



China Infrastructural Development and Expansion in Africa; the Rise of a New Global Hegemony

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Abstract— Since the presence of China in Africa in 1955, her concept in Africa is important; the frames, legitimates and her comprehensible foreign policies in the continent are based on 3 major components of China's role in Africa: The Chinese model for development in Africa, the struggle against the superpowers hegemony in Africa, and China's Third World initiative for elevation into growing and developing economy.

There is no doubt that Africa occupied a major place in Chinese foreign policy based on the principle of non-interference and friendly relations in the continent as an altogether new and positive model for external engagement with Africa. Drawing clear distinctions with the super powers, the European colonial past and Western policies that China believes are based on a paternalistic interference in political affairs which left the continent into struggle for infrastructural development and liberation struggle. The industrial and infrastructural approach brought by China promotes its presence based on equality, mutual respect, and mutual benefit as a major actor with vital interests in the continent industrial and infrastructural development experience.

Originality/Value: - The paper uses a combination of theoretical literature review from various academic research works to justify Chinese relations and expansion as Africa occupied a central place in Chinese foreign policy and her changing situations while Western observers tend to depict China as a “spoiler” in Africa, whose “insatiable” and “voracious” appetite for mineral resources is nothing more than a neo-colonial grab for raw materials that perpetuates African countries’ underdevelopment, this paper tends to present the pros and cons of this holistic relations. .

Keywords— Development, Engagement, Foreign policy, Infrastructure, Mineral resources.

1. INTRODUCTION

Africa is presently a unique continent to China’s goals and ambitions on the world stage, with strong strategic partnership and diplomacy in Africa; Chinese interests on the continent encompass not only natural resources but also issues of trade, security, diplomacy, and soft power. China by the way is a major donor of aid to Africa, it has support the African governments in pursuance of peace, neutrality and non-alignment serving as advocate to the solution of conflict, disputes between African countries through peaceful negotiations, African solidarity, opposition to aggression and interference in the continent affairs by the Western power.

Chinese African solidarity, the principle of non-interference and friendly relations with the continent marks a distinctive approach compared to the European Colonial Masters and Western policies which are divide and rule system, imposition of democratic system, support for authoritarian regime and despots Military leaders.

The fundamental needs of food, security, and economic development, according to Chinese officials, are themselves forms of human rights,

African citizens and governments hold positive views of Chinese engagement in Africa which helps promote robust infrastructure, economic development and trade growth, job creation for local workers, improvements of roads networks, rail lines, bridges, electricity development, mobile telecommunications, Military aid support and transportation networks are all benefits that ordinary men and women of Africa will always like and remember Chinese for rather than a global power that treats them as 'shithole' and lecturing them about democracy, good governance, and free markets.

However good the Chinese might be, they have been perceived flaws in their relations to the continent such as poor labour conditions, job displacement, exports of raw materials in exchange for inferior manufactured goods. In the interview, Lu Xincheng said Chinese businessmen smuggle ivory and rhino horns out of the country and flood local markets with counterfeit goods while contractors constantly try to undercut each other, resulting in shoddy infrastructure projects. "Our bad habits have followed us," he told the Guangzhou-based Southern Metropolis News.

2. CHINESE ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA

African prosperity, security, stability of the continent and well-being of the Government that support their interest in the continent, ensures the safety of China's investments and the continuation of its commercial activities will be most paramount interest to the Government of China because Africa will forever remain their strategic partner for natural resources, access to oil, minerals, and other raw materials to fuel its ambitious industrialization efforts and a new world hegemony which by 2020, China is predicted to overtake the United States in terms of oil imports worldwide and will become the largest global consumer by 2035. To guarantee future supply, China is heavily investing in the upstream and downstream oil sectors in countries such as Sudan, Angola, and Nigeria.

Nigeria, the African most populous country recently signed a currency-swap agreement worth \$2.4 billion to boost commercial ties and reduce the need to use dollar in their bilateral trade. The swap would provide local currency liquidity for both Nigerian and Chinese businessmen. The apex bank stated: "The transaction, which is valued at Renminbi (RMB) 16 billion, or the equivalent of about \$2.5 billion, is aimed at providing adequate local currency liquidity to Nigerian and Chinese industrialists and other businesses thereby reducing the difficulties encountered in the search for third currencies. "Among other benefits, this agreement will provide Naira liquidity to Chinese businesses and provide RMB liquidity to Nigerian businesses respectively, thereby improving the speed, convenience and volume of transactions between

the two countries. It will also assist both countries in their foreign exchange reserves management, enhance financial stability and promote broader economic cooperation between the two countries.

Nigeria was not the only country that had agreed to a currency swap with China, as several other countries – developed and emerging markets – with growing trade volumes with China had entered into similar currency swaps with the Asian country.

The countries are the United Kingdom, Belarus, Malaysia, South Africa, Australia, Armenia, Surinam, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Thailand, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Canada, Qatar, Russia, the European Union, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, New Zealand, Argentina, Switzerland, Iceland, Albania, Hungary, Brazil, Singapore, Turkey, Ukraine, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, and the United Arab Emirates, totalling over RMB3.137 trillion.

With this and many more, Africa presents a huge untapped market for Chinese goods. Africa's collective gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to grow to \$2.6 trillion by 2020. Investment in Africa can potentially facilitate China's efforts to restructure its own economy away from labour-intensive industries, especially as labour costs in China increase. These two factors—feeding Chinese energy needs and absorbing Chinese exports—remain the central drivers of China's engagement with Africa.

China veto power at the United Nations helps maintain and increases its influence in engagement with Africa. African countries account for more than one-quarter of United Nations (UN) member states and occupy three non-permanent member seats from the Africa Group regional block in the UN Security Council. As such, Africa represents an important voting bloc for Chinese-led initiatives or against Western-led initiatives with which China disagrees. Africa has played a major role in the diplomatic jostling between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China in the United Nations. African countries constituted 26 of the 76 total votes supporting the PRC taking over the China seat from Taiwan in 1971, which led Mao Zedong to claim that "it is our African brothers who have carried us into the UN.

African votes in the UN also function to shield Beijing from criticism of its human rights policies. Motions by Western nations to censure China over its human rights record at the UN Commission on Human Rights Council have failed on numerous occasions due to support from African countries.

China's impact on Africa has been mixed. Its investments have created jobs, developed critically needed infrastructure, and contributed to economic growth, particularly in sectors or geographic areas in which international financial institutions and Western governments and companies have been unwilling to engage. Its expenditures on education, training, and economic development have contributed positively to Africans' standard of living and economic opportunities.

China's investments and contracts in sub-Saharan Africa alone between 2005 to 2018 is total to be \$ 229 Billion while in 2018, Chinese president Xi Jinping vowed to invest a further \$60 billion into African nations. If the continent can successfully navigate the issues raised by Chinese neo-colonial ambitions—such as the

fear of “debt trap” diplomacy, with \$130 billion in loans from China to African nations since 2000—they will be able to ascend from this trajectory into global power.

The engagement in Africa has evolved rapidly from its roots in anti-colonial solidarity to that of a major force on the continent. With the line between development partner, economic threat, and partner of pariahs becoming increasingly difficult to discern for some in Africa, the task of consolidating this ‘mutually beneficial’ relationship is indeed daunting. Moreover, with the role of traditional donors and institutions undergoing a review, the impact of China’s African ‘safari’ will continue to be felt in Western capitals. Africa’s future, like that of the world, is most certainly in part Chinese, but keeping these relations on a constructive path is a task that will occupy this next phase of engagement.

3. INTERNATIONAL HEGEMONY

Africa as a key diplomatic, strategic, and geopolitical platform with China operates a core principles of equality, non-interference, and “South-South solidarity” among developing nations. The Chinese government believes that strengthening Sino-African relations helps raise China’s own international influence and helps Beijing’s cause of building a more “just international order” that advances peace, prosperity, and equality worldwide.

Furthermore, China considers itself the largest developing country in the world, while Africa is home to the greatest number of developing countries. China’s “success in Africa,” write journalists Serge Michel and Michel Beuret in their 2009 book, *China Safari*, “has reinforced its status as a global superpower.”

For long, China has been presented as a post-imperial superpower, whose foreign policy is anchored by the principles of non-interference and win-win economic partnership. It refused to get embroiled in domestic troubles in other developing countries, from Sudan to Syria and across Africa incessantly focusing on its economic interests. Slowly but surely however, as China expands its geopolitical and economic stake in far-flung regions of the world, it has increasingly resembled a traditional global power who doesn't shy away from influencing political developments abroad.

Since the 2007-2008 Great Recession, which shook the foundations of western economies, China has become the top trading partner of Latin America, almost all East Asian countries (with the exception of the Philippines), and, perhaps most dramatically, Africa.

China is no longer just a source of affordable commodity goods, but it has also become a major source of capital and technology to much of the developing world.

In particular, Africa - a site of colonial machinations for centuries - has emerged as a key barometer of the shifting global poles of power, as Chinese companies and workers redefine the ancient continent's economic landscape.

While Chinese influence faces stiff competition from western (and regional powers) in places such as Latin America and the Middle East, the African continent has, as provocatively argued by US journalist Howard French, become "China's second continent".

In Africa, China has not only brought in capital and machinery, but also thousands of Chinese workers and businessmen, who represent the new face of globalization in Africa.

4. NEW GLOBAL ORDER

To boost its soft power, China has funded major and highly symbolic infrastructure projects, from large stadiums across the continent to the glittering headquarters of the African Union.

Chinese economic presence, largely concentrated in extractive industries in Africa, has become decisive, comprehensive and indispensable to the economic growth and stability of many African nations, while Chinese migration to the region has redefined the urban landscape in many sub-Saharan African countries. Like in Sudan, China produces virtually every needs and wants of the country be it infrastructure, roads, hospitals, Universities Libraries, IT's and telecommunications industries.

During his recent trip to Africa, even US President Barack Obama, widely seen as a "son of Africa", struggled to reassert US influence in the continent, ending up (indirectly) criticising China by cautioning African leaders to "make sure that if, in fact, China is putting in roads and bridges, number one, that they're hiring African workers; number two, that the roads don't just lead from the mine to the port to Shanghai..."

After three decades of breakneck economic growth - built on the back of cheap labour, mercantilist trade policies, and massive export-oriented industries - the Asian powerhouse has arguably emerged as the one truly competitive rival to western hegemony, particularly in the peripheries of the world. Nowadays it is fashionable to talk about the decline of the West and the rise of the East, particularly China.

As Singapore's legendary statesman Lee Kuan Yew adamantly asserted, nominally Communist China, which happens to be a leading capitalist power today, is not actively promoting an alternative way of life and global order to that of the West. Ecstatic about the possibilities of a new global order amid China's rise, Sinologists such as Joshua Cooper Ramo have heralded the dawn of a so-called "Beijing Consensus", a supposedly pragmatic, cooperative, and business-oriented Chinese foreign policy doctrine, which supposedly stands in stark contrast to the so-called "Washington Consensus", the western doctrine of pro-democracy interventionism and neo-liberal economics.

China has been repeatedly portrayed both at home and abroad as a new power bereft of imperial missionary zeal, especially in Africa. Prominent economists such as Dambisa Moro have gone so far as confidently claiming: "Pursuing imperial or colonial ambitions with masses of impoverished people at home would be wholly irrational and out of sync with China's current strategic thinking." A closer look, however, reveals how China's foreign policy doctrine is a reflection of its present circumstances and expanding interests abroad, is subject to change, and not bound by some eternal principles. China's

seemingly insatiable demand for natural resources has exposed it to the political realities of global peripheries, from Latin America (think of post-Chavez Venezuela) and Middle East (think of Libya in 2011) to Africa.

Intent on protecting its own national interest, China is increasingly becoming like a "normal" global power, leveraging its economic resources and military muscle to influence domestic political developments abroad, including the world's newest countries like South Sudan.

Overall, as China seeks to prevent an all-out conflict in Sudan, it will become increasingly difficult for Beijing not to be embroiled in domestic upheavals across Africa and stick to a purely business-oriented foreign policy model.

5. WHAT MORE SHOULD AFRICAN DEMANDS FROM CHINA?

As African governments look to China to get more political recognition, legitimacy and to contribute to their economic development through aid, investment, infrastructural development, and trade. The vice chairman of Tanzania's ruling party, for example, said in 2012 that "China's development model sets a very good example for African nations, in Tanzania in particular. . . . It is a model which shows how a country can develop from a low level of production to very high level of production and it is the correct model for all developing nations, especially for African nations.

Many African leaders simply believe that as a fellow developing country, China has more altruistic motives than exploitative Western corporations. The Tanzanian party official, for example, asserted, "Companies in the west are business-oriented, they are to make profits whatever projects they participate in, they look for what they can get out of it, not what African countries would get out of it. China does not have that approach. China is to help the African nations build their own capacity to develop and that's the difference we very much appreciate.

African leaders are eager to be treated with respect on the international stage, both in bilateral interactions and in multilateral fora such as the United Nations and all its specialised agencies, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank; China goes out of its way to emphasize that its African partners are equal, sovereign states, and it frequently contrasts its position with Europe's history of exploiting the continent.

China's special envoy to Africa, Zhong Jianhua, made this point most recently in the run-up to President Xi Jinping's March 2013 trip to Africa, stating, "Africa wants to be treated as an equal, and this is what many Western countries do not understand, or are at least are not willing to do. China at least knows that we have to treat people in Africa as equals." Many African political leaders have welcomed China's approach, portraying Beijing's respect for their sovereignty almost as proof that they have moved beyond dependency on the West.

At the 2012 FOCAC meeting, South African President Jacob Zuma remarked, "We are particularly pleased that in our relationship with China we are equals and that agreements entered into are for mutual gain. . . .

We certainly are convinced that China's intention is different to that of Europe, which to date continues to intend to influence African countries for their sole benefit."

Furthermore, however their partnership and relationship, African countries ought to demand more overarching strategic interests in Africa. The following are put forwards for the interest of the continent;

- a. More security and military aid for peaceful coexistence and stability of the continent with a view to provide African peacekeeping proficiency to be internationally recognized with substantial military equipment, weapons, and training to engage and counter terrorism within and outside the continent.
- b. Market for African products and diversified investment has many African countries are blessed with valuable natural resources that will attract more investment in a wider range of sectors.
- c. More Chinese investment in African infrastructures as Western private investment has been held back by a wide range of obstacles, and most Western aid has been focused in areas that advance human development more than economic development. African countries need foreign investment in minerals, manufacturing, and construction to create much-needed jobs, and their economic growth is hindered by critical shortcomings in infrastructure.
- d. Value-added stable jobs and effective industrial production policies needed to promote industrialization and economic transformation of the continent.
- e. Reliable and adequate water and electricity supply for efficient production with good road networks and railways to foster greater regional integration, which will create bigger markets for African goods and promote intra-African trade, which has huge opportunities for economic growth of the continent.
- f. Human Development

China has vastly expanded its soft power in Africa, including expanded scholarships and training, an international visitor program, cultural centres, and a new volunteer corps, with this, they should provide more development assistance to all African countries to elevate educational institutions, support rural development, provide or improve health care facilities at all local and province areas, with this assistance; African relationship and partnership will foster People Republic of China as a new world class hegemony as alternative to Western and European bullying powers.

6. WESTERN PRESSURE AGAINST CHINA

The allegation levelled by Western and African commentators alike, that China is colonizing Africa is inherently misleading and portrayed in bad context of China's anti-hegemonies with inadequate discussion of China's economic development, booming infrastructural development of the continent, provision of peace keeping forces should be viewed as contributions to developing the continent and the developing world. In this regards, Chinese policy toward the developing world will be misplaced if China's political and

strategic interests are emphasized at the expense of its economic interest in Africa alone instead China provide a balance positive relationship ties with a great deal of opportunity for the continent.

The Western backlash over China's support of the Khartoum government during the 2007 crisis in Darfur, resulted in severe reputation costs inflicted to China. In 2006, however, China's indifference began to shift as Western pressure directed towards China began to mount. The West called on China to utilize its unique relationship with Khartoum to broker an end to the violence, and for China to cease selling weapons to Khartoum. Western pressure came in the form of sanctions against the Khartoum regime, and political outcry censuring China's actions and harming China's international reputation. Following the extensive Western pressure towards China, Chinese official Wang Guangya assisted in brokering a peace deal authorizing an increased presence of UN peacekeepers to Sudan during negotiations in Addis Ababa in November 2006.

In February 2007, Chinese President Hu Jintao presented a proposal to Khartoum encouraging the Sudanese leadership to accept UN peacekeepers. President Hu's proposal worked, and China's entrance into interventionist politics on the African continent began.

In April 2014, Western pressure once again emerged in South Sudan when sanctions were discussed against South Sudanese individuals caught conducting human brokering a peace deal authorizing an increased presence of UN peacekeepers to Sudan during negotiations in Addis Ababa in November 2006. In February 2007, Chinese President Hu Jintao presented a proposal to Khartoum encouraging the Sudanese leadership to accept UN peacekeepers. President Hu's proposal worked, and China's entrance into interventionist politics on the African continent began.

7. CHINA FAILURE IN AFRICA

China's engagement has had deleterious effects as well. Its investments and political and military support have helped a number of nondemocratic regimes cling to power. Its emphasis on investing in natural resources has reinforced many African countries' dependence on raw materials and unskilled labour. Growing trade between China and Africa has contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs in industries such as textiles that could not compete with less expensive Chinese imports. And the nature of many Chinese investment deals has contributed to high levels of debt, economically unviable decisions, and official corruption.

Weak rule and endemic corruption involved in infrastructure and construction projects is an invitation to official corruption. Government officials have the authority to sign off on the expenditure of state funds and the commitment of state resources, and the general absence of independent oversight creates opportunities to solicit kickbacks. Moreover, unlike American companies, which are prevented by the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act from offering bribes to foreign officials to secure business deals, Chinese firms are widely believed to engage in such practices.

China is certainly not the only source of money for dishonest officials who seek to enrich themselves, but the lack of transparency or independent scrutiny of many Chinese-funded projects—a corollary of Beijing’s no-strings-attached, non-interference policy—makes such initiatives particularly ripe for personal enrichment.

Moreover, extractive industries—which represent a large share of Chinese investment on the continent—are particularly susceptible to corruption because of the enormous amounts of money involved and because governments often hold exclusive rights and powers regarding land, licensing, regulations, and exports of commodities.

Low wages and poor working conditions in Chinese-operated mines and factories in African countries have contributed to violent labour protests. Negative opinions of Chinese companies have affected many Africans’ views of individual Chinese—both the workers sent to Africa to work on large-scale industrial initiatives and the hundreds of thousands of Chinese in Africa who work as merchants, traders, restaurateurs, and small businesspeople.

Quite simply, individual Chinese people are visible targets of anti-Chinese sentiment ginned up by opposition to labour abuses, competition, poor quality goods, and other economic elements of China’s engagement on the continent.

8. MEDIA COVERAGE OF AFRICA

China now has a major media presence in Africa interested in media expansion driven by desires: to reach out to African audiences, to respond to the growing Chinese population in Africa, and to counter a perceived neo-colonial and anti-Chinese bias in Western news agencies’ reporting on Africa. With widely distributed reporting from Xinhua (more than 20 bureaus in African states) and a mix of Chinese- and English-language programming featuring news and human-interest media across print, radio, and television Chinese media is expanding in Africa while many Western media outlets are reducing their presence. Western media coverage of African pushback toward Chinese influence, however, tends to distort the causes and overstate the scale of popular African discontent.

9. CONCLUSION

China’s evolution away from a non-interventionist driven foreign policy on the African continent provides insight into China’s potential emerging role in global affairs. As China continues to grow and strengthen its international image, a non-interventionist foreign policy creates friction between China’s domestic goals and its foreign policy goals. No longer is China able to abstain from conflicts on the African continent when economic interests, Western pressure, and African pressure coerce its attention in the internal affairs of African nations.

A general historical review shows how China’s traditional cultural diplomacy has developed and how it has opened different channels of cooperation in order to strengthen its economic and political ties within



the African continent. Consequently, both China and Africa have benefited politically and economically. Another area where the interest of Chinese converge is in teaching Chinese language at major Universities across Africa as Confucius Institute where Mandarin is widely taught.

In the long run, most African capital projects are financed and supported by the Chinese an engagement that if not properly checked and managed could lead Africa into exploitation and miss uses of its natural resources for development and lack dividends to advance it economic, social and technological development.

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