The Kenyan government is pursuing its long-term national development Vision 2030 in order to increase human capital and accelerate progress in improving human capital outcomes (Gu & Qiu, 2019). The goal of this strategy is to transform the country into a newly industrializing, 'middle-income country that provides a high-quality life to all of its citizens by 2030 (Kenya Vision 2030, 2008). Prior to the implementation of the next phase of Vision 2030 through the Third Medium Plan, H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta conceptualized the Big Four development priorities (Big Four Agenda): manufacturing, universal health care, affordable housing, and food security (Government of Kenya, 2017). According to Kenneth Mwige, Director General of the Vision 2030 Delivery Secretariat, the Big Four agenda has not replaced Vision 2030 in terms of government priorities, but rather serves to accelerate its achievement (Njoka, 2020). This promotes national economic development by expanding infrastructure, promoting sustainable development, and hastening poverty eradication. The Kenyan government sees investment in infrastructure capacity building as a crucial means of achieving its long-term development goals. Kenya's industrial transformation initiative aims to boost the country's manufacturing and export bases. Infrastructure capacity building in the areas of transportation, communications, energy, and water is a critical aspect. This necessitates large-scale investment as well as implementation experience, which the BRI can provide as a value-added and comparative advantage (Gu & Qiu, 2019).

Infrastructure constructions, as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements, have advanced under the BRI, allowing China and Kenya to cooperate by opening up consumer markets and encouraging commerce (Githaiga et al., 2019; Li & Li, 2020). Opportunities, on the other hand, bring with them challenges. Despite the fact that China and Kenya are both developing countries, bilateral trade imbalances and an ageing trade structure in bilateral import and export products trade exist due to differences in national economic scale, population, and social development. Furthermore, China has been in surplus for a long time in bilateral trade with Kenya, while Kenya has been in deficit for a long time, which has hampered deep cooperation in bilateral trade in goods (Li & Li, 2020).

Political risks, runaway costs, policy barriers, and inflated expectations are among the other potential challenges identified by Githaiga et al (Githaiga et al., 2019). Political risks are, without a doubt, the most serious threat to the BRI in Africa. In Africa, social and political upheaval may radically alter a country's favourable stance toward BRI projects and Chinese investments in general, thereby impeding the growth of BRI infrastructure projects. When political risks are addressed, BRI projects should be shielded against all extra spending that would make them too costly for recipient nations. On the challenge of runaway costs, procurement and public tendering have sparked a lot of interest in the Chinese project execution model to ensure more transparency and reduce wasteful spending. The opaque nature of many BRI agreements limits public and private sector monitoring and prevents competitive bidding. For instance, in Kenya's SGR construction, the government-to-government procurement process was involved in legal conflicts over concerns that it did not allow for competitive bidding and transparency. When it comes to policy barriers, a lack of such analysis to identify economic viability typically leads to an overestimation of project benefits. Overestimating the benefits of BRI initiatives harms the project's implementation. Overestimation of the positive impacts or benefits of infrastructure projects can result in overexploitation or insufficient use of said infrastructure due to inflated expectations. Kenya's SGR project is also one of the most scrutinized in the country, and controversies have been surrounding it, which is typical of accusations levelled against other Chinese mega-projects in Africa. Amongst these issues are the SGR's debt sustainability, economic viability, corruption, and opaque contracting (Wissenbach & Wang, 2017). The BRI's rapid expansion of infrastructure credit entails significant risks. Many of the large infrastructure projects are financed with debt, raising concerns about the African economies' rising debt levels and long-term viability. To keep the SGR running, the taxpayer will now have to dig deeper into his or her pocket(Irandu & Owilla, 2020).

Prospects amidst the Evolving Challenges

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, on the other hand, spoke extensively about the Belt and Road Initiative, Sino-Africa relations, and Kenya-China relations at the 2017 Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. He stated that the BRI was the ideal model for Africa's desired progress and that the continent was set to reclaim some of globalization's lost prospects by participating actively in China's proposed interconnected world initiative. Being a part of BRI allows the continent to transition to a new platform where global collaboration will enable value addition, innovation, and increased prosperity. The initiative complements the African Union's plan to build more infrastructure links across the continent. He went on to say that Africa must transition from being a mere consumer of finished goods to becoming an exporter and that joining the Belt and Road Initiative will expand trade and investment prospects while also reigniting Africa's own regional and continental integration plans. Nonetheless, he emphasized that a win-win situation will be achieved when the people have the necessary skills, assets, and financing to create infrastructural corridors that will improve connectivity, support commerce, and lower the cost of doing business between the two countries. When people have the technology to add value to Africa's richness of resources, everyone benefits because it is essential for fair and unrestricted trade (Xinhua News, 2017).

BRI and FOCAC Youth-oriented Policy Transfer and Learning in Kenya

The Kenya Youth Development Policy (KYDP) 2019 defines youth as anyone over the age of 18 who has not yet reached the age of 35 based on the 2010 Kenyan Constitution. This Policy, however also provides suitable actions for those aged 15 to 17 years old to guarantee that youth issues are addressed holistically. The term 'youth' is used in the Policy to refer to both age and youth hood. In terms of age, a youth is defined as a person, male or female, between the ages of 18 and 34 years; while youth–hood is defined as the period between childhood and adulthood during which people must navigate a complex interplay of personal, socioeconomic, and cultural changes to make the transition from dependency to independence, take effective control of their lives, and assume social commitments. The Policy views youth hood as a period of transition and vulnerability when they must learn, transition to work, maintain health and safety, create families, and exercise citizenship, including adherence to national values and governance principles. To succeed throughout this moment of change, the youth's human capital must be developed, they should also be equipped with values and direction to enable constructive contributions towards national and international sustainable development, assume leadership roles, make informed and competent decisions, and acquire a sense of wellbeing.

Youth are not a homogeneous group, and this policy acknowledges that. Even though young people face certain common developmental challenges, their origins, experiences, interests, gender, needs, and cultures are distinctively diverse(*Kenya-Youth-Development-Policy-2019*, 2019). Figure 1, a population pyramid, shows a breakdown (age and sex) of the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing

Census (KPHC) report produced by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). According to this report, Kenya maintains a predominantly youthful population.

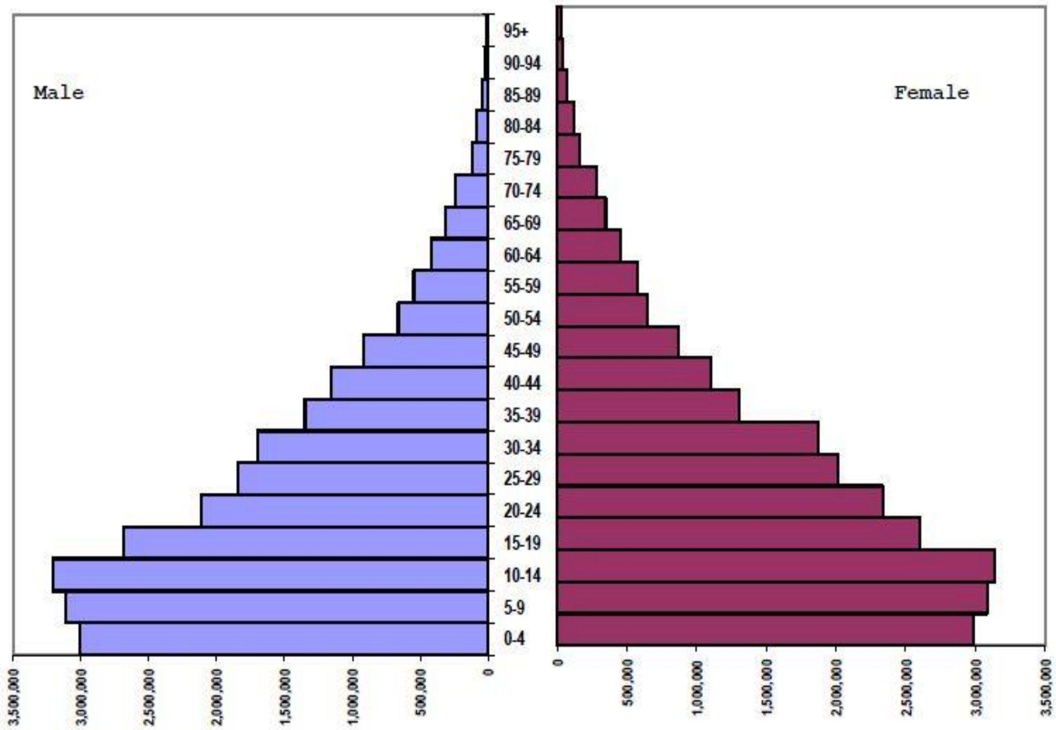

Figure 1: 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC)(KNBS, 2020)

As a result, it is necessary to promote the comprehensive empowerment and participation of youth in socioeconomic and political spheres for national development, with the goal of creating a society where youth have an equal and responsible opportunity to realize their full potential in these scopes through integrity and honest effort(*Kenya-Youth-Development-Policy-2019*, 2019). This goal aligns with the East African Community (EAC) Youth Policy's mission of creating an enabling environment for effective youth participation and empowerment in the development and sustainability of the East African Community, with a vision of an integrated East African Community where youth are empowered to fully participate and benefit in all aspects of the region's development (*EAC Youth Policy*, 2014).

In the Kenyan context, the KYDP 2019 has established youth empowerment and development objectives, with priority areas such as achieving a healthy and productive young population; developing a qualified and competent youth workforce for long-term development; providing possibilities for the youth to acquire a respectable and long-term living; supporting youth participation in environmental management for long-term development; fostering youth talent, creativity, and innovation for wealth generation; fostering and cultivating a culture of entrepreneurship among youth through subsidized loans, training, mentorship, internships, attachments, business incubation, and partnerships; assisting in the development of a diverse range of ICT-based programs in local languages, as needed, with content relevant to various groups of youth, etc. (*Kenya-Youth-Development-Policy-2019*, 2019).

China is unquestionably one of Africa's largest and most important economic partners. Despite China's rapid expansion of investment in Africa over the last two decades, Chinese companies operating in Africa have been accused of failing to do enough to promote local skills development and technology transfer. This criticism is frequently directed at the manufacturing sector, with critics accusing Chinese firms of leaving Africa further and further behind in the global technological frontier. Faced with high unemployment rates, rapid population growth, and a disproportionate skills gap across many African nations, local and international stakeholders expect Chinese actors to transfer skills and create opportunities in Africa to level the trade-off. In this context, AVIC International, a large Chinese infrastructure company, has been working in Kenya, where the youth unemployment rate is nearly double that of the rest of the population, to develop a number of skills transfer initiatives(I. Y. Sun & Qi, 2017). For example, AVIC sponsors Africa Tech Challenge (ATC), and during an award ceremony for the Challenge's fourth season in 2017, senior Kenyan government officials present emphasized Kenya's commitment to strengthening partnerships with China to build a critical mass of highly skilled youth capable of propelling the country's industrial transformation agenda. There were suggestions to strengthen ties with China to foster youth empowerment through the transfer of skills and knowledge. Dr. Amina Mohamed, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Education at the time, stated that collaboration with Chinese companies has transformed skills development for Kenya's rapidly growing youth population. She stated that initiatives such as the Africa Tech Challenge allow young people to participate in the manufacturing sector while also developing their entrepreneurship skills. The 2017 edition of ATC, which focused on skill development in carpentry, bricklaying, and steelwork, drew 103 young participants from around the country, with AVIC International offering to hire 25 youth who displayed exceptional competency in the three construction-related skills(Xinhua News, 2018).

During the 2018 FOCAC proceedings in Beijing, China’s President Xi Jinping announced that China would support the establishment of 10 Luban (renamed after Lu Ban, a renowned Chinese carpenter, craftsman, and engineer) Workshops across Africa to help the continent build needed technical skills among college students. That pledge was fulfilled ahead of the 2021 FOCAC Summit in Dakar, Senegal on 29–30 November. Machakos University in Kenya hosts the workshop, which began in December 2019 and focuses on cloud computing (in collaboration with Huawei Technologies). Young people are expected to play a key part in the continent's transformation and development, hence the crucial need to upgrade their technical abilities. Nonetheless, challenges such as poor training infrastructure, a scarcity of trainers, limited industry participation, and insufficient research support continue to stymie Africa's pursuit of vocational training aspirations. This notwithstanding, Luban Workshops provide an excellent platform for cultural exchanges, since Chinese instructors, as well as tutors and trainees from partner countries, have the opportunity to connect and strengthen China-Africa people-to-people ties (Chinadaily, 2021). On the international stage, the fifth China-Africa Youth Festival was hosted in Beijing in October 2020 to commemorate the FOCAC’s 20th anniversary. During the seven-day festival, 42 African and Chinese youth representatives participated in numerous events displaying Chinese culture and visiting firms and high-tech industrial parks in Beijing and Jiangxi province in East China. Since its inception in 2016, the festival has grown into an event that promotes exchanges and mutual understanding between Chinese and African youth, as young people are critical to China-Africa relations. Youth from China and Africa were urged to collaborate in building the FOCAC and forging closer ties (Chinadaily, 2020; FOCAC, 2020).

Professor Maria Nzomo, Director of the University of Nairobi's Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies at the time (2012-2022), stated at a Nairobi forum on election preparations in 2017 that Kenya should learn from China's model of leveraging the youth bulge to promote socio-economic and cultural regeneration. Beijing has established a precedent for using its youth's talents and entrepreneurial energy to propel progress. It is necessary to follow China's lead in empowering its youth by creating a suitable atmosphere where they can achieve their greatest potential. Delegates at the conference believed that Kenyan youth may be a constructive force for change if a welcoming climate is created that allows them to participate in nation-building (New China, 2017). Despite this, information is context-dependent. Aside from public announcements that may mislead the public into believing that growth is a blueprint that can be easily transported, adaptability and flexibility are essential. The continent can learn from China's experience, but China's policies are not set in stone; they have evolved through trial and error. Rather than imitating, it is necessary to comprehend the processes and institutions that allow policy changes to occur. Of course, learning is reciprocal, and a comprehension of the receiving countries' developments and procedures is also important(Wu, 2019). Thus, while there is credible evidence that Chinese investments do generate job possibilities for Africans, China has to engage in tech-transfer mechanisms to enable more Africans to hold management roles. China needs to re-evaluate its investment strategy for Africa, and African leaders need to learn to negotiate better deals with China, fully incorporate Africa as a partner and reflect the concept of “win-win” diplomacy. The majority of jobs offered by Chinese companies to young Africans are low-wage, unskilled positions. There is room for improvement on both sides in an era where artificial intelligence and machine learning are transforming the world's economic picture and will be crucial in a post-COVID-19 era(Ochiel, 2019).

Kenya-China Discourse and Engagement Advancements

According to the China Africa Research Initiative's Chinese Loans to Africa (CLA) Database, which contains publicly-available data from official government documents, contractor websites, fieldwork, interviews, and media sources, Chinese financiers signed loan commitments worth USD 9 billion with Kenya between 2000 and 2019. Based on the intended area of use, this provides insight into notable areas of engagement in the Kenya-China discourse (SAIS-CARI, 2019). The following categories are listed: transport, power, multisector, ICT, health, education, government, mining, water, other social, unallocated, agriculture, environment, business, industry, budget, trade, defence, food, and banking. Transport has received USD 6 billion in commitments, power USD 1.3 billion, multi-sector USD 600 million, ICT USD 458 million, health USD 217 million, education USD 166 million, mining USD 68 million, water USD 31 million, other social USD 29 million, and unallocated USD 14 million.

Among the borrowers listed during this period (2000–2019) are the Government of Kenya, the Development Bank of Kenya, and the Kenya Electricity Transmission Company (KETRACO), a state-owned enterprise (SOE). The lenders listed include the Export-Import Bank of China (China Exim Bank), the China Development Bank, the Government of China, and the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), while the contractors for the various sectorial projects are/have been primarily Chinese.

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China (1998-2020) on the gross annual revenues of Chinese companies' construction projects in Kenya, there were generally significant gains until 2016, with gradual declines over the next four years, particularly after 2019. Regardless, China has reaped considerable benefits from the projects based on revenue streams. The same is depicted in Figure 2 below.

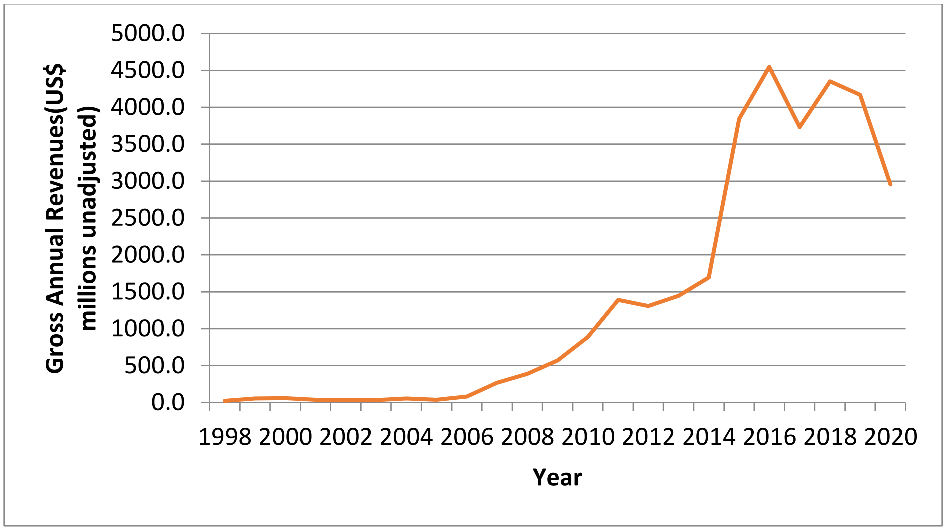

Figure 2 Gross Annual Revenues of Chinese Companies' Construction Projects in Kenya (Source: Authors' compilation based on SAIS-CARI (2019))

On the trade front, which appears to be another area of notable engagement in the Kenya-China discourse, China's exports to Kenya have generally increased between 1992 and 2020 (gradual increases between 1992 and 2002, then sharp increases after). On the other hand, China's imports from Kenya have gradually increased from 1992 to 2020. This is based on data from the United Nations COMTRADE database of international trade. However, as illustrated in Figure 3 on China's exports to and imports from Kenya below, there has been a significant disparity between the former and the latter. This demonstrates that China is/has been in surplus with Kenya in terms of bilateral trade, whereas Kenya has been in deficit (balance of trade heavily in favour of China). This necessitates additional measures to reduce it, such as encouraging the purchase of more Kenyan goods in the Chinese market. Although standards and quantitative restrictions have made the Chinese market difficult to access, the two countries should work together to develop favourable policies that will ease access to the Chinese market, such as negotiating duty-free access for commodities in which Kenya has a comparative advantage.

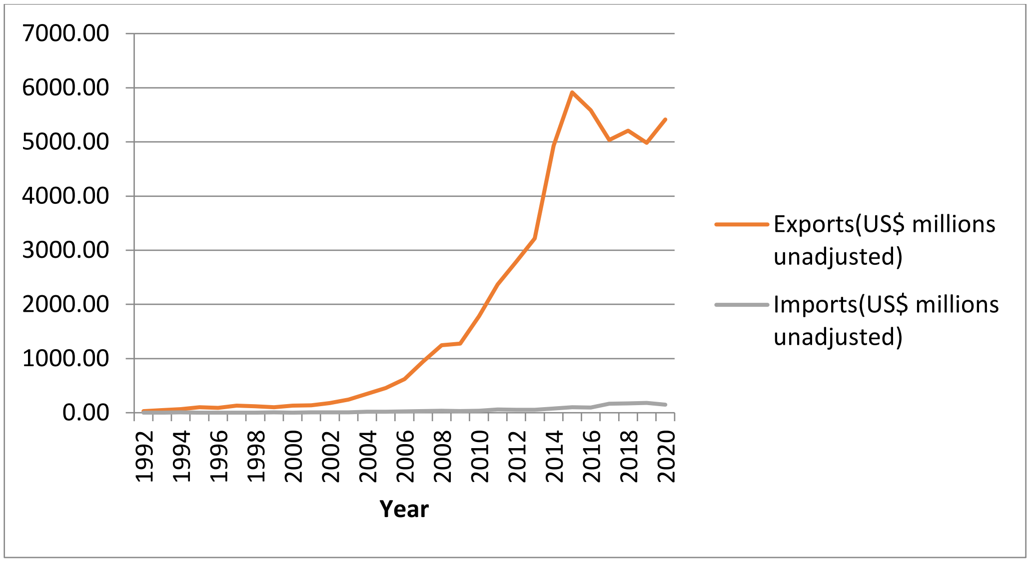

Figure 3 China's Exports to and Imports from Kenya (Source: Authors' compilation based on SAIS-CARI (2019))

Avenues for addressing the aforementioned trade deficit that favours China was one of the areas touched on during the bilateral meeting, which took the form of a Ministerial Roundtable officiated by Kenya's Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Raychelle Omamo in the presence of the People's Republic of China's State Councillor and Foreign Affairs Minister, Wang Yi, among other officials, on January 6, 2022, in Mombasa. The discussions focused on putting into action the outcomes announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 8th Ministerial Conference on the FOCAC, which was held in Dakar, Senegal, from November 28th to 30th, 2021. This included areas of cooperation under the first three-year plan of the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 through nine programs: medical and health, poverty reduction and agricultural development, trade promotion, investment promotion, digital innovation, green development, capacity building, cultural and people-to-people exchange, and peace and security (FOCAC, 2021; Wanja, 2022).

Kenya and China inked six agreements and MOUs during their bilateral meeting. Both countries agreed to explore further cooperation in agricultural value addition, capacity building, and trade facilitation for Kenyan agricultural products as part of the poverty reduction and agricultural development initiatives. Regarding trade promotion, the two countries signed an MOU on forming a working group to address tariffs and nontariff barriers between the two countries to promote trade and reduce the trade deficit. China and Kenya also concluded and signed two protocols to facilitate bilateral trade, particularly on the issue of avocado and aquatic product exports to China. The two sides agreed to work together to promote Chinese investments in agro-processing, textiles, and apparel, leather processing, footwear, iron and steel, machinery, furniture and wood, electronic assembly, auto assembly, construction, pharmaceuticals, oil, and gas as part of the promotion of bilateral investments. In terms of digital innovation, the two countries signed an MOU to increase investment and collaboration in the digital economy. Concerning green development, they agreed to continue discussions on collaboration in technology transfer in the circular, green, and blue economies, as well as the establishment of low-carbon development and climate change adaptation centres of excellence(Tanui, 2022; Wanja, 2022).

Kenya-China Engagement Actors towards Kenya's Development and Economic Growth

Overall, the formulation of China's policy toward Africa (hence Kenya) is under the leadership of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the State Council. However, with the increasing involvement of various actors, China's engagement in Africa has become more diverse in recent years. Various ministries are involved in implementing China's policy toward Africa under the leadership of the State Council. Because the FOCAC secretariat is housed in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the MFA plays a role in coordination. The MFA's central involvement in China's policy toward Africa is shown in the appointment of a Chinese Special Envoy for Africa in 2007, a senior Chinese diplomat from the MFA solely responsible for African affairs. In addition to the MFA, China's foreign trade and investment connections with Africa are managed by the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM). The MOFCOM was in charge of foreign aid until April 2018, when the CIDCA was established, replacing MOFCOM's Department of Foreign Aid. CIDCA reports directly to the State Council and was established to "achieve better coordination and greater impact" of China's aid programs, particularly in support of the Belt and Road Initiative. Aside from these two bodies, the Ministry of Finance wields responsibility for the foreign affairs budget through its approval and supervision authority. The Ministry of Finance has a unique position in deciding China's aid actions on the ground in Africa, especially when it comes to the foreign aid budget, which is jointly submitted by the MFA and MOFCOM. Geographically, the ministry divides Africa into two regions, overseen by the Department of West Asian and North African Affairs and the Department of African Affairs (Sub-Sahara). Issues to do with Kenya fall under the latter. The MFA's field offices (Chinese embassies) are the primary sources of information on bilateral relations between China and specific African countries within the bureaucratic system of the MFA (Stahl, 2016; Y. Sun, 2014). Therefore, in Kenya's case, it is the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Kenya.

China's policy banks, in addition to China's ministries, play an important role in China's involvement in Africa. The China Export-Import Bank (China Exim Bank) and the China Development Bank (CDB) are the two most important Chinese policy banks. Whereas the CDB is important in funding large infrastructure projects both in China and abroad, China's Exim Bank is crucial in supporting China's foreign trade and economic cooperation with Africa. It manages concessional loans in accordance with diplomatic and commercial objectives, and it plays a "policy-oriented 'development financing' role" in Africa. In this context, China's policy banks back Chinese companies' operations in Africa. Similarly, China's engagement with Africa is heavily reliant on the private sector(Stahl, 2016). There are a considerable number of Chinese companies operating in Africa; both SOEs and private-sector companies (especially small and medium-sized enterprises).In Kenya, China Roads and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), which did the SGR and is doing the Nairobi Expressway, and China Wu Yi, which constructed the Thika Super Highway, are some examples of state-owned enterprises. Because SOEs are not subject to stockholder pressure like private companies, they are better suited to advancing the government's broader geopolitical objectives. Along with national institutions, Chinese subnational governments play an important role in Africa. Chinese provincial and municipal governments have established extensive overseas programs over the years, becoming important players in international development cooperation with Africa (Stahl, 2016). In 2019, Tianjin, for example, opened its second Luban Workshop in Africa in Kenya. Tianjin City Vocational College, China Huawei Technology Company, and Machakos University in Kenya collaborated to establish it.

When it comes to Kenya as a country, the onus of carrying out China's policy toward Kenya falls primarily on the Government of Kenya (while taking into account its national development objectives as well). This is done through the relevant ministries as it relates to the implementation sector. This is evident in the aforementioned Ministerial Roundtable, which was officiated by Kenya's Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Raychelle Omamo on January 6, 2022, in Mombasa, in the presence of the People's Republic of China's State Councilor and Foreign Affairs Minister, Wang Yi, among other officials. Kenyan Cabinet Secretaries (CS) who signed the MOUs included the CS for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives, the CS for National Treasury and Planning, the CS for ICT, Innovation, and Youth Affairs, and the CS for Industrialization, Trade, and Enterprise Development. Aside from that, relevant SOEs also play an important role, such as the KETRACO. As the Kenya-China dialogue evolves, the private sector, through organisations such as the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) and the Kenya-China Chamber of Commerce, among others, is and will be critical in implementing China's policy toward Kenya.

Conclusion and Perspective

Under the auspices of FOCAC and BRI, Kenya-China relations have grown tremendously, building on the two countries' historical ties. Notable areas of engagement include transport, the energy sector, ICT, health, education, mining, water and sanitation. However, relations have had their share of challenges, for instance in terms of process localization and disparities in areas like bilateral trade, where the balance of trade is in China’s favour. In terms of actors in the measures to achieve China's policy toward Kenya, both state and non-state actors play important roles. In China’s case, formulation is under the leadership of the ruling CCP and the State Council, with various ministries primarily involved in implementation, that is, the MFA, the MOFCOM, and the Ministry of Finance. Apart from these, we have the CIDCA. In addition to the ministries, China's policy banks also play an important role, particularly the China Export-Import Bank and the China Development Bank (CDB). Similarly, Chinese subnational governments, SOEs, and private-sector companies also play a crucial role. In Kenya’s case, the government, the relevant ministries as it relates to the implementation sector, relevant SOEs, and the private sector do play a role.

To understand the nature of evidence-informed policy and policymaking, there is a need to further study how policymakers take action as well as the complex policymaking environment in which they operate. With this context in mind, we can create a realistic "how-to" guide that encourages pragmatism about the highly political ways in which governments "learn" from one another. Cooperation between Kenya and China should be viewed and developed from a strategic and long-term perspective. A combination of long-term orientation, short-term self-knowledge, and medium-term learning may be a beneficial exchange between China and Kenya, as well as an essential activity that their cooperation institutions can undertake (Jordan, 2015). Both entities should continue to work together to advance the Belt and Road cooperation and the implementation of the FOCAC Summit outcomes, particularly in areas and directions that affect Kenyans' livelihood and employment and are in line with Kenya's economic transformation and upgrade, to aid in the fostering of self-development capacities, accelerate the industrialization process, and advance Kenya-China cooperation.

Given Kenya's predominantly youthful population, capitalizing on the youth bulge is critical. Poor implementation of youth-centred policies can result in them failing to bring visible advantages to the youth community, while some policies utterly miss the mark because they were designed incorrectly from the start (Matthias, 2019). Learning will only be rendered effective if it is tailored to local needs and situational circumstances. The view that "Africa should learn from China's development" has been expressed frequently in Africa. However, African countries should study the processes and institutions through which China devises, adapts, and evolves its policies rather than the static outcomes of those policies. With this in mind, learning goes both ways, and understanding the changes and processes of the participatory countries is equally important.

China’s policy toward Kenya should be viewed in the context of initiatives and policy frameworks that have governed China's engagement with Africa, such as the FOCAC and the BRI, as well as Kenya’s national development strategies. The FOCAC platform, for example, hosts a triennial event that brings together Chinese and African top policymakers, including heads of state and governments, to discuss areas of mutual interest such as trade and investment, diplomacy, security, and cultural exchange. FOCAC, which is held every three years in either China or Africa, has proven to be a vital forum for China to make important pronouncements and pledges on aid, trade, investment, and policy direction toward Africa (Waweru, 2020).

This study expands on the idea of "learning from abroad" or "from each other," which has received considerable scholarly attention over the years. The well-known policy transfer framework put forth by David Dolowitz and David Marsh in 2000 is a significant turning point. To define the process under review, the framework proposed a list of specific questions, including: why policies are transferred, who is involved, what is transferred, what sources are used, how effective the result is, and what potential barriers might exist. By extending them to the Kenya-China cooperation framework, this study puts these factors into perspective and highlights the dimensions of involvement, the actors involved, and the status of the processes' localization, particularly with regard to youth. This brings out how effective the outcome is and any potential obstacles to strengthening the bilateral strategic partnership between the two countries.

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