

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, LAW, AND  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Master's degree in European and Global Studies



An overview of China's success in Africa:  
The rise of China as a Neocolonial threat or a  
Win-Win development opportunity?

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A.A. 2023-2024



*Keywords:*

*China-Africa partnership – South-South cooperation – neocolonialism – scramble for Africa*

*Preface*

It should be noted from the outset that for this research when I refer to Africa, I am not including North Africa, which by academic convention is often discussed as part of the Mediterranean and, incidentally, is how the European Union organizes its policies with North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt are all included in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership agreement.<sup>1</sup> For the last decades, there has been a general expansive trend in the Sino-African relationship, and the tendency has been widespread to compound the Chinese people into one homogeneous group without a nuanced focus on their distinctiveness and individuality. Part of the reason is that Africa and China are considered the overarching units of analysis, even on non-state matters, which is a postcolonial error emanating from embedded perceptions of Africa and China as monolith “countries”. More so, the authoritarian nature of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and its attempts to create a single Chinese identity feed into the ethnic and cultural homogenization of its citizens based on perceived ‘Chinese’ physiognomy. Although this is persistent, it might not be for long because there are efforts, albeit still in their infancy to question the concept of ‘Chinese’ and ‘Chineseness’ and interrogate the complexities of China’s diverse identities and ethnicity beyond the Han Chinese. The complexities are not only visible in China but also surfacing in Africa as China’s economic, political, and security clout grows, and interactions between people from China and African countries take root.

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, *Africa in International Politics: External Involvement on the Continent* (Routledge, 2004), 8.



## *Abstract*

This research endeavours to be a theoretical dissertation that consolidates and summarizes various previous projects and papers authored by esteemed scholars and witnesses of the Sino-African relationship phenomenon. The title highlights the paradox of perceiving China as a successful partner in Africa while simultaneously avoiding, or at the very least, minimizing the perspective of the 'Western reader'. This perspective commonly characterizes China's involvement in African countries as 'an invasion for resource exploitation and the imposition of social, political, and economic dominance'. Essentially, this study aims to propose cognitive methods for developing an independent viewpoint without prejudiced support toward any particular stance. The inspiration behind this research stems from the classical decolonial concept of the 'locus of enunciation'. As explained by Grosfoguel (2007), this expression refers to both the geopolitical and body-political position of the subject engaging in discourse. It is important to take into consideration while studying and reading essays the concept that emphasizes the significance of understanding the impact of one's positionality on knowledge production and interpretation. This element has guided my selection of sources, as I have been mindful of the author's perspective. Interestingly, currently, there is a scarcity of Chinese authors who bravely explore the dynamics of this phenomenon or who have explored it without opening its accessibility to international academic audiences. I have reached this conclusion partly due to the insights bestowed upon me by the Chinese director of the Confucius Institute in Padua. In contrast, a plethora of African authors have felt empowered to address this topic, largely motivated by a sense of belonging and patriotism.

The findings indicate that classifying this form of South-South cooperation as neocolonialism is contingent upon the perspectives through which it is analysed. From the standpoint of a Chinese individual, relocating their business to Africa represents a lucrative opportunity,

particularly when accompanied by a local partner who alleviates the language and bureaucratic barriers. Conversely, the viewpoint of an African is multifaceted and is influenced by the specific country of origin. For example, a *Zambian* would view Chinese companies favourably due to their introduction of new infrastructures and improved societal well-being. However, this is not the case for a *Malian*, where China is tantamount to exploitation and corruption. Finally, an Italian perspective may embrace both viewpoints, potentially influenced by cultural heritage, open-mindedness and the desire/initiative to study this phenomenon.

## *Table of content*

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Introduction .....</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Review of Literature and Methodology .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Chapter I: Historical excursus: From the origins of Chinese intervention<br/>in Africa and its forms to current China’s power projection.....</b> | <b>11</b> |
| The momentum of new Chinese “go out” policy: Post-Cold War era .....   | 23        |
| China’s image in Africa: expansion plan of South-South cooperation beyond<br>the economic dimension .....  | 25        |
| <b>Chapter II: A framework of analysis: Key concepts for a systematic<br/>examination of Chinese engagement in Africa .....</b>                      | <b>33</b> |
| Sino-African relations: A model of analysis .....  | 36        |
| Geo-economic interests.....  | 41        |
| Geo-political considerations.....  | 42        |
| Socio-cultural factors .....   | 45        |
| Mutual Sino-African Economic Endowments .....  | 46        |
| Mutual Political, Diplomatic, and Military Support.....  | 46        |
| Socio-cultural point and the two sides of the coin: The desire to emigrate<br>whatever it takes?.....  | 46        |
| <b>Chapter III: Worldviews of China and Western reactions: a real threat of<br/>neocolonial diplomatic practices? .....</b>                          | <b>63</b> |
| The perception of the concept of neocolonialism .....  | 63        |
| China – USA proxy disagreement .....   | 64        |
| Impact of Chinese activity in transforming African economies .....   | 71        |
| Overview of “Chopsticks mercantilism”: Which factors have affected<br>Chinese investments in Africa? .....   | 77        |
| China’s position change in the world economic scenario: “chopsticks<br>mercantilism” .....   | 79        |
| Loss of competitiveness.....   | 79        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Impact of WTO Membership .....  | 81         |
| Hypothesis and data.....  | 82         |
| What are the pull and push factors of foreign direct investments (FDI)?<br>.....  | 82         |
| Turning point for FDI trend in 2008.....  | 84         |
| <b>Chapter IV: The spectre of “Digital Colonialism”: a new wave of the 21<sup>st</sup><br/>century Scramble for Africa.....</b> | <b>89</b>  |
| <b>Chapter V: A trip into China’s second continent.....</b>   | <b>105</b> |
| Mozambique .....  | 106        |
| Zambia .....  | 108        |
| Senegal.....  | 110        |
| Liberia, Sierra Leone .....   | 110        |
| Mali .....  | 113        |
| Ghana .....   | 113        |
| Tanzania.....   | 121        |
| The peculiar case of Eswatini.....  | 122        |
| <b>Conclusions .....</b>  | <b>125</b> |
| <b>Tables and figures .....</b>   | <b>135</b> |
| <b>Bibliography.....</b>  | <b>138</b> |
| <b>Appendix I: African political map .....</b>  | <b>142</b> |
| <b>Appendix II: African political map and dissemination of natural resources<br/>.....</b>                                      | <b>143</b> |
| <b>Appendix III: Chinese dynasties .....</b>  | <b>144</b> |
| <b>Appendix IV: Comparison between the several Chinese minorities .....</b>   | <b>145</b> |



## *Introduction*

The extent of China's territorial presence in Africa has been the subject of debate in the international community, as the nation's involvement in the continent has become increasingly significant over the past few decades. As Africa has become an integral component of China's geographic and geopolitical strategy, *the scramble for Africa* has emerged as a major theme in United Nations discussions, with European powers and other Asian countries also *vying for a piece of the pie*, referring to African resources. Given the magnitude of the continent and the various actors involved, it is unsurprising that the issue of China's land ownership in Africa has surfaced. From a European scholar's perspective, Africa has been involved in a phenomenon known as the "Scramble for Africa" which commenced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the exploration and colonization of the continent by European powers. Indeed, Chinese people have started to travel there since the 1400s. Accordingly, over time, various Asian and European countries have vied for strategic presence in Africa. The scramble is often depicted as a situation where gains made by one nation are counterweighed by a loss to another. However, the advantages arising from increased trade and investment in Africa surpass the perceived costs to certain countries. Nevertheless, the scramble has a dark side characterized by the emergence of brutal dictatorships and civil unrest in several African nations since the end of colonialism causing, furthermore, the loss of millions of lives. Additionally, numerous African countries continue to deal with poverty, as well as rising income inequality and governance deficiency.

Before starting my research, I have wondered some questions and I have tried to find an answer. *How Much Land Does China Own in Africa?* Africa has an estimated area of 1.2 billion acres, (equal to about 5 million km<sup>2</sup>), with 71% occupied by land and the remaining 29% by water. China's land ownership in Africa is estimated to be around 350,000 km<sup>2</sup>, constituting approximately 7% of the total land area of the continent. Just to provide

a more accurate frame, according to the land survey conducted by the African Development Bank in 2020, 64% of the total land area of Africa is owned by the state and other institutions, while 36% is privately owned. As with other developing countries, government-owned land constitutes the agricultural acreage in Africa. This state-owned land is leased to land-hungry farmers, often via long-term concessions.<sup>1</sup>

*How China Got Involved in Africa?* Since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, European nations have been the dominant players in Africa. However, the early 15<sup>th</sup>-century Zheng's expeditions, authorized by the Yongle Emperor, were the first official contact between China and Africa. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the renowned Chinese navigator, Zheng He, led numerous trade envoys in multiple expeditions to the eastern and southern African coastal regions. These forays are said to have established the foundation for cordial relations between China and Africa and forged an ancient maritime Silk Road trade route.

*Why China and Africa are development partners?* China's attraction to Africa is rooted in the country's considerable potential as a market, driven by its young and rapidly expanding population. Due to China's economic development being predominantly focused on urban areas, accompanied by relatively lower per capita income compared to many other nations, Africa has emerged as an important source of new consumers for Chinese products, thereby contributing to China's growth and development. Moreover, Africa serves as a crucial source of raw materials for China, essential for its economic expansion. With China being the world's largest producer and consumer of copper, alongside other minerals such as oil and gas being found in significant quantities in Africa, the need for these resources has spurred a significant level of Chinese investment in African mining. China's expanding presence in Africa has elicited resentment among certain segments of the African population in various regions.

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<sup>1</sup> Sourced on the official website of African Land, a Real Estate Investment Advisory which is located in Ghana, Nigeria and the UK. Available at: <https://african.land/>

Many African nations view the Chinese as competitors with regard to employment opportunities, natural resources, and investments. On the other hand, it is also shown concerns that China's involvement with African nations is motivated solely by economic factors ignoring political, social, and human rights issues.

Despite these points of contention, several African nations have taken steps toward enhancing their diplomatic influence by forging strategic partnerships with China and other major global powers. China and Africa are similarly antagonized by common threats such as pressures from the West, climate change resulting from global warming, and a depleting supply of hydrocarbon fuels, making it necessary for them to collaborate on complementary undertakings. In 2014, the Belt and Road Initiative presented by China was widely welcomed by numerous African countries as an upcoming opportunity to bolster commerce and investment along traditional commercial routes while advancing economic development and lasting composure.

This analysis is organized into five chapters. Initially, it provides an overview of the historical trajectory of China's engagements with Africa. This encompasses the early exchanges of goods between Asian Emperors and African representatives dating back to 30 BC, as well as the examination of the slave trade during the opening stages of the colonization era for, then, delving into the period of the Cold War, leading up to the establishment of entrenched "South-South" cooperation and the current state of mutual interdependence. A distinctive aspect of China's approach is its closely tied diplomatic relationship with the African continent and it will be presented at the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation. Since 2000, the FOCAC Ministerial Conference has convened every three years, emphasizing the importance of equal consultation, fostering understanding, building consensus, strengthening friendship, and advancing cooperation. In the second section, the analysis aims to provide fundamental empirical concepts for

a systematic examination of Chinese engagement in Africa, essentially offering an analytical framework for understanding this "partnership of equals." These theoretical approaches encompass geo-economic, geopolitical, and sociocultural factors, as well as mutual Sino-African assets and considerations regarding reciprocal political, diplomatic, and military support. The focus will be on the rationales (why?) behind the Sino-African partnership, as well as the strategies and operations (how?) of the relationship. Matters about Chineseness and Hanification in Africa will be addressed, examining interactions between Chinese and Africans, taking into account conventional beauty standards, limited understanding of African culture and society, and challenges in language communication. Specifically, the mentioned economic imperatives of trade and investments form the foundation for the subsequent chapter, wherein chopsticks mercantilism is discussed as a necessity for economic expansion from a capitalist perspective. In Chapter IV, an innovative perspective will be offered on the 21st-century Scramble for Africa, particularly focusing on "Digital colonialism." This section demonstrates that Chinese influence in African states, where large-scale tech companies extract, analyse, and own user data for profit and market influence offers peppercorn benefit to the data source. It will be taken into consideration the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, published by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in 2019. The final chapter is a culmination of comments and considerations about the book by Howard W. French, entitled "*China's Second Continent: How a million migrants are Building a new empire in Africa*" in which he recounts his travels through nearly ten African states, witnessing the consequences of Chinese influence and impact by interviewing locals and immigrated Chinese. China's growing presence in Africa is drawing increasing attention, both positive and negative, and there is no clear consensus on the amount of land that China owns in Africa. Some nations express concern that China is seeking to increase its influence in the region while

others welcome the presence as an opportunity to increase trade and investment. What is clear is that China and Africa have several shared interests and challenges that will require international cooperation to address. Accordingly, in this research, I would like to provide some inspiration to raise the consciousness about this phenomenon and yet to foster its interpretations.



## *Review of Literature and Methodology*

The process of source selection for this research initially deviated from my initial expectations. I intended to gather academic perspectives about the Sino-African Relationship by comparing papers authored both by Chinese and African sociologists or scholars. However, obtaining relevant research from Chinese sources proved to be more challenging than anticipated. Thanks to valuable guidance from the Director of the Confucius Institute of Padua, I gained access to a paper written by a Chinese author, Miss Li Yang (李洋), in her native language. This necessitated a preliminary translation phase followed by a subsequent content elaboration process. Personally, this presented a valuable opportunity to contribute on a more personal level to this research endeavour, incorporating my ten-year academic journey in studying the Chinese language. The majority of the academic scholars – who have significantly influenced my exploration of the multifaceted Chinese approach towards Africa – are of African origins or hold American citizenship. Within the bibliography, I aimed to prioritize the primary sources that shaped my research and aided in enhancing not only my understanding of this global phenomenon but also my proficiency in the language. I highly recommend these sources for further exploration by the lecturer.

Howard W. French, an award-winning investigative journalist and former New York Times bureau chief in Africa and China, expounds on his experiences in Africa, providing an invaluable contribution to the understanding of China's seismic geopolitical development. His book titled *“China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa”* proved pivotal in gaining practical insights into the impact of Chinese activities across numerous African states, including infrastructure development and the propagation of culture through Confucius Institutes. China's burgeoning presence in Africa is already

exerting a profound influence on the lives of millions. Through journeys from Liberia to Senegal to Mozambique, French acquaints readers with the diverse individuals comprising China's determined immigrant population: entrepreneurs who are singlehandedly reshaping African infrastructure, and less fortunate migrants who, while struggling, remain steadfast in their belief in Africa's opportunities. French's acute observations shed light on critical unknowns in contemporary Sino-African relations: the motivations driving China's cultural and economic forays into the continent, Africa's role in this dynamic, and the foreseeable implications for both parties and the broader global community.

Earl Conteh-Morgan is a professor of international studies in the School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies at the University of South Florida. He is a former senior research fellow at the Norwegian Nobel Institute (Oslo). He has authored, co-authored, and co-edited several books and book chapters, as well as published several refereed articles in the *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *International Journal of Peace Studies*, and the *Global Security and Intelligence Studies Journal*, among many others. He is currently researching state weakness and the onset of civil wars in Africa. His book, *"The Sino-African Partnership: A Geopolitical Economy Approach"* provides a rigorous and lucid examination of the China-Africa relationship, delving into the geopolitical, geo-economic, and socio-cultural dynamics that underpin this extensive and deepening "South-South" cooperation. The analysis emphasizes China's strategic role in this partnership, highlighting its multidimensional approach and power projection in a continent composed of nation-states with varying geo-strategic importance and resource endowments. The book also delves into the impact of globalization imperatives on China following the end of the Cold War, along with its focus on ideological rivalry. Moreover, it offers graduate and undergraduate students, China-Africa scholars, and general readers a fresh perspective on the relationship between these two



entities. It constitutes a distinctive and comprehensive exploration of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, relationships, and significant developments in global politics involving two prominent developing actors. The study provides novel insights into China's power projection in Africa and the ensuing global reactions triggered by its multifaceted activities. Regarding the economic dimension of the Sino-African relationship, I delved into the concept of "chopsticks mercantilism," drawing inspiration from my earlier research on the subject. A pivotal source for my investigation was the analysis presented by Soyyiğit and Nişancı (2021). This paper stood out for its up-to-date academic insights and its adeptness at elucidating intricate economic concepts through the use of accessible visual aids like histograms and graphics. In essence, the sources employed in my prior paper collectively substantiate a cohesive perspective on this global phenomenon. Additionally, it is noteworthy to recognize the contributions of Dambisa Moyo, an economist and author from Zambia. Her extensive body of work, encompassing books, articles, and public lectures, is committed to scrutinizing the mechanisms of wealth generation and the enduring issue of poverty within the global economic framework. A substantial portion of her scholarly endeavours revolves around dissecting the intricate interconnections among economically disadvantaged nations in her native Africa, emerging economic powerhouses like China, and well-established wealthy societies such as the United States. During her formative years, Moyo spent a portion of her childhood in the United States, where her father pursued postgraduate education. She later returned to Zambia, where her mother assumed the position of chairwoman at a state-owned bank, and her father pursued a career in academia and public administration. In her book titled *"Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What It Means for the World"*, Moyo postulates that the world's reserves of mineral commodities and vital resources like water and arable land are finite and subject to escalating competition. Within this "zero-sum" paradigm, she contends that China is executing a forward-thinking strategy of acquiring

rights to resources globally—often under favourable terms that result in employment opportunities and infrastructural development for countries in dire need. This section extensively examines the subject of foreign direct investments within the framework of South-South cooperation involving China and Africa. Given that numerous researchers from diverse national backgrounds have scrutinized this topic, procuring English-language sources proved relatively uncomplicated. It may also prove intriguing to juxtapose papers written in different languages, to discern whether and to what degree the authors' "locus of enunciation" influences their perspective on this global phenomenon.

This thesis adopts an expository, and descriptive methodology to conduct an investigation of the topic. It aspires to offer a multidisciplinary analysis, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by seeking empirical data that can address the research question. The research draws on a wide array of sources, encompassing academic books, peer-reviewed papers, reputable newspapers, and official government websites following mixed methods: qualitative and quantitative. Academic books and literature-based research serve as the bedrock of knowledge and for historical analysis, while peer-reviewed papers lend support to key arguments and provide some empirical elements as launching pad for the examination. Reputable newspapers present current perspectives, and government websites yield authoritative insights. This diverse approach aims at facilitating a comprehensive analysis by integrating theoretical frameworks with real-world events. With this methodology it would aim to ensure lucidity and structured presentation, rendering the thesis an enlightening resource for readers and a foundation for further exploration of its facets.

## *Chapter I*

### *Historical excursus: From the origins of Chinese intervention in Africa and its forms to current China's power projection*

China's interactions with Africa predate modern European contact with the continent. There are historical indications that indirect exchange of products between China and Africa could go back to two thousand years ago: Queen Cleopatra of Egypt who reigned between 51 and 30 BC used to wear dresses made of Chinese Silk.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, African products also reached China around 166 AD, when the Han Emperor Wanti received gifts from the Roman Emperor Antonias who also ruled in Egypt, such as elephant tusks, rhinoceros' horns, and hawks' bills. From the establishment of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), when China was thrown into intermittent wars, and split into many independent and sometimes warring states or dynasties, to almost 400 years later until Li Shiming, the second emperor of the Tang dynasty, unified the whole country and China became once again powerful and prosperous. Then, during the Sung dynasty (960-1279), China's agriculture, commerce, and handicraft industry including iron-smelting, porcelain-making, and ship-building, achieved big advances<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, historical evidence such as Chinese porcelain and coins from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively have been found across East Africa, in the Island of Zanzibar and Somalia. During the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, the Sung Dynasty<sup>3</sup> engaged in maritime trade along the East African coast: the Sung rulers encouraged foreign trade through ocean-going ships as a source of

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<sup>1</sup> Gao Jinyuan, 'China and Africa: The Development of Relations over Many Centuries', *African Affairs* 83, no. 331 (1984): 241-50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 2.

revenue.<sup>4</sup> Thus trade between China and foreign countries as far as Africa, Persia, and Arabia became more frequent and on a bigger scale: Egypt remained the most important centre of Sino-African trade traffic. With the development of trade, China had the advantage of increasing the knowledge about Africa and leaped forward during the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) such that African States started to be represented cartographically as a triangle pointing southwards composed of 35 states.<sup>5</sup>

Personally, this historical path was preparatory for understanding the most important period that signed Sino-African relations in history: China's Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Here there was the climax of China's efforts to develop relations with Africa. Ming Dynasty promoted several voyages visiting southeast Asia, around the Indian Ocean and admirals reached the east African coast exploring territories belonging to Somalia and Kenya in present-day, for instance, Mogadishu and Malindi. All these African envoys brought with them traditional goods such as ivory, rhinoceros' horns, frankincense (or oliban), ambergris, and even animals strange to China like zebra, ostrich, and giraffe which were regarded by the Chinese as a special kind of auspicious heavenly beast.<sup>6</sup> They were not only gifts but commercial objects and, in this sense, these "goods" were exchanged by Chinese admirals with a large amount of gold, silver, silk, porcelains, and coins. Probably, this justifies the available historical evidence. Fragments of Chinese porcelains dating back to the Ming Dynasty have subsequently been found in many African countries, including Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Madagascar, and Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless, visits had a reciprocal nature. It meant that even some African leaders sent their ambassadors to China.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jinyuan, 'China and Africa: The Development of Relations over Many Centuries'.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> Earl Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership* (New York, United States of America: Peter Lang Verlag, 2017), 1-19 <https://doi.org/10.3726/b11836>.

However, these official contacts between China and Africa involved current countries such as Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Somalia, and Kenya, however, collapsed and it was a threefold withdrawal, including both domestic and external reasons.<sup>8</sup>(1) With the death of Emperor Yongle<sup>9</sup> and the following resurgence/revival of Confucianism which promoted investments in domestic economic activities, especially agriculture rather than exploration and trade, and other foreign pursuits Yongle (1360-1424), was the first Chinese emperor who lived in the Forbidden City and the third of the Ming Dynasty, mainly known for reforming the Chinese nation and for moving the capital to Beijing.<sup>10</sup> (2) The change of policy on the part of the Ming rulers: the maritime trade itself became one of the issues in this power struggle discouraging people from undertaking heroic maritime cause and fomenting harassment by the Japanese pirates who assaulted the Chinese coastal areas. (3) By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and during the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the invasion of European colonialists in both Asia and Africa represented a decisive cause for the Chinese rulers to issue edicts prohibiting ship-building and sea-going trade. In this period, Vasco de Gama and his crew turned around the Cape of Good Hope and entered the Indian Ocean. At the same time, a repeatedly attacked and devastated Africa lost any mood or power to send any more traders to such a faraway country as China.<sup>11</sup> Despite this, some years later efforts had been made by the Ming administration to resume overseas trade primarily for taxation purposes. However, due to the weakened strength of both the Ming court and the peasant rebels, the Manchu armies, coming from the northeast, were able

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More information about the Chinese expedition to Africa in the early 1400s is available on this blog managed by Kwasi Konadu, Professor of African History and Africana Studies at Colgate University, in New York.

<sup>8</sup> Jinyuan, 'China and Africa: The Development of Relations over Many Centuries'.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>10</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 1–19.

<sup>11</sup> Jinyuan, 'China and Africa: The Development of Relations over Many Centuries'.

to take advantage and eventually conquered the whole of China establishing a new nationwide regime, the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).<sup>12</sup> The rulers of the Qing dynasty, who were therefore of Manchu descent, arrived at the conscious decision to restrict their interactions with foreign nations. This resulted in China falling behind in terms of economic and social advancements, as the Western world had made significant progress with the industrial revolution and colonization. Nevertheless, China remained entangled in a decaying feudal system, which rendered it powerless against foreign aggression from gunboats and the coming of opium from the West. The policy of isolation was eventually terminated, when the British employed their military prowess to assert their control during the Opium War, in the mid-19th century. However, the outcome of the war did not lead to positive changes for China; rather, imperialists took advantage of the nation's weakened state and perpetrated injustice against its populace. Even if China were to embark on international connections, particularly with Africa, a continent that was already exploited by colonialists and imperialists, it was unlikely that it would be able to function at its optimal capacity. Afterward, there were Chinese laborers or *coolies* recruited by white colonialists to work in mines in South Africa during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, Sino-African relations were more negligible during Guo-Mintang's rule of China<sup>13</sup>, until 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded and only after the emergence of an *independent* Africa.<sup>14</sup> It started as a gradual process with only 4 African independent states: Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, and the South African state. Precisely, there were no normal relations distinctively because both Ethiopia and Liberia were under American influence at that time and during the Korean War (1950-1953) local

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 2. Currently, this group is part of the 56 ethnic groups officially recognized by the People's Republic of China. They originate from Manchuria, a region located in northeast China. In the 17th century, the Manchus defeated the Ming dynasty and founded the Qing dynasty. The Qing Empire was present in China until 1912 when the Republic of China was established after the Xinhai Revolution.

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>14</sup> Jinyuan, 'China and Africa: The Development of Relations over Many Centuries'.

troops were sent against the Chinese volunteers; only after the end of the Korean War started official contacts.<sup>15</sup>

Exporting Chinese workers (the so-called Coolies) to British and French colonial territories swelled the population of Chinese in Africa. Concerning it, according to Mohan (2017), the Chinese-Africa business contact can be illustrated into three phases.<sup>16</sup>

(a) The first stage from 1850 to 1950 related to colonial labour demand was called the “coolie trade” (or slave trade). Coolie trade focused mainly on plantation, mining, and railway construction of the colonial powers. Many also found themselves miners in Zambia, South Africa, Madagascar, and Mauritius.

(b) The second period, from 1960-1980, was crucial because of the establishment of the People’s Republic of China and the subsequent Cold War correlatedly relations between China and Africa became political too. This new political regime (the newly formed PRC) actively lent its support to African countries that were fighting wars of liberation and independence. It also gave moral ideological and material support to countries like Ghana, Guinea, and Mali that were trying to engage in the nation-building process free of the shackles of neo-colonialism. This allowed China to challenge the superpowers through foreign aid and assistance to Africa to cement “South-South” relations by respecting the sovereignty of the recipient country and also by encouraging the independence movement. The new economic reforms were being

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem,

<sup>16</sup> Dr Giles Mohan, ‘The Invisible Hand of South-South Globalisation: Chinese Migrants in Africa’, 2017, 1–26.

instituted allowing liberalization, special economic zones, and permitting foreign direct investment.<sup>17</sup>



*Figure 1: The leaders of **non-aligned-nations***

*From the left: Indian Premier Nehru, Prime Minister of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah, Egyptian President Nasser, Prime President of India Sukarno and Tito.*



*Figure 2: Bandung: The First Asian-African Conference, 1955*

*From the left: Zhou Enlai Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai (left) and Indonesian President Soekarno (centre) and Egyptian President Nasser (right) at the 1955 Asian-African Conference.*

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<sup>17</sup> T. L. Deych, 'China in Africa: A Case of Neo-Colonialism or a Win-Win Strategy?', *Outlines of Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, Law*, 2019, 63–82.



This interest in the newly independent countries was in line with the deliberation during the Bandung Conference where China had not only identified the struggles of the Third World but also expressed an interest in spearheading the goals and objectives of Third World nations. Consequently, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai embarked on an extensive tour of Africa between 1963 and 1964. The overall objective of the trip was to cement the friendship between China and the new African nations. Afterwards, the period which covers roughly the 1960s to 1976 saw the beginning of modern China-Africa relations in the areas of diplomacy, and infrastructure development, by China in Africa.<sup>18</sup>

For instance, it was during this period that many independent African states switched diplomatic support from the ROC (Republic of China, Taiwan) to the PRC (People’s Republic of China), and the Chinese began aiding Africa in the areas of development related to medicine, healthcare, transportation, and infrastructure development in general. Following the visit by Zhou Enlai to Africa, hundreds of Chinese medical personnel were dispatched there.

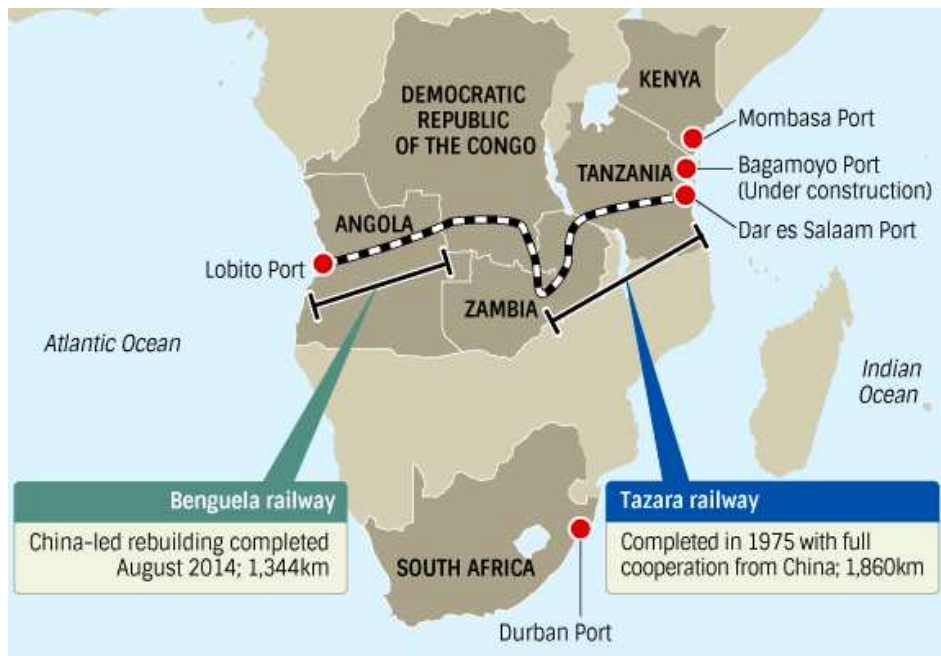


Figure 3: Tazara railway compared to another more recent Chinese-built infrastructure

<sup>18</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 1-19.

In 1976, the year when Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong passed away, the 1860km TAZARA railroad was completed, and constructed by 50,000 Chinese workers.

This long project was built with financial and technical assistance from China, amounting to over US\$400 mln, in the form of a long-term interest-free loan. Known as the "Freedom Railway" or the Great Uhuru Railway, TAZARA was conceived to provide the critical outlet to the sea that landlocked Zambia needed to break free from its dependency on Rhodesian (Zimbabwean), Angolan, and South African rails and ports. TAZARA was, therefore, a transnational as well as a Pan-African project, intended to serve as a symbol of revolutionary Third World solidarity and resistance to the forces of colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism.<sup>19</sup> With their deaths in 1976, a new era of pragmatism under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping began. China experienced profound internal reforms, encouraged DFI into China, and a substantial increase in industrial activities and the corresponding labour pool. Lacking traditional markets and sources of DFI, one key advantage of Western nations, China decided



*Figure 4: Posters of Chinese worker in Africa, helping to build the Tanzam or TAZARA Railway (1968-1976), linking Tanzania and Zambia and a portrayal of the new infrastructure.*

为世界革命人民服务 (Wèi shìjiè gé mìng rén mǐn fú wù)  
*Servi il popolo rivoluzionario del mondo*

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<sup>19</sup> Mohan, 'The Invisible Hand of South-South Globalisation: Chinese Migrants in Africa'. 1-26.

to resuscitate its relationship with Africa, a continent rich in natural resources and an appropriate market for low-cost consumer goods.<sup>20</sup> There are striking similarities between China and Africa that make the two regions also more compatible to each other, than to the Western world, in terms of authoritarian tendencies, human rights violations, corruption, and a general absence of the rule of law. Besides, China does not criticize Africa's lack of a democratic culture. Africa equally does not criticize the oppression of dissent as in the case of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests that resulted in the deaths of a mass of ordinary Chinese.



*Figure 5: The friendship road - the TANZAN Railway*

友谊之路 - 坦赞铁路 (*Yǒuyì zhī lù - tǎn zàn tiě lù*)

(c) The end of the Cold War marked the opening of the last period of China-African relations according to Mohan and Kale (2007) with a Chinese government opening towards economic expansionism to the rest of the world and so to other markets. Trade and investment reforms and incentives have led to a surge in FDI and have represented a major source of China's productivity gains and rapid economic and trade growth. Concretely, the support by the government of Chinese business was manifested in the provision of loans to Chinese firms at low rates. Local Chinese embassies acted as facilitators for Chinese economic expansion

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

in host countries as well.<sup>21</sup> Specifically, in the case of China-Africa historical and current factors provided an advantage in its efforts to cement ties with Africa: mutuality, equality, win-win cooperation, mutual trust, cooperative approach with immersion in the host economy. Chinese companies have moved to African countries, particularly in the areas of construction, mining, and oil extraction.<sup>22</sup>

While Sino-African goes several centuries past, in this era of modern economic globalization they have entered an entirely different phase. The extent and rapidity of China's immersion into the economics of African states imply that some of the most traditional and popular assumptions on which issues of aid, trade, and investment with Africa are built are being rapidly undermined and/or challenged.

In contemporary times, however, continued strong economic growth, globalization, and, in part, global political dynamics have encouraged China to be more proactive and forge new approaches in its relationships with Africa and indeed the rest of the world. Favourite backyard of the colonial powers, this fictional construction of Africa has always been the object of a multitude of attention and fantasies, and the strategic penetration of Chinese power in the African territory is giving rise to numerous concerns and comments. Already by 1983, China had proposed four principles for developing economic cooperation with African countries. These principles included equality and mutual benefit, pursuing practical results, adopting various paths, and seeking common development.<sup>23</sup> According to President Hu, China has pledged to support Africa's development and aims to strengthen Africa's capacity for self-development and improve the welfare of Africa's Business and Development Relationship with China and African people. This objective

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<sup>21</sup> Deych, 'China in Africa'.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Qin Gang Makes a Four-Point Proposal on the Development of China-Africa Relations', January 2023.

has continued to underlie and form the basis of China's African policy, effectively allowing China to seek opportunities for development and address the challenges.

These objectives of the Chinese towards Africa make the Optimists hold the view that China's active involvement in Africa is a "win-win" partnership where both China and Africa are immensely beneficiaries. Anshan (2007) pointed out that Western scholars have often found it easy to negatively label the Chinese presence in Africa.<sup>24</sup> While maintaining that most of these Western perceptions had changed with the current nature of Sino-African relations, Anshan (2007) noted that China had always been a supporter of Africa to an extent that even when faced with a precarious economic situation between 1956 and 1978, China still aided Africa with billions of dollars in the period. She further stressed that China's foreign policy towards Africa had always reflected equality, mutual benefit, and summit diplomacy. This is why some view China's economic presence in Africa as the better option for Africa. China has had a much cleaner record of interaction with the continent and given that Africans are now wiser, Africa stands to benefit a great deal from engagements with China. In other words, the long hegemonic role of the West manifested in global rules and regulations – of IFIs like the IMF and the World Bank calls for democracy promotion, or respect for universal human rights in practice – competes with China's policy of non-interference and equal partnership with African countries in particular. Chinese activities have engaged the global consciousness to such an extent with their rapidity and depth that the analysis of the relationship ranges from criticisms to outright approval. It is interesting and worthwhile to examine the economic behavioural differences between China and the West vis-à-vis Africa.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Li Anshan, 'China Security, Chapter 3: China and Africa: Policy and Challenges', Summer 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Esther Onomah, *Africa and Its Relation to China: Why the African Continent Should Be Looking towards Increased Partnerships with China* (GRIN Verlag, 2019), 1–31, <https://www.grin.com/document/512218>.

During the Cold War, African leaders aligning themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union received substantial diplomatic, economic, and military support. These strategic alliances ensured a consistent inflow of resources from the superpowers to their respective allies. However, this influx of resources exacerbated issues of corruption, nepotism, and militarized forms of governance. Consequently, the rivalry between superpowers temporarily elevated Africa's geopolitical significance and bolstered the influence that African nations could exert in international platforms like the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and various other global forums.<sup>26</sup>

Following the Cold War, a political climate emerged that left minimal room for addressing the enduring political legacies of colonialism, including the pervasive influence of capitalist principles across all societal domains, the prevailing doctrine of the nation-state as the legitimate form of political community, the establishment of private property rights, and the militarization of governance structures. In contrast, China increasingly endeavoured to engage African states after 1989, aiming to deflect Western criticism of its human rights record and assert its leadership position within the bloc of developing nations. Notably, the conclusion of the Cold War shifted former adversaries of the West from beyond the Iron Curtain to become Africa's primary competitors for Western attention and resources. Since 1989, Western aid and investments have been progressively directed towards former members of the Warsaw Pact, rather than towards Africa. Additionally, the perceived success of "market socialism" in China, and to a lesser extent in Vietnam, has emerged as a new draw for Western corporate investments. Consequently, Western interests in Eastern Europe and Asia have, in part, come at the expense of those African states that extended their support during the Cold War.

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<sup>26</sup> Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, *Africa in International Politics: External Involvement on the Continent* (Routledge, 2004), 1–22.

Throughout the 1990s, advocating for Western aid to Africa as a matter of enlightened self-interest became increasingly challenging, given mounting evidence of corruption, militarization, and by extension, ineffective governance. With the disappearance of the communist threat, Western governments began to reduce their diplomatic presence on the continent and allocated diminishing funds for foreign aid directed toward Africa. Thus, just as the conclusion of the Cold War left Western governments without a clear foreign policy compass, it also left numerous African states without a cornerstone for their international relations.<sup>27</sup>

### *1.1 The momentum of new Chinese “go out” policy: Post-Cold War era*

China joined the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1980. Throughout the following decades, Beijing has carefully balanced its status as a recipient country from the perspective of the World Bank, and a donor country to other developing countries. During the 1997 Asian financial crisis China stepped in to assist its worse-off neighbours, including South Korea, Indonesia, and Thailand, contributing an unprecedented US\$ 1 billion to an IMF aid package to Thailand.<sup>28</sup> In Africa, however, China has provided financial assistance to countries that have been cut off from World Bank financing, such as Chad, and has also stepped in to provide unconditional loans that serve as an alternative to the conditional funding offered by the World Bank. Since entering the Bretton Woods system in 1980, China has aligned itself with a wide range of international institutions. It has joined regional institutions such as the Asia Pacific Economic Forum (APEC), ASEAN Regional Forum, and ASEAN-Plus-Three (APT), and has also taken a more active role of its own, in initiatives such as the Shanghai Cooperation

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<sup>27</sup> Adem Seifudein, ‘The Paradox of China’s Policy in Africa’, *African and Asian Studies* 9 (Institute of Global Cultural Studies, Binghamton University, New York, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Graham Boden, ‘China’s Accession to the WTO: Economic Benefits’, *The Park Place Economist*, 20, no. 1 (1 January 2012).

Organisation<sup>29</sup> and the Six-Party Talks<sup>30</sup> on Korea. Multilaterally, it has allied itself with the G20 bloc in the WTO and cooperated closely with the G77 grouping in the UN. It has continued to expand and strengthen bilateral relations with a large number of countries, as well as developing relations with regional organisations inside of Asia, including the African Union. China's foreign policy since the early 1990s is well described by the term 'multilateral' (Chinese: *zhoubian*). In pursuing its policy of multilateralism in international affairs, the United Nations is a key venue for China.

The Chinese government has described the UN as: “*the most universal, representative, authoritative inter-governmental international organization*”, and calls for a reformed UN that can play a larger role than today as a platform for collective action.<sup>31</sup>

China became a member of the UN peacekeeping community in 1990 and has since contributed about 5,600 personnel to 15 UN missions. Currently, more than 1,500 Chinese peacekeepers are serving in UN missions in Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Sudan. In Africa, Chinese peacekeepers have also been stationed in

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<sup>29</sup> The *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (SCO) is a political, economic, and military alliance comprising eight countries: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. Its founding aim was to promote regional economic cooperation, fight against terrorism, and ensure political stability in the region. The SCO also serves as a counterbalance to Western-led alliances such as NATO. It was formed in 2001 and has since expanded its scope to include mutually beneficial economic and cultural projects, joint military drills and intelligence-sharing, and cooperation in areas such as energy, transportation, and infrastructure.

<sup>30</sup> The *Six-Party Talks* were a series of diplomatic negotiations held intermittently from 2003 to 2009, involving North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. The main aim of the talks was to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear program in exchange for security guarantees and economic aid. However, the talks were ultimately unsuccessful, with North Korea conducting its first nuclear test in 2006 and continuing to develop its nuclear program despite international sanctions.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at the Conference Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Lawful Seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations’, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Islamic Republic of Iran, October 2021, [http://ir.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zyxw/202110/t20211025\\_9982254.htm](http://ir.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zyxw/202110/t20211025_9982254.htm).



Western Sahara, on the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, in Sierra Leone and Mozambique. In April 2003, a team of 175 soldiers and 43 medical staff was sent to Congo. Afterwards in the same year, a transportation team of 240, a medical team of 45, and a construction team of 245 were dispatched to Liberia. In October 2005, a peacekeeping team of 435, including 275 soldiers, 100 transportation staff, and 60 medical staff, was sent to Sudan.<sup>32</sup> In addition to its contributions to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, China has provided financial support to the African Union's peacekeeping operations in Darfur. Despite a substantial involvement in peacekeeping, China also exported arms to both sides in the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict between 1998 and 2000 and supplied military equipment to parties in the conflicts in Congo and Sierra Leone, as well as long-term military assistance to the Government of Sudan.<sup>33</sup>

It took years of negotiating before China was admitted to the WTO in 2001. China and African countries have sought common ground in the WTO, based on similar levels of economic development and similarities in the composition of exports.

### *1.2 China's image in Africa: expansion plan of South-South cooperation beyond the economic dimension*

Since the end of the Cold War and the formation of FOCAC in 2000, China has utilized a multi-pronged strategy of cementing its relationship and bolstering its cooperation with African nations. While it is the economic cooperation between the two that receives the greatest attention, China and Africa cooperate in peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction, agricultural, cultural, and educational matters, among others. The

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<sup>32</sup> Philippe D. Rogers, 'China and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Africa', *Naval War College Review* 60, no. 2 (2007): 73–93.

<sup>33</sup> Mohan, 'The Invisible Hand of South-South Globalisation: Chinese Migrants in Africa'.

possibility of considering the Sino-African relationship as a model of South-South cooperation has opened a debate in the academic scenario. Asante (2018) took interestingly into consideration both sides of China's development cooperation with Africa, the light and the dark. According to him, the core of the issue is that China-Africa trade is experiencing growth: Africa's exports to China are increasing at a fast pace, which indicates a narrowing gap between imports and exports in bilateral trade. However, it is uncertain whether this trend can be maintained. The dynamics and fluctuations as well as the limited diversification and the rise of African countries' debt, could compromise the recent progress in China-Africa trade and exacerbate their asymmetrical relationship, reproducing the trade pattern between the West and African countries.<sup>34</sup> The collaboration between China and Africa can be characterized as both extensive and profound. It spans a broad spectrum, encompassing elements ranging from reciprocal trade interdependence, technology transfer, healthcare initiatives, and cultural exchanges to concerns related to regional security. The depth of this collaboration is evident in China's multifaceted involvement, extending beyond financial support, to include advisory services, conflict resolution, capacity-building in various sectors, augmentation of agricultural productivity, provision of healthcare, and the revitalization of critical infrastructure such as roads, schools, and hospitals. Additionally, China takes an active role in advocating for African interests within the United Nations Security Council. The collaborative efforts between China and Africa are geared towards addressing and resolving an array of challenges, spanning economic, technological, agricultural, healthcare, and even political domains. This cooperative endeavour is underpinned by foundational principles of equality and shared development, manifesting as a "partnership of equals" aimed at achieving mutually beneficial progress.

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Asante, 'China and Africa: Model of South-South Cooperation?', *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 04, no. 02 (January 2018): 259–79, <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2377740018500124>.

Furthermore, China's commitment to non-interference in African domestic affairs, coupled with its dedication to establishing partnerships characterized by fairness and reciprocity, stands in contrast to the potentially exploitative nature of the approach taken by Northern nations towards Africa. This approach is perceived as more attuned to local needs and conducive to fostering sustainable development.<sup>35</sup>

China's view of cooperation with African states is also predicted and shaped by its overall foreign policy of non-interference: China in its relationship with Africa constantly reiterates its respect for state sovereignty, for African regional organizations like the AU or sub-regional ones like ECOWAS, COMESA, or SADC. China exercises caution regarding the United Nations' involvement in African crises due to concerns that it might be leveraged by influential nations to directly intercede in the internal matters of African states. Despite its position as a member of the United Nations Security Council, China will only lend its endorsement or support to a Chapter VII resolution aimed at addressing issues within an African nation if key African states and regional organizations also extend their endorsement or support for the proposed action.<sup>36</sup>



*Figure 6: logos of African organizations*

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<sup>35</sup> Interview conducted at the Chinese Embassy, Accra, March 2018 by Asante.

<sup>36</sup> Sara Van Hoeymissen, 'Regional Organizations in China's Security Strategy for Africa: The Sense of Supporting "African Solutions to African Problems"', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 40, no. 4 (2011): 91–118.

In practical terms, this signifies that while China perceives UN interventions as a potential pretext for influential nations to meddle in the domestic affairs of African nations, it remains open to supporting UN interventions when explicitly requested by African nations themselves. Nevertheless, China exhibits a greater readiness to utilize its veto power when the suggested course of action or sanctions against an African ally lacks substantial backing from major actors within the continent. A notable illustration of this occurred in 2008 when China obstructed a resolution, sponsored by the United States, aimed at imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe.

While the rationale of China's expansion into Africa is geo-economic, the glue that ensures continuing Sino-African economic relations is mutual international geopolitical support manifested in China's unwavering support for African governments at the UN, and Africa's equally strong support for China on issues of human rights.<sup>37</sup> Even if China has been caught in the crossfire of ethnic rivalries or government opposition rivalries as in Sudan, Nigeria, Niger, and Ethiopia, China has never given up its state-centric focus, or non-interference approach with all African states. A bedrock of China's African strategy is a deliberate and calculated policy of cementing a relationship with Africa at all levels from the state, sub-regional, and continental, as well as via FOCAC meetings. Not by chance, China has appointed representatives to all the major sub-regional organizations – ECOWAS, COMESA, and SADC.

The White Paper on China's African Policy released in January 2006, the first one, "proposed a new type of China-Africa strategic partnership featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchange".<sup>38</sup>

Following this line, the increasingly expansive cementing of ties between China and Africa is not just limited to rhetoric, discourse, summits, or

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<sup>37</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 147–202.

<sup>38</sup> 'White Paper on China's African Policy, January 2006', *China Report* 43, no. 3 (1 July 2007): 375–91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000944550704300309>.

meetings, but is backed by tangible financial support on the part of China. In addition, the sub-regional organizations in Africa and the AU have been the recipients of Chinese financial support, especially for post-conflict and peacekeeping activities.

In this sense, even if China's financial support of African states may not be as large as Western support, nevertheless it has succeeded in establishing a network of institutional or ministerial linkages with states, sub-regional entities, and the AU itself. In any case, the mutual trust, mentioned in the Paper, has explicitly advanced by the social proximity as well as similarity in a political culture which is reflected in their strong support and adherence to the principles and practice of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations.<sup>39</sup>

In a certain sense, the pressures exerted by Western entities through the potential imposition of sanctions, as well as economic and political constraints, evoke distressing memories of colonial and neocolonial experiences for many Africans. China possesses a comprehensive understanding of the sensitivities involved and, consequently, aligns itself in solidarity with African nations. Irrespective of their cultural distinctions in terms of language (Anglophone, Francophone, or Lusophone), African leaders and their educated populations tend to exhibit a unified front against threats to their governance, and the control of neo-patrimonial networks, associated benefits, and personalized political authority.

In its opposition to sanctions directed at a specific African state (e.g., Zimbabwe in 2008) and advocating for a ceasefire in Libya (2011), China consistently aligns its position with that of the African Union (AU) or the prevailing majority within the AU. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that China also opposes sanctions targeting crucial economic allies to safeguard its economic interests. United Nations

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<sup>39</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 147–202.

sanctions pose a threat to China's interests due to the potentially adverse impacts they could have on the stability of economic transactions.

Here, a discernible dichotomy emerges between the Western approach towards Africa and that of China. China's steadfast adherence to a policy of non-interference does not pose a threat to incumbent regimes or the pursuit of regime preservation. Conversely, Western preoccupation with matters of human rights or human security poses a threat to authoritarian states or leaders whose primary objective is to prolong their rule. Furthermore, while China and Africa share a certain social closeness, the West, in contrast, exhibits a political and social culture that stands in stark juxtaposition, characterized by an active civil society, a well-established legal framework, and the paramount significance attributed to the individual, among other factors.<sup>40</sup>

In 2021, China's State Council Information Office on Friday released a white paper titled "*China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals*."

which delineates a collaborative framework between China and African nations characterized by mutual respect and parity. The document underscores a departure from traditional power dynamics, emphasizing an equitable partnership that aims to promote shared development, cooperation, and prosperity. This paper signifies China's commitment to fostering a relationship with African states based on reciprocal benefits, as opposed to one marked by imbalances of power or influence. It outlines key principles and initiatives aimed at bolstering economic, political, and socio-cultural ties, with an overarching objective of advancing collective growth and sustainable development in both regions.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> The State Council Information Office of and the People's Republic of China, 'White Paper "China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals"', November 2021.

## *About FOCAC: Forum on China-Africa Cooperation*



*Figure 7: FOCAC Logo*

The FOCAC logo prominently shows a red "C" on the left wing, signifying China, while the entire emblem forms the letter "a," representing Africa. This logo serves as a visual representation of solidarity and cooperation between China and Africa, with the green colour denoting peace and development, and the red symbolizing vitality and prosperity. The guiding principles articulated in the Program for China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social Development, ratified during the 2000 Ministerial Conference of FOCAC, underscore the importance of equal consultation, fostering understanding, building consensus, fortifying friendship, and advancing cooperation. Following the agreed-upon Program, China and Africa established joint follow-up mechanisms to conduct regular assessments of the implementation of subsequent actions. In July 2001, a FOCAC ministerial consultation meeting convened in Lusaka, Zambia, during which the Procedures for Follow-up Mechanisms of FOCAC were deliberated and adopted. These follow-up mechanisms officially came into effect in April 2002, functioning at three distinct levels. The Ministerial Conference convenes every three years, while the Senior Officials Follow-up Meeting and the Senior Officials Preparatory Meeting for the Ministerial Conference occur in the interim year and shortly before the Ministerial Conference, respectively. Additionally, consultations between the African Diplomatic Corps in China and the Secretariat of the Chinese Follow-up Committee occur at least biannually. The Ministerial Conference and the Senior Officials Meeting are conducted alternatively in China and an African host country, with both China and the African host acting as co-chairs presiding over the proceedings and taking the lead in implementing the outcomes. The Ministerial Conference is attended by foreign ministers and ministers responsible for international

economic cooperation, while the Senior Officials Meeting involves officials at the director-general level from relevant departments of both China and African nations. In response to the expanding scope and depth of China-Africa cooperation, both the Third Ministerial Conference of FOCAC (held in November 2006 in Beijing) and the Sixth Ministerial Conference (held in December 2015 in Johannesburg) were elevated to the status of FOCAC Summits. The 2006 Beijing Summit also determined that political consultations between Chinese and African foreign ministers be conducted on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly sessions held in the year following each Ministerial Conference. Consequently, Chinese and African foreign ministers engaged in four such political consultations in New York in the years 2007, 2010, 2013, and 2017.

Furthermore, in pursuit of jointly advancing the implementation of outcomes from the Johannesburg Summit, China and African countries convened the Coordinators' Meeting for the Implementation of the Follow-up Actions of the FOCAC Johannesburg Summit in Beijing in July 2016. Additionally, as China-Africa cooperation continues to expand and deepen, various sub-forums have been established within the framework of FOCAC. These include the China-Africa People's Forum, China-Africa Young Leaders Forum, Ministerial Forum on China-Africa Health Cooperation, Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation, China-Africa Poverty Reduction and Development Conference, FOCAC-Legal Forum, Forum on China-Africa Local Government Cooperation, and China-Africa Think Tanks Forum.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Find more information on the official website, available in English too.



## *Chapter II*

### *A framework of analysis: Key concepts for a systematic examination of Chinese engagement in Africa*

One of the most remarkable developments in the international political economy of the post-Cold War has been the scope, volume, and frequency of Sino-African transactions which have catapulted Sub-Saharan Africa into the limelight of international relations. In particular, since the late 1990s the political, diplomatic, economic, and cultural interactions between China and African countries have grown steadily. Scholars emphasize that the reciprocal political-economic interactions between China and Africa have been further fortified by shared socio-cultural affinities, which engender mutual diplomatic support within the broader international system. China's expansive outreach to Africa constitutes a response to a new geopolitical landscape that emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War and aligns with the contemporary global reality characterized by a transformed political-economic framework, rendering the previous ideological rivalries obsolete. The strategies and approaches employed by China in maintaining its engagement with African states are perceived as pivotal factors or the bedrock of the burgeoning interactions between the two entities. This partnership exemplifies a unique instance of collaboration between entities at differing stages of industrial development. Simultaneously, they may be classified as belonging to the global "South" within the North-South division of the global landscape. It serves as an endeavour to underscore how two "Southern" entities navigate the imperatives of globalization. In essence, its distinctiveness lies in the asymmetrical nature of the relationship, mirroring trade patterns between the West (North) and African nations. Although there

are positive indications of a narrowing trade gap between both parties, questions persist regarding its long-term sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

While there are positive signs that the trade gap between both sides is narrowing, there are questions about its sustainability. Although China has expanded trade relations with non-resource-rich countries, its imports from Africa are still dominated by natural resources and exports by manufactured products with limited diversification and technology transfer.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the Chinese government has always claimed that its official policy position toward Africa is based on a reciprocal model of “South-South cooperation”, reinforced by equality, common development, and a “partnership of equals”. It is often argued that this aid-trade-investment approach helps to leverage donor-recipient cooperation and leads to win-win development and self-reliant development, particularly among low-income developing states. Moreover, China’s commitment to non-intervention in African domestic affairs and its determination to build partnerships based on equality and mutuality appear less exploitative and more relevant to local needs than the North’s approach to Africa, embraced by developed countries and thus has tremendous potential to unlock Africa’s development scenarios.<sup>3</sup> Within the concept of “economic globalization imperative” is implied geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics and linkages to emphasize Sino-African political-economic interactions even though there is the obvious dominance of economic transactions over political-ideological ties. Economic imperatives of trade and investment and, the need for economic expansion, are promoted by the state as an instrument of capitalist expansion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Asante, ‘China and Africa: Model of South-South Cooperation?’, *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 04, no. 02 (January 2018): 259–79, <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2377740018500124>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> Earl Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership* (New York, United States of America: Peter Lang Verlag, 2017), 45–63, <https://doi.org/10.3726/b11836>.

However, in China, it was especially the communist state led by Deng Xiaoping that was predominant and gave the direction for China's SOEs<sup>5</sup> to "go out" in search of trade and investment. Especially for China, there is greater alignment between state interests and economic forces compared to liberal democratic capitalist states, where there may be conflict between state and corporate interests. But in China, SOEs are an integral part of, even largely owned by, the Communist state. Just as in liberal democracies, the capitalist economic forces, multinationals, or businesses in general need the support of the state, or the diplomatic functions of the state as facilitators for the effective expansion of capitalism. At the same time, the state is largely dependent on a thriving capitalist or business sector to meet its political functions of delivering services to society and conducting its external obligations.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the state can sustain itself and provide a modicum of security to society through taxation facilitated by a healthy economy.

In engaging with Africa, China has established the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) as a multilateral framework, with the Ex-Im Bank and Fund playing a key role in facilitating economic relations. The "geopolitical imperative", it can be argued, is effectively reflected in China's use of FOCAC to promote its goals in Africa by involving the ruling African elite and incumbent political actors. Through FOCAC and other political relationships, such as the training of African public officials in China, China seeks to demonstrate its commitment to relations with Africa and establish itself as a credible partner on the continent. FOCAC is a political forum where Chinese and African politicians interact in the multilateral and international arena through summit diplomacy. China leverages the opportunity during every three-year summit for persuading, cogently expressing its goodwill towards

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<sup>5</sup> SOEs stands for state-owned enterprise and it is an entity formed by the government for the purpose of engaging in commercial activities. The government usually takes either full or partial ownership of any SOEs.

<sup>6</sup> T. L. Deych, 'China in Africa: A Case of Neo-Colonialism or a Win-Win Strategy?', *Outlines of Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, Law*, 2019, 63–82.

Africa, and even for promising generous aid packages and investment projects all within the overall emphasis on “win-win”, “mutual respect”, and “equality” refrain of relations between China and Africa. China consistently uses the political-diplomatic arena of FOCAC to maintain and even try to cement credibility vis-à-vis African states. Through FOCAC and other political relationships such as the training of African public officials in China, it signifies to African states that China is sincere and serious in its engagement with the specific African country, or its relationship with the continent as a whole.

China persistently utilizes the political and diplomatic platform of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) as a means to sustain and potentially reinforce its legitimacy with African states. The utilization of FOCAC, in conjunction with other political affiliations such as the provision of training for African governmental officials in China, effectively conveys to African states that China is earnest and committed to its involvement with the respective African nation or in its partnership with the continent as a whole.

### *2.1 Sino-African relations: A model of analysis*

In this analysis of Sino-African relations in the era of globalization (Morgan, 2018) the concept of geo-economics is used in the theoretical framework to underscore the primary role that economic activities (aid, trade, investment) play in bilateral and multilateral relations. The concept of geo-economics has the task of emphasizing the greater importance of economics compared to politics.

In this case, economic resources are foundational to the Sino-African relationship and political and diplomatic relations constitute the superstructure that facilitates the activities of trade and investment as well as the uncompromising stance over human rights and sovereignty issues. It is the geo-political factors that act as state instruments to facilitate aid, trade, and investment activities between the two entities.

However, since both China and many African states cannot be described as liberal democracies as are Western Europe, Japan, and North America, they still wield a great degree of relative autonomy, in the sense that they exercise the greatest influence over economic policies. Both political forces and economic ones are interdependent and mutually supportive of each other. In fact, on one hand, a state needs a healthy economy as a source of revenue through taxation, and as a provider of social stability ensured by a robust economy. On the other hand, economic forces need the state to provide regulation, protection, and business enterprises both within and outside of the state. In countries where democracy and capitalism are not very advanced, there is often less conflict between state

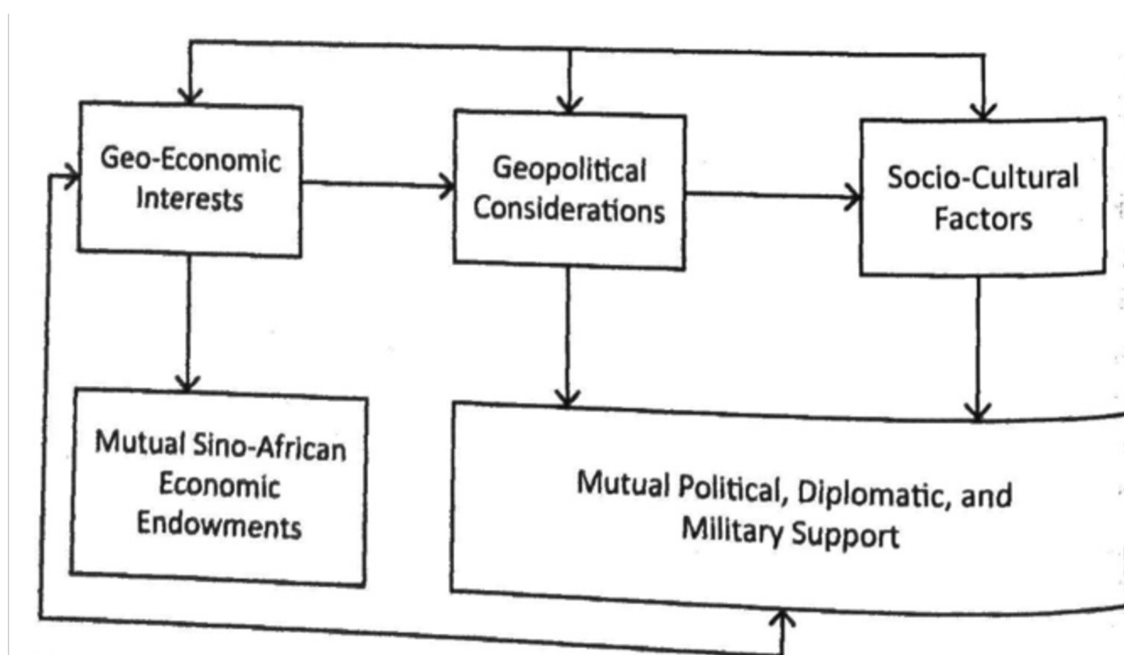


Figure 8: A framework of analysis of the Sino-African relationship

officials and economic forces.<sup>7</sup> The end of the Cold War developments such as the globalization processes, and democratization pressures are important factors in explaining China's deeper engagement with Africa.

<sup>7</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 20–45.

The transition from ideological rivalry to economic imperatives (markets, investments, trade, and economic development in general) shows how the power elite in China responded positively to the transition and became facilitators for capitalist (aid, trade, investment) expansion both at the domestic and international levels. The result is a more robust relationship with African states. The focus will be on the reasons (why?) of the Sino-African partnership as well as the strategies and activities (how?) of the partnership.

In Sino-African relations, there are significant aspects of interactions (e.g. health, agriculture, cultural exchanges, water systems, etc.) that are not an integral part of geo-economics and geopolitics but help to cement the relationship and deepen the diplomatic relations. The negative perception, or fear from the West is that the economic and political power of China has the potential of displacing the West's current hegemonic status in Africa, and may even have the potential to slow down the expansion of American and Western political-economic objectives in Africa. Moreover, since China has capably demonstrated that liberal democratic culture is not a necessary condition for achieving a booming capitalist society, it poses a threat to the Western emphasis on spreading liberal democracy to African states. A secondary but very powerful threat is that African states could become more inclined to adopt the China alternative to development and thereby abandon the Western model with all of its economic and political impositions and austerity measures.<sup>8</sup>

The rhetoric/discourse is full of implicit and explicit statements or questions that Africa is not capable of concluding a good deal, that is prone to be exploited because it is full of uneducated and unskilled people; its rulers are easily bribed by MNCs (multinational corporation), it is pervaded by corruption, and the like.

In other words, these are representations of Africa that have persisted since Europeans first came into contact with the African world.

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<sup>8</sup> Deych, 'China in Africa', 63–82.

Finally, China's strategy is multidimensional. It is based on all the components of Chinese national power and endowments. These include the use of power-political, power-economic, diplomatic, socio-cultural, humanitarian, technological, and military capabilities. These serve to condition and convince African nation-states to cooperate with China in the pursuit of its global responsibilities. The essential factor is economic and technological power directed at the objectives of China's overall foreign policy towards Africa.<sup>9</sup>

Any relationship between two political entities, in this case, China and African states can be explained from several perspectives and various dimensions. A theoretical model for the empirical analysis is proposed to highlight the most essential features of the relationship which can then serve as a means for more profound theorising. Interstate relations are typically understood as a combination of factors shaped by political, economic, military, or cultural interactions. The cementing factors, which strengthen the Sino-African relationship, in the Sino-African relationship include, for example, critical resource endowments, markets, and investment outlets in African states on the one hand, and China's advanced technology, foreign aid in general, technical assistance, and diplomatic overtures to Africa to the other hand. To further understand these factors, it is in turn essential to underscore the active role of China in counting African states and its positive effect on African states. Moreover, the technological relevance of China to Africa and the psycho-cultural and political historical affinity between China and Africa contribute to a deeper understanding of Sino-African relations.<sup>10</sup>

The dynamics and strengths of the Sino-African relationship are in turn supposed to be shaped by the efforts undertaken by China to strengthen and deepen the relationship in terms of its political, economic, cultural, military, and other aspects. The strength and growth of interstate

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<sup>9</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 20–45.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

relations depend largely on facilitators such as volume and frequency of trade, the significance of items traded, gains and losses, and mutual diplomatic and political support between the two, among other things. Accordingly, the active role of China could converge to the school of mutual foreign policy which considers the dynamic interaction of the limitations and problems, as well as facilitators, incentives, and attractions that constitute interactions, as well as the state-level efforts to manage and strengthen ties both through rhetoric/discourse and tangible policies. The model of analysis proposed below, taken from the great research study by Earl Morgan, introduces conceptual clarifications of the framework, showing relations in terms of goals and objectives, rationales, bilateral and multilateral relationships, transaction flows, gains and losses, discourse, or the like. In this diagram, “mutuality” is a redundant concept. It is justified by the fact that the dependence between two or more entities would be shaped by their political and economic importance or endowments, interests, and needs. In large part, the analysis is inspired by the transition from Cold War political ideological preoccupations between China and African nations and the international systems as a whole to the economic globalization imperatives that came with the end of the Cold War. In other words, it is inspired by the global and regional emphasis on economic issues and utilizes a foreign policy theoretical framework predicated on geo-economic and geopolitical imperatives as a theoretical lens through which to analyse Sino-African relations. All this mutual support is further strengthened by the socio-cultural affinity and similar political-historical experiences between the two entities.



### 2.1.1 *Geo-economic interests*

Geo-economics can be described as the interplay between the imperatives of economic globalization on the one hand, and international political and diplomatic strategy on the other, as manifested in the China-Africa bilateral and multilateral relationships on issues of economics, politics, and culture.

Geo-economic interests can be clarified as China's pursuit of energy security, other geostrategic minerals, or any other alternative resource driven by its need to satisfy its industrial development momentum and social transformation, with which many African states are naturally endowed. Oil, natural gas, and several strategic minerals are the key to the Chinese industrialization process. These interests imply the use of instruments of foreign policy manifested in aid, trade, and investment relationships described as a mutual benefit, the pursuit by China and African states of opportunities, investments, trade, and aid relationships that enhance their industrial development goals and all its interrelated benefits.

Nonetheless, Africa has advantages too: while Africa plays the role of supplier of raw materials, it is benefiting from upgraded infrastructure such as roads, airports, railways systems, and agricultural technology. China has access to the African market for its finished products, and many African products have a big market in China, with many of them tariff-exempt.

The influence of China over Africa is continuously strengthened by the credibility created through a *non-conditional* and *non-patronizing* approach (or multifaceted approach) to African states, deducible by some specific examples of Chinese initiatives and projects: (A) the construction projects in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Zambia, (B) the contribution to peacekeeping in Liberia, (C) in Angola, investments in education, energy and water, health, agriculture, transport, public works reaching an amount over 1 billion dollars, and so on.

In the limelight of these characteristics, Chinese aid to Africa is free of many conditionalities often imposed by Western or OECD aid, but often the genuine interest in Africa's development exercises a profound influence on the African elite in particular. The recipient African country is then expected to be open to Chinese influence because it stands to gain by maintaining that relationship. Accordingly, China is adopting a "*catch-all strategy*" and is pursuing to win over all African states through diplomacy and political ties and to have open access to the minerals of each African country. By considering these factors, the context is read as *China's game of economic influence buying Africa*, in which China, the more developed entity, plays as the initiator and wants to establish vis-à-vis Africa.

### *2.1.2 Geo-political considerations*

Geopolitical considerations mean the use of power-economic capabilities to gain access, not only to natural resources but also to the diplomatic support of African states. The most contemplated capability is generous trading terms towards Africa to consolidate its access to Africa's resources and markets, as well as the enhancement of its One China Policy through the support of African states. However, Africa exploits its vast raw materials to acquire a new and politically powerful alternative economic partner capable of supplying technology and upgrading much-needed infrastructure through a robust economic relationship described as based on mutual benefit.

In general, geo-economics is used for the total and long-run Chinese strategy in Africa including competition for Africa's resources vis-à-vis Western powers, the need to project its overall power concerning other powers, a need to strengthen and rejuvenate its former relationship with all African countries.

Questions of strategies of resource accessibility are best understood within the context of changing systemic values such as the transition

from Cold War military strategic-defensive issues to those of economic globalization, rapid industrial growth, and more and easy access to critical mineral resources.

The current geopolitical geo-economic and socio-cultural behavior of China is indicative of a new and more determined economic competitor in Africa preoccupied with issues of resource scarcity and access given its phenomenal economic growth rate of roughly 10 percent and above over several years.

The end of the Cold War was followed by the primacy of socioeconomic issues, in particular trade and investment. The shift in the national interest from military to economic supremacy ushered in a new era and *Weltanschauung* characterized by (1) an overwhelming focus on the acquisition of critical raw materials as a result of rapid industrialization by countries such as China and India; (2) with globalization the issues of trade, aid, investment have become transnational; (3) the modern state is preoccupied with extending its access to critical raw materials as well as to maintain a solid diplomatic and political relationship with both developing and developed nations. Transnational, because the many African nations are impelling China to equally compete against West European nations and the US for access to such resources. Accordingly, the Chinese focus on access to Africa's markets and minerals is going to be a continuous foreign policy objective and could be viewed as related mostly to the future contingency of dwindling oil and energy resources on a global scale, and the present need for China to satisfy its enormous demand for oil and energy resources driven by its unprecedented industrial growth. China's primary goal (primary importance) is uninterrupted access to energy and other critical resources, and its tools are strong diplomatic, political, cultural, and economic ties with rich-resourced countries. In light of this, the multi-pronged approach that China embraces is structured by the emergence and demands of neoliberal internationalism and its emphasis on more economic configurations of power and influence, increasing primacy of socio-

economic issues, non-military technological competition, and industrial production.

For China, it is a significant shift from the era of Cold War ideological rivalry when its preoccupation with Africa was more narrowly focused on ideological completion, proxy wars, arms transfers, and other elements of a geostrategic game of spatial competition for power and influence in anticipation of war. For China, in the current era, Africa's oil, iron ore, bauxite, and other resources are a prime target, regardless of whether they are located in democratic, democratizing, or authoritarian states. China uses foreign aid as a quid pro quo for maintaining some political influence and thereby gaining access to critical minerals. China's overall foreign policy towards Africa is therefore based on a combined use of strategy and politics.

Post-Cold War globalization impelled China to deepen and expand its relationship with African states. China's behaviour is in line with the need for great powers to expand geographically to keep up with other great powers in the pursuit of power, wealth, and prestige, as well as pressures generated by domestic changes within China to satisfy public demands regarding private enterprise, or a move away from rigid communism in economic matters.

The economically driven aspect of neoliberal internationalism impels China to adopt a rather geo-economic emphasis in its foreign policy posture. In other words, China's diplomatic and economic behaviour can be explained or predicted in terms of its perceived security and/or insecurity of access to strategic raw materials, in particular, energy resources, and sources of investment. Chinese socio-economic, diplomatic, and cultural activities in Africa are tantamount to regional power protection in search of markets, resources, and sources of investment. China's international politics is cognisant of an economically driven international system where foreign policy is even more underpinned by the transfer of rewards ranging from agriculture, infrastructure, and education, to military assistance, among other things,

and the cultivation of allies to secure access to critical resources and enhance overall economic security.

In the contemporary era of globalization, geo-economic values are manifested in industrial power and critical resource endowments.<sup>11</sup>

### *2.1.3 Socio-cultural factors*

These factors refer to both perceived and real political, economic, and value similarities between China and Africa. Political attractiveness between these two entities, indeed, is given by communalism, the developing status, similar political historical experiences, and the concerning issues of human rights, corruption, and governance. In addition, we can talk about complementarity, not only attractiveness. Surprisingly, the socio-cultural distance between the two is close and at the same time, the complementarity between the two is very strong because of China's technological development. Studying the culture of an ethnic group, nation or society involves several things such as dress, cuisine, belief, or value systems among other things. One of the cultural traits that China and Africa share has been said to manifest itself in the business transaction landscape: the "gift-giving" preceding the asking for a favour which signals a need to expand cooperation (willingness to engage in more cooperation and is often expected and acceptable cultural behaviour) rather than engage in open competition. Conversely, an exchange before concluding a business deal is labelled bribery or corruption by the West.

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<sup>11</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*.

#### *2.1.4 Mutual Sino-African Economic Endowments*

These refer to natural resource endowments and technical capabilities possessed by China and Africa that enhance and strengthen their relationship. It means that, for example, China has a vast amount of investment capital and technology that it transfers to African states, some of which are used to upgrade dilapidated infrastructure. In international politics, China even protects African states considered pariahs and shields them from Western sanctions. Conversely, African states generally export critical raw materials to China to enhance their industrial progress.

#### *2.1.5 Mutual Political, Diplomatic, and Military Support*

This aspect of mutuality refers to the support that China and African states render each other because of their similar political and cultural levels and experiences, against the reality of, or imagined, western domination. The support is often expressed at the United Nations, the UN Commission for Human Rights, and in non-interference or refusal to criticize each other's governance style and largely non-conditional interactions. Africa's geopolitical importance is manifested in the United Nations where it has more than a quarter of the membership with significant implications to sway issues through its voting power. It has often used voting power to support China during critical moments in China's relationship with the UN and with other members of the Big Five in the Security Council.

## *2.2 Socio-cultural point and the two sides of the coin: The desire to emigrate whatever it takes?*

China recognizes that the emphasis on cultural affinity/sociocultural proximity with Africa is one way to cement Sino-African relations. Cultural similarity, shared values, customs, and mores are therefore frequently utilized by sociocultural strategy at the bilateral and

multilateral interaction and foreign policy levels meaning the ability of China to invoke shared historical, political, socio-economic, and sociocultural experiences and similarities as instruments of forging closer ties with other countries. In other words, an issue to explore is the effect of shared experience and culture on Sino-African ties and overall relations. Accordingly, China has increasingly underscored shared experiences with African nations or its cultural behavioural, and historical similarities with African nations to distance itself from Western nations and thereby forge trust and closer ties with African nations.<sup>12</sup> This instrumental use of shared experiences and common cultural traits strengthens China's foreign policy ties with the African elite in particular. Moreover, this instrumental use of shared socio-political, economic, and cultural experiences is underscored during FOCAC meetings, business deals, policy pronouncements, and the like.

The use of shared experiential knowledge and cultural instrumentalism is a *sine qua non* for China to forge closer ties and engage in successful economic transactions with geo-economically strategic countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Nigeria, and Kenya, among others, and to enhance its capability/effectiveness in dealing with unforeseen and actual problems within African nations especially with regards to labour disputes and occasional anti-Chinese outbursts. In the area of educational cooperation, there has been a rapid increase in types and volumes of exchange.

This educational aspect of China's multi-pronged strategy acts as the glue to cement cross-cultural understanding and reinforce the "Chinese Presence" in the continent. The Confucius institutes constitute the bedrock of Chinese cultural diplomacy in the continent. As an integral aspect of Chinese philosophy and thought Confucianism evoked through Confucius Institutes provides a propaganda advantage for China's

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<sup>12</sup> Dr Giles Mohan, 'The Invisible Hand of South-South Globalisation: Chinese Migrants in Africa', 2017, 1-26.

engagement with Africa. In reality, China is more focused on a geo-economic and mercantilist conquest of Africa rather than the spread of Confucian thought.<sup>13</sup>

China knows that education is power and that in its engagement with Africa, education would generate a Chinese cultural power that could rival that of the West despite the advantages of Britain and France as ex-colonial powers. As more Africans learn the Chinese language, and Chinese master languages like Swahili and Hausa research collaboration between China and African universities would develop.

Educational cooperation began as far back as the 1950s, with some interruptions between 1967 and 1972 because of revolutionary instability in China as a result of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution launched by Mao Zedong. By 1978 there were slightly over 600 African students in China. However, with the Opening Up and Reform launched in 1979 following the death of Mao, and in the 1980s a total of 2245 African students from 43 African countries were studying in China. By the 1990s, the numbers increased: over 7000 students from more than 50 African countries (total are 54, 48 constitute Sub-Saharan Africa). In the reason of this, most students were supported by Chinese government scholarships.

The benefit for Sino-African relations of educational cooperation is that it is a way to cement geopolitical understanding and enhance mutual cooperation. China's educational aid policy emphasizes training African professionals, sending teachers to African countries, and targeting specific educational projects and training plans for specific African countries. Consequently, cultural exchanges between China and Africa are an integral part of the cooperation. The Confucius Institutes and language centres help to create a more favourable image of China as a country as well as a more positive attitude towards its culture as a whole.

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<sup>13</sup> 李洋 Li Yang, '非洲的中国新移民：现状及问题 (New Chinese Immigrants in Africa: Current Situation and Problems)', 卷宗 3, no. 11 (2013): 2.



Notably, the Africans are still imbued with a great deal of colonial mentality and neo-colonial influence by Europeans (especially Britain and France) but the Chinese educational cooperation is far behind in this respect.<sup>14</sup>

In Sino-African cultural proximity is strengthened by shared values such as civil-government relations, group orientation as opposed to individualism, and elite-mass relations based on obedience and reverence for elders. Other national character traits are in common between China and Africa: (a) Authoritarian political systems: unfortunately, even African states that are relatively democratic still have problems with conducting regular, free, and fair elections. (b) Weak Civil Society: A low level of higher education is largely responsible for the fact that women's associations, labour unions, and other groups cannot put pressure on governments to do what is right. (c) A more or less submissive population in relation to governmental rule, or human rights issues. (d) Communalism and neo-patrimonialism, nepotism, or ethnic solidarity, as opposed to the overt individualism and largely impersonal behaviour of the West.<sup>15</sup> Both regions express Third World solidarity because they are still largely at the level of pockets of industrialization in a sea of pre-industrial growth. Surprisingly, there are large areas of China that are still rural, underdeveloped, and steeped in pre-industrial values of the importance of the community, communal living, extended family, and the focus on spirituality or morality over individual acquisitiveness or cut-throat competition. Cultural similarities have thus become facilitators of China's robust expansion into Africa. These ties became a communications bridge for economic, political, diplomatic, and military transactions between Beijing and the African nations. Cultural affinity or similarities do enhance the ability of two societies/actors to hold converging views on political, economic, military, or diplomatic issues.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

Sino-African cultural affinity has therefore played a major role in China’s success in Africa. China offers “gifts” to African governments in the form of stadiums, hospitals, modern roads, and the like before even concluding a mineral resource contract. Accordingly, the compatibility or incompatibility of cultural mindsets determines harmonious interactions in political, economic, or military interactions between nation-states.<sup>16</sup> In the Chinese language is very common, to sum up the prominent concepts and keywords that often remind one of moral or ethical principles. In this case, as shown below, these were the four values that the conference wanted to transmit.

*Table 1: Values in the China-Africa Friendly Night 2019*

|    |                  |   |
|----|------------------|---|
| 开拓 | <b>Kāituò</b>    | <i>Openness toward development and new horizons or pioneering</i> |
| 创新 | <b>Chuàngxīn</b> | <i>Innovation for bringing forth new ideas</i>                    |
| 高效 | <b>Gāoxiào</b>   | <i>Efficiency for high purposes</i>                               |
| 超越 | <b>Chāoyuè</b>   | <i>Transcendence and go beyond the ordinary</i>                   |

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<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

Instead, a large screen displayed these four buzzwords: along with the words “Innovation”, “Efficiency”, and “Transcendence” appeared “Exploitation”. However, language difficulties caused by deeply different alphabets and cultural paradigms can bring also to diplomatic incidents, such as this:



Figure 9: China's "exploitation" of Africa translation gaffe causes outrage

It was a tactless case of mistranslation that caught the attention of China-Africa observers worldwide. The 2019 China-Africa Friendly Night, which was held in Beijing, was attended by top African business and diplomatic officials along with representatives from nations involved in China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>17</sup> It was defined as a Freudian slip or a simple lack of African involvement in the event’s organization which would have ensured that such a gaffe wasn’t printed and even approved as the final message. The result of this mistranslation has had

<sup>17</sup> Abdi Latif Dahir, ‘A Translation Gaffe at a Major Beijing Event Defined China’s Relations with Africa as “Exploitation”’, February 2019, The Quartz Africa Weekly Brief edition.

a greater negative impact also since has been widely shared on WeChat<sup>18</sup> in China-Africa groups and beyond.

Language errors are a common occurrence, but for China, they occur at a time when its increasing presence in Africa is being criticized both domestically and internationally. Beijing's expansion of diplomatic, trade, military, and economic investments over the last two decades has led to accusations of entrapping African nations in debt and engaging in "chopsticks mercantilism."<sup>19</sup> Social and culturally, this *faux pas* is being revealed at a time when a growing number of African students are studying in China when Mandarin is becoming a regular subject in schools from Uganda and Kenya to South Africa, and as Beijing promotes its culture abroad even as Africans are subjected to racial behaviours and prejudices in China. However, what has surprised me more in this occurrence is that if no one attempts to face and raise the problem of mistranslation, then how can China improve its progress on cross-cultural and cross-national issues?

### *2.2.1 The complexity of "Chineseness"*

With 54 countries, a land size of 30.2 million km<sup>2</sup>, and a population of about one billion, Africa is far from being a homogenous entity (Choukroune, 2013).

"Chineseness" is a keyword for the lecture on this phenomenon, because it explores the complexities of the Chinese identity and the forms in which they are represented by Chinese migrants in Africa. The following aims to explain that there is no single Chinese identity in Africa.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> WeChat is an all-in-one super app and it is widely used as social media and messaging app in China. It provides users with a wide range of features, such as instant messaging, voice and video calls, group chats, a social media feed, and e-commerce capabilities, for instance make payments, buy train tickets, order food, book taxis, and more. It is also known for its security features, including facial recognition and fingerprint scanning. It is one of the few social media apps allowed by the Chinese government in its territory.

<sup>19</sup> See chapter III.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 3.

It is well-known that many different ethnic groups are settled in the whole of China. Altogether there are 56 official ethnic groups. The largest group, the Han, makes up over 92% of China's vast population so much so that scholars talk about *Hanification* in the last decade.<sup>21</sup>

Racism persists and Chinese bias against Africans is predominantly grounded on three factors: conventional beauty standards, lack of knowledge about African culture and society, and difficulties with language communication.<sup>22</sup> It is worthwhile to remember that there is an immense diversity among the 750 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa, and each country is a cultural and ethnic group with its own history, language, and religion. More than two thousand separate and distinct languages are spoken in all of Africa.<sup>23</sup>

China's historical and current interactions with African countries provide an opportunity to examine the complexities of the Chinese identity. This is because, in addition to state-to-state relations, there exist numerous identities among the "Chinese" in Africa. These individuals range from descendants of migrants who settled in Africa in the late 17th century to more recent 21st-century migrants. As a result, there are Africans of

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<sup>21</sup> Amy H. Liu and Kevin Peters, 'The Hanification of Xinjiang, China: The Economic Effects of the Great Leap West', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 17, no. 2 (2017): 265–80, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sena.12233>.

<sup>22</sup> Wits Journalism Department, 'Trailblazers 2009-2014: The Best of the Wits China-Africa Reporting Project' (University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, n.d.), 59–65. Trailblazers 2015 is the first collection of articles published by the Wits China-Africa Reporting Project. The collection features some of the best articles produced by Chinese and African journalists with China-Africa Reporting Project grants from 2009 to 2014. In four sections, the 17 articles range over and between the two regions, from new players in South Sudan to veteran traders in Soweto; from migrants and marriages in Guangzhou to gold miners in Ghana. By exploring real stories at ground level and navigating polarized debates, the journalism in this volume is able to enhance our understanding of what is a complex and dynamic China-Africa relationship. This collection does not aim to be a definitive account of all the issues but should rather be considered a snapshot of a period of immense change in China-Africa dynamics, and a reflection of journalists' attempts to understand and make sense of these changes.

<sup>23</sup> PhD Royal Berglee, 'Human Geography of Subsaharan Africa' World Regional Geography (17 June 2016): Chapter 7.

Chinese descent, such as Fay Chung, who identifies more as Zimbabwean, Gabonese, South African, etc., than as Chinese from the People's Republic of China. Jean Ping is another notable example, born to a Chinese father from Wenzhou, China, and a Gabonese mother. Despite these differences, many recent migrants from the People's Republic of China have settled in African countries as workers, entrepreneurs, traders, and other roles. Without acknowledging these historical dynamics, media, scholars, and politicians often fail to recognize the variety of individuals included in the umbrella term "Chinese."<sup>24</sup>

Negative perceptions of China and its recent migrants to Africa also bring to light the complexities of the Chinese identity. These narratives, such as the idea of China colonizing Africa and producing substandard goods, contribute to a subconscious association of anything related to China as Chinese. This populist narrative obscures questions about what constitutes 'Chineseness' and who is considered Chinese. The media and existing literature tend to focus on macroeconomic relationships rather than micro-level engagements between people from China and African countries, thus neglecting the growing phenomenon of the Chinese diaspora in Africa. Though there are references to a million Chinese from mainland China living and working in Africa, little research has been done on who these individuals are and how they integrate into local African communities. Existing literature tends to group all Chinese individuals as a homogenous group, without acknowledging their distinct histories, identities, and cultures. It is important to consider these nuances, as there are varying categories of Chinese individuals living in Africa.<sup>25</sup> Chinese identity and Chineseness are not fixed, and there is agreement among scholars that there is no single definition of this

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<sup>24</sup> Obert Hodzi, 'Chinese in Africa: "Chineseness" and the Complexities of Identities', *Asian Ethnicity* 20, no. 1 (2019): 1-7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2018.1539826>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

concept. Recent studies of Chinese immigrants in African countries such as Ghana and Zimbabwe greet the idea that the Chinese population in Africa is homogeneous with skepticism. These immigrants' individual identities and expressions of Chineseness are shaped by their unique interests and reasons for being in Africa. Even among Chinese people from the same province, there may be multiple identities based on their location and experiences. This fluid and transnational identity requires, however, further research and exploration.<sup>26</sup>

Several insights into what explains the complexities of the Chinese identity could be provided. Firstly, the interactions between Chinese migrants and Africans in Africa are creating new forms of Chineseness and shaping Chinese identity. Local reactions and dispositions to the Chinese impact their Chineseness, which is shaped by the nature of interaction and the spaces in which these interactions take place. The majority of interactions occur in the marketplace and workplace, and how the two groups behave and interact with each other contributes to the formation of new identities and reinforces past ones. The competitive environments that Chinese traders find themselves in are shaping how they articulate their identity, especially in Ghana where market spaces are designated as Chinese. The incompatibility of Chinese and local trading practices in some African countries – such as Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia – is contributing to the dismantling of Chinese immigrants' ethnic identities. The interpretation of what constitutes Chineseness is enduring due to the 'us and them' dichotomy, which feeds into stereotypes in the public domain and perpetrated by local and international media reports. As a result, Chinese migrants in Africa are in a constant struggle to articulate and negotiate elements of their identity to secure their spaces and ensure their survival.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

Secondly, the pervasive mutual fear and mistrust between locals and Chinese immigrants, particularly in the realm of trade and business, affects how the Chinese perceive their adopted country. As a result of being unable to fully integrate into the local communities due to tangible and perceived differences in structure and culture, Chinese merchants frequently expatriate their profits back to China.<sup>27</sup> Chinese immigrants are ghettoizing themselves creating spaces that represent their identity and provide safety by developing their social capital and establishing secure social and business environments. Such spaces include exclusive Chinese restaurants, Chinatowns, and Chinese shopping centres in cities like Harare, Johannesburg, and Accra, which function as "enclosures of Chineseness." These places serve as Chinese communities within Africa, where individuals feel safe to embrace their Chinese identity and language without fear. This dynamic unintentionally fuels the suspicion and mistrust that locals and their ruling elites have regarding the "Chinese". The Chinese are therefore in a perpetual state of negotiating and renegotiating their identity with the locals.<sup>28</sup> This phenomenon has caused some tensions within the communities and families involved. The report states that some Chinese parents are unhappy with their children marrying Africans, and vice versa. In some cases, the disapproval can be so strong that it leads to the couple being ostracized or even threatened. Yet, some couples have managed to overcome these challenges and create successful and loving relationships. Furthermore, the report highlights the complexities of navigating cultural and linguistic barriers within these mixed marriages. For example, some African partners struggle to

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<sup>27</sup> Hodzi, 'Chinese in Africa: "Chineseness" and the Complexities of Identities'.

<sup>28</sup> National Book Festival: At the Heart of Modernity with Howard W. French. 2022. Video available on <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-10524/>. What happens when you consider the origins of modernity and centre Africa rather than Europe? Howard W. French's book, "Born in Blackness," explores that very question as he investigates the forgotten history of how Africa and its relations to the Western world played an integral role in the development of the modern world. Moderated by Lanisa Kitchiner, Chief of the African and Middle Eastern Division of the Library of Congress.



learn Mandarin, while some Chinese partners find it difficult to adapt to African cultural practices and traditions. Despite these challenges, the report suggests that the growing number of mixed marriages between Chinese and African individuals could have positive implications for both communities. It could lead to increased cultural exchange and understanding, as well as economic and social benefits. Overall, the report sheds light on a relatively understudied topic and provides valuable insights into the experiences and challenges of mixed marriages between Chinese and African individuals.

Examining what emerged from the report *Trailblazers 2009-2014* produced by the Journalism Department of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in South Africa I found it incredibly fascinating, especially concerning the topic of mixed marriages between Chinese and Africans due to their significant increase, also because this study was the pragmatic lecture of what I experienced during my journey in China (Guangzhou, Hangzhou and Shanghai) in 2019. Typically, the couples consist of a Chinese woman and an African man, as the immigrant from the African continent is often a male worker seeking fortune in China. Some individuals have deliberately admitted to being married to one or more wives in their home country, since their religion allows them to embrace polygamy, particularly in the case of Muslims. Many African men leave their Chinese wives to raise their children alone and face ridicule for marrying a 黑鬼 Hēiguǐ – a derogatory term for a black person, intended as a “black ghost”, while the colloquial translation would be 黑人 Hēirén, meaning “person of colour”. Weddings like this are commonplace in Guangzhou. Although there are no official statistics regarding Afro-Chinese marriages, mixed-race couples can be seen operating wholesale businesses in trading warehouses throughout the city, with their coffee-coloured and hair-braided children running through the corridors. While the Guangzhou Public Security Bureau (PSB)

denies African husbands any more rights than a tourist, their children will possess residency permits and full Chinese citizenship.

The majority of Afro-Chinese relationships stem from trade and take place in the district of Guangzhou known as "Chocolate City" or "Little Africa," which is predominantly inhabited by male African migrants, with the Nigerian, Malian and Guinean communities being the most numerous.<sup>29</sup>

In general, the African bachelors are not desperate individuals seeking asylum, conversely, they are eligible businessmen who own a car, have a steady source of income, and are fluent in Mandarin Chinese. They also often have received higher education. This is partly due to the fact that doing business in China requires a certain level of financial stability, and the cost of a plane ticket alone can be upwards of US\$ 2,000. Essentially, this acts as a filtering process.<sup>30</sup> Chinese marriages are a calculated move to improve business prospects engendering the phenomenon labelled by Sam Piranty "*Flows of economic nomads*".<sup>31</sup> It is challenging for foreigners to open a shop as landlords unless they have a Chinese passport or partner. A Chinese wife can provide support to suppliers, for instance. On the other hand, many Chinese women from poor rural areas are looking to marry Africans as a means of improving their social status due to their wealth. Indeed, by marrying an African man, a Chinese woman can become the head of his wholesale shop and a significant contributor to his export business. In situations where visas have expired and are overstayed, a Chinese wife is crucial for survival. However, some traditional families do not approve of their daughters marrying black men. Policies regarding African migrants vary by province, and the Guangdong

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<sup>29</sup> Wits Journalism Department, 'Trailblazers 2009-2014: The Best of the Wits China-Africa Reporting Project'.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem. *Economic nomads are cited also in* 非洲的中国新移民：现状及问题 (New Chinese immigrants in Africa: Current situation and problems), 李洋 Li Yang, 2013 and it described as "*a city that pulses with an energy so infectious that it'll awaken the wanderlust in your soul.*"

authorities whose capital is Guangzhou) are known for their discriminatory and inconsistent treatment of them compared to other Chinese cities.<sup>32</sup>

The strategies of China's global economic expansionism have been anchored on diplomatic, political, and diverse socio-economic engagements with many countries in the African continent, especially those endowed with energy resources essential for continued industrial growth in China. This is in contrast to the 1960s and 1970s when China's preoccupation in Africa was largely political and ideological and structured by its ideological rivalry with the Soviet Union and the US.

In particular, China's geo-economic strategy toward Africa is underlined by an assurance of cooperation based on rhetoric of non-exploitation, and mutual benefit to both actors. The 2006 China-Africa Policy Paper underscores the goals of cooperation in various political, economic, educational, cultural, and technological activities.



Figure 10: Chinese Provinces map

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

The Policy Paper underscores that interactions between China and Africa will be structured and shaped by “sincerity, equality and mutual benefit, solidarity, and common development – these are the principles guiding China-Africa exchanges and cooperation and the driving force to lasting China-Africa relations. *The entire Policy Paper resonates with the themes of equality and mutual benefit, political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win, and sustainable development for both Africa and China.*<sup>33</sup> The constant refrain of equality and mutual benefit is meant to convey the understanding to the rest of the world that, unlike the West which went on a mission of plunder, exploitation, and colonization of Africa, China’s intentions toward Africa are based on the need for common development, the need to learn from each other. Every FOCAC summit is an opportunity for China to increase the scope of its involvement in Africa. Since the first FOCAC summit in 2000, subsequent summits (2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2021) have emphasized the determination between China and Africa to further consolidate cooperation in several areas of development. For instance, during the Third Ministerial Conference of the FOCAC held in Beijing and attended by 48 African countries, President Hu Jintao specifically announced China’s determination to deepen its involvement in Africa by increasing the amount of loans disbursed to Africa by five billion dollars and so by increasing the China-Africa Development Fund (CADFUND).<sup>34</sup> The areas of China-Africa cooperation are many and include among others: international affairs, trade, investment, financial cooperation, agricultural cooperation, infrastructure, tourism, debt reduction, and

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<sup>33</sup> The State Council Information Office of and the People’s Republic of China, ‘White Paper on China’s African Policy, January 2006’, *China Report* 43, no. 3, 375–91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000944550704300309>. One of the main themes was the new type of China-Africa strategic partnership featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges, which was defined at the historic summit, opened broad prospects for deepening China-Africa cooperation, and set an example of South-South cooperation. More information on [http://gh.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/sgxw/200601/t20060114\\_6137256.htm](http://gh.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/sgxw/200601/t20060114_6137256.htm)

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

relief, economic assistance, education, health and science, cultural exchanges, and media cooperation, peace and security, and environmental issues.<sup>35</sup> China has often preferred to ignore the debt regime requirements: forgiveness of debt governed largely by the regulations of the “Paris Club”, which is a committee comprised of the major creditor nations to resolve the debt repayment problems of debtor nations. China, however, has on some occasions forgiven the debt of several African countries without adhering to Paris Club regulations of debt rescheduling. China has granted debt reductions to countries such as Zimbabwe, which are not considered eligible by the Bretton Woods institutions.<sup>36</sup> Both domestic and external economic imperatives impelled China to embark on a partnership with African nations cemented by geo-economic, geopolitical, and socio-cultural strategies and tactics. This triadic foundation of Sino-African relations translates into multidimensional transactions between China and most African states.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>36</sup> The Paris Club, also known as the Club de Paris, is an assembly of officials representing significant creditor nations. Its primary mandate is to collaboratively devise sustainable and coordinated resolutions for the payment challenges faced by debtor nations. In tandem with the debtor countries' efforts to implement reforms aimed at stabilizing and revitalizing their macroeconomic and financial stability, Paris Club creditors administer appropriate debt relief measures. Debt treatments provided by Paris Club creditors to debtor nations typically take the form of rescheduling. This entails either postponing or, in cases of concessional rescheduling, reducing the obligations related to servicing the debt over a defined period (flow treatment), or as of a specified date (stock treatment).

The establishment of the Paris Club was a gradual process that commenced in 1956, marked by the initial negotiations between Argentina and its public creditors in Paris. The Paris Club addresses public claims, encompassing those owed by the governments of debtor nations and those guaranteed by the public sector to Paris Club members. A parallel procedure is followed for public debt held by private creditors in the London Club, which was established in 1970, mirroring the Paris Club's model, serving as an informal consortium of commercial banks convened to renegotiate their debt holdings with sovereign debtors.

Creditor nations convene ten times annually in Paris for Tour d'Horizon and negotiation sessions. To facilitate the operations of the Paris Club, a small secretariat is provided by the French Treasury, with a senior official from the French Treasury appointed as chairman.

Since its inception in 1956, the Paris Club has entered into 433 agreements with 90 countries, encompassing a total value exceeding US\$583 billion. More information on [clubdeparis.org](http://clubdeparis.org).



## Chapter III

### *Worldviews of China and Western reactions: a real threat of neocolonial diplomatic practices?*

#### *3.1 The perception of the concept of neocolonialism*

It is argued that the intellectual discourse that has mushroomed has been largely due to the clashing worldviews between the West, especially the US, and China. Some Western countries, especially the United States, have raised concerns about China's increasing influence in global affairs, particularly in terms of economic dominance, an expanding military presence, and the Belt and Road Initiative. However, China argues that its foreign policy is based on mutual respect, non-intervention, and win-win cooperation. Notably, any diplomatic practice that undermines the sovereignty, human rights, or economic prosperity of any nation is not acceptable by Western philosophy. In this sense, neocolonialism, as an extension of colonialism, has no place in the current world order. In other words, it is not recognized anywhere. Therefore, the international community must navigate the differences in worldviews between China and the West while fostering constructive dialogue and promoting respect for the sovereignty and autonomy of each nation. It is interpreted as a Sino-Western rivalry in Africa, as competition between capitalist dictatorship represented by China and capitalist democracy represented by the West.<sup>1</sup>

There is already a plethora of public, private, and intellectual discourse on the growing scope and deepening ties in China-Africa relations. Central to this discussion is the evident clash of worldviews between China and Western nations, particularly concerning fundamental Western values like good governance, universal human rights, anti-corruption efforts, and differing diplomatic approaches towards African

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<sup>1</sup> Earl Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership* (New York, United States of America: Peter Lang Verlag, 2017), 66–89, <https://doi.org/10.3726/b11836>.

states, among other considerations. Critiques characterized by Sinophobia are rooted in China's policy of non-interference, perceived as a lack of concern for systemic corruption within Africa, and are viewed as potentially disruptive to the prevailing structure of global trade and governance.<sup>2</sup> The paradox lies in the discernible, tangible impacts of Chinese investments, exemplified by the establishment of new infrastructure and strengthened educational partnerships, which give rise to positive narratives surrounding the implications of China's engagement in Africa for the continent's development.

Various actors, including national and international media outlets, academics, think tanks, International Financial Institutions, bloggers, NGOs, and individuals alike, have levied negative criticisms against China's involvement encompassing investment, trade, aid, and extractive activities, among other facets, in Africa.

### *3.2 China – USA proxy disagreement*

*Will the world witness Sino-American convergence to the benefit of Africa, or will it witness instead greater Sino-Western rivalry as China gets more entrenched in the continent and perhaps becomes the major great power actor in the region in the realms of economic, politics, technology, and cultural heritage?*

The West's reaction to China's strategy in Africa is four-fold (Conteh, 2017): (a) China is undermining democracy and respect for universal human rights in Africa; (b) China's policies and actions in the areas of aid and investment are a violation of the debt regime; (c) China is disregarding environmental standards in its economic or industrial behaviour; (d) China may be undermining Africa's sustainability in terms of overall long-term development.

Apart from these concerns, there is the visible US-China rivalry in Africa strengthened by their conflicting worldviews. China is determined to

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.



counteract what it sees as a US domineering attitude reflected in impositions on other nations and interference in their internal affairs. China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has accumulated even more political and military power to resist any external sermonizing from any power. With the increase in China's political-economic power has emerged a corresponding increase in its nationalism which seems to be in conflict with American globalism and preoccupation to spread democratic capitalism to all nations, including China.<sup>3</sup>

The Sino-American competition in Africa is overall one of low-intensity and largely based on non-military tactics adopted and largely initiated by China and counteracted by the US. China aims to undermine US unipolarity or hegemony in Africa, the US, in turn, is counterbalancing China in Africa by giving more attention to the continent since the time of the Clinton Administration.<sup>4</sup>

China's ascendancy as a global economic power in Africa stems from its remarkable growth over the past three decades. If this robust economic expansion persists in tandem with its economic, political, cultural, and technological activities and presence in Africa, it is poised to exert a substantial influence on the established territorial order, particularly shifting from European hegemony to Chinese dominance. Within Africa, China's economic prowess is swiftly translating into geo-economic and geopolitical supremacy compared to other external actors. The pervasiveness of China's involvement in the energy sector has sparked competitive insecurities, particularly with the West, notably the United States. Major Chinese oil enterprises are state-owned, and their approach in Africa extends beyond mere oil procurement contracts, encompassing ownership of exploration, production, and transportation assets. This explains their willingness to undertake the construction of vital

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<sup>3</sup> Dambisa Moyo, *Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What It Means for Us*, The New York Times Bestseller (Penguin Books, 2013), 11–45.

<sup>4</sup> Adem Seifudein, 'The Paradox of China's Policy in Africa', *African and Asian Studies* 9 (Institute of Global Cultural Studies, Binghamton University, New York, 2010).

infrastructure such as roads, pipelines, railways, and ports, among other projects. In 2005 and 2006, the "national security issue" became of such paramount importance to the US that President George W. Bush engaged in discussions with then-President Hu Jintao during the latter's visit to the White House in April 2006. This concern was also integrated into the 2006 National Security Strategy of the US.<sup>5</sup>

However, China's reactions and responses to US perceptions and concerns align squarely with China's overarching worldview and articulated global paradigm and philosophy, which asserts that China adheres to a non-interventionist stance and is primarily motivated by business interests in its interactions with other nations, including African states.<sup>6</sup> China's post-Cold War policy is firmly grounded in a dual approach, characterized by economic globalization or expansion through trade, aid, and investment, coupled with a commitment to non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. Given China's imperatives for domestic development and industrialization, its geo-economic and geopolitical pursuits may not necessarily align with American or Western neoliberal principles. This deviation from Western political and economic norms, along with its extraordinary growth that threatens to surpass US global economic dominance, positions China as a burgeoning challenge for the West in Africa.<sup>7</sup>

China is perceived as having a significant impact on African states still grappling with the process of nation-building, as it presents an alternative to the prevailing liberal internationalist ideology, which emphasizes the inherent connection between democracy and capitalism. The Chinese model contends that a nation can thrive without necessarily adopting democratization. China's rise threatens to erode the fragile

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<sup>5</sup> The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States of America', March 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> Semanur Soyyiğit and Murat Nişancı, 'Examination of Chinese "Chopsticks" Mercantilist Policies in Africa', *Politická Ekonomie*, 2021.

democracies of Africa and may even deter further Western neoliberal influence and consolidation in the region. The US consistently emphasizes in official speeches that China should pursue a democratic trajectory and embrace openness in both economic transactions and politics at large.

At the heart of US rhetoric lies the apprehension that China's ascendancy could eventually eclipse US power and pre-eminence, especially if it is anchored in a different developmental model from that of neoliberal internationalism. The US is particularly concerned about China possessing advanced military capabilities that either rival or surpass those of the US. The underlying "tensions and conflict" between the US and China thus stem from American idealism, characterized by the promotion of political liberalization in tandem with a free market economy, and China's authoritarian capitalism, which is primarily responsive to the imperatives of economic globalization driven by aid, trade, and investment, underpinned by a prevailing disregard for democratic values and universal human rights.

For example, China's economic power has enabled it to project that power in partnerships with Africa (FOCAC), Asia (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), and the BRICS, and in terms of financial power (AIIB), and in continuation with the 1954 Bandung Spirit where China announced the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, and launched in May 2017.

By engaging in such power projection, China puts the US on the defensive and even gives the perception of challenging US hegemony or dominance in many parts of the world, especially Africa. While therefore China is engaged in a hegemonic challenge, the US responds in Africa through Power Africa, US-Africa Economic Summits, and AFRICOM. The end of the Cold War brought to an end the military-strategic defensive balancing based largely on ideological rivalry underlined by military deterrence, but

a decade later the competition is largely economic, and socio-cultural coming largely from China.<sup>8</sup>

In the contemporary landscape of global economic competition, economic interests have evolved to possess heightened geopolitical significance, with balancing efforts now explicitly manifesting in diplomatic spheres. This balancing act revolves around the contestation between contrasting models of development and transactional methodologies. Within this context, the United States employs a transactional approach characterized by a reliance on politico-economic conditions set forth by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, as well as stipulations pertaining to good governance as prerequisites for the disbursement of development aid. This approach stands in stark contrast to China's articulated principle of a stringent demarcation between business and politics, emphasizing non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

China's challenge to Western, particularly American, hegemony is executed through a combination of diplomatic and power-economic strategies, involving the establishment of alternative centres of influence that either subvert or confront the traditional political-economic power hubs primarily dominated by the United States. In pursuit of this objective, China reinforces its influence through initiatives such as the BRICS bank, which consolidates the resources of robust emerging economies, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)<sup>9</sup>, which revives the principles of the Bandung Spirit. Additionally, China augments its sway in Africa through mechanisms like the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

In essence, China's exertion of economic and diplomatic power projection is non-military, yet it instigates a sense of insecurity in the United States due to its assertive competition with the well-established American

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<sup>8</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 203–230.

<sup>9</sup> More information on the official website <https://www.aiib.org/en/index.html>.

diplomatic and economic influence in Africa. Moreover, China employs diplomatic, institutional, and financial strategies aimed at diminishing the preeminent power of the United States or balancing against its greater sphere of influence, with the ultimate aim of fostering a more multipolar world order wherein the United States would be less inclined to involve itself in the internal affairs of other nations. China, in other words, in its diplomatic style and aggressive economic power projection, is challenging American goals and values and promoting its own political and economic interests, strengthening its African regional security goals, and enhancing its national development objectives. By pursuing its national interest, China is not deliberately challenging the US regional objectives but is merely conducting its traditional foreign policy by using its newly acquired economic and diplomatic power.<sup>10</sup> An alternative interpretation of the rivalry between the United States and China in Africa posits a departure from traditional great power competition, characterized by military and ideological contention, towards a rivalry predicated on socio-economic and cultural factors. This rivalry is manifested through instruments such as assertive diplomacy (embodied by FOCAC for China and AFRICOM for the U.S.), expansive investment endeavours, the establishment of Confucius institutes, and the consolidation of bilateral and multilateral relations through political and financial institutions, as well as high-level summits.<sup>11</sup>

What renders China's engagement with Africa potentially threatening, and prompts feelings of insecurity for the United States, is the fundamental disparity between China's worldview, characterized by non-interventionism, non-alignment with universal human rights, and a variant of communist capitalism, and the American worldview, grounded in the principles of universal human rights, good governance, and liberal

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<sup>10</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 203–230.

<sup>11</sup> A. Simplicite Asongu, C. Jacinta Nwachukwu, and A.A. Gilbert Aminkeng, 'China's Strategies in Economic Diplomacy: A Survey of Updated Lessons for Africa, the West and China', Working Paper (African Governance and Development Institute, 2014).

democratic values. This ideological contrast is further underscored by divergent perspectives on global economic governance, as highlighted by the adherence to the regulatory frameworks of the IMF and World Bank by the United States. In essence, the concept of a balance of power in the era of economic globalization necessitates a nuanced understanding of how China, as an ascendant power, competes with the United States and engenders a sense of hegemonic insecurity, albeit within the framework of economic imperatives. While China may not pose a direct threat to U.S. military defensive capabilities, it strategically deploys its considerable economic influence to accrue power, exert influence, and engender attraction towards itself.

Through its economic and cultural power projection, China appears to be endeavouring to dilute the prevailing pre-eminence of U.S. power and, at the very least, establish a more multipolar global order. Indeed, in 2001, as Vice President of China, Hu Jintao asserted that "*Multipolarity forms a crucial foundation for attaining lasting global peace. Such multipolarity contributes to the establishment of a new, just, and rational socio-political order, the creation of a relatively stable international political framework, and the advancement of exchanges and cooperation.*" China's burgeoning economic might is wielded as both an instrument and strategy to erode the prevailing dominance of U.S. power and dismantle the unipolar international framework.<sup>12</sup>

China's pursuit of cooperative and strategic partnerships with regions possessing lesser power serves as a key aspect of its strategy. Additionally, it cultivates strategic alliances with other substantial powers, or entities with the potential for great power status, as exemplified by its membership in the BRICS. China's sustained efforts to engage with African states, extend its reach to Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as foster ties with Asian states, may be interpreted as a deliberate manoeuvre to promote diffusion of power and present alternatives to

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

weaker nations, offering them a viable option apart from complete dependence on the United States. Instances such as Zimbabwe and Sudan, which have faced Western sanctions, often turn to China as an alternative and means of emancipation from reliance on the U.S. or the broader Western sphere.

### *3.3 Impact of Chinese activity in transforming African economies*

China's economic expansionism inevitably intersects with governance and human rights issues in Africa, particularly when an African nation possesses crucial resources vital for China's ongoing economic advancement and emergence as a global economic powerhouse. This dynamic presents a quandary for China, given its commitment to a non-interference policy in the political affairs of host African nations, in contrast to the democracy and human rights principles advocated by the Western world.<sup>13</sup>

For instance, China's relationships with conflict-prone countries like Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Guinea draw substantial criticism regarding its stance on democracy promotion and adherence to human rights standards. An integral facet of a comprehensive global economic expansionist agenda entails the establishment of political ties with the host developing country, which may potentially involve becoming entangled in domestic disputes or conflicts. China appears to operate on the premise that it can shield itself from purely political issues within African nations. However, bilateral economic connections could engender vulnerabilities and entanglements that might undermine the primary economic objectives of a more advanced economic entity. When a state, as an actor, engages in conflict with non-state internal actors, it endeavours to leverage bilateral economic relations with a more developed country as a political tool against these non-state actors. In

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<sup>13</sup> Seifudein, 'The Paradox of China's Policy in Africa'.

the case of China's engagement in Africa, its emphasis on economic objectives does not always suffice to insulate it from existing domestic disputes prevalent in countries such as Zimbabwe, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guinea, and even Nigeria.<sup>14</sup>

The overarching foreign policy objective is to steer clear of political embroilments in civil conflicts or state-society conflicts, which will likely continue to constitute a prominent aspect of China's foreign policy approach towards African nations. The volatility observed in numerous African states gives rise to a diverse array of political circumstances.<sup>15</sup> Much like the broader Third World context, African nations constitute a mosaic of multifaceted conflict scenarios, some of which may be deeply entrenched and could impede the pursuit of economic objectives.

As China deepens its involvement in African nations, an inevitable consequence is the heightened convergence of China's economic aims and the challenges presented by the political realities within these African countries. Bilateral relations between China and African states are often underscored by three interconnected considerations. Firstly, there exists an inherent intertwinement of economic and political issues within the host country. Secondly, attention is directed towards China's adaptive responses to such a quandary as a major power. Thirdly, consideration is given to the impact of domestic conflicts or internal warfare on China's image and objectives in Africa.

China's globalized orientation stems from the imperatives of economic expansionism driven by its imperative need for resources to sustain its rapid industrialization. Its economic ventures, cultural engagements, and involvement in peacekeeping endeavours in Africa are contributing to the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> According to IMF, volatility refers to the degree of variation or fluctuation in a financial instrument's price or value over a specific period of time. In broader terms, it can also refer to the degree of instability, unpredictability, or rapid change in any given situation or context. In finance, high volatility indicates that an asset's price can change significantly in a short span of time, making it riskier for investors, while low volatility suggests a more stable and predictable price movement.



broadening networks of collaboration with the continent.<sup>16</sup> This global agenda, particularly in its manifestation in Africa, is characterized by a comprehensive strategy of cooperation founded on high-level diplomatic overtures, an expansive economic agenda encompassing aid, trade, investment, cultural exchanges, and even participation in peacekeeping efforts. Furthermore, China consistently emphasizes its goodwill towards the African continent and its people. Thus, in its approach to "comprehensive cooperation" with Africa, high-level diplomacy, favourable aid terms, debt relief, and infrastructure development play pivotal roles.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the scope of projects encompasses a wide range of areas including oil exploration, healthcare initiatives, agricultural education, cultural exchanges, and peacebuilding endeavours, among a multitude of other activities.

China's economic expansion into Africa can be attributed, in part, to a phenomenon known as "aid and investment fatigue" on the part of the Western nations towards the African continent. China found it more conducive to establishing economic ties with African states compared to Middle Eastern counterparts, particularly in the context of oil-related ventures. The dominance of Western corporations in traditionally oil-rich Middle Eastern nations prompted Chinese firms to seek out countries in Africa abundant in critical resources, including newfound oil reserves.

Chinese enterprises in Africa have diversified their investments beyond oil access, encompassing ventures in infrastructure development, agriculture, education, healthcare, and various other sectors. The substantial augmentation of China's foreign reserves has significantly bolstered its capacity to rapidly expand its presence in Africa while

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<sup>16</sup> George B. N. Ayittey, 'Chinese Investments in Africa: Chopsticks Mercantilism.', *Emerging powers*, 5 October 2017, available on <https://www.pambazuka.org/emerging-powers/chinese-investments-africa-chopsticks-mercantilism>.

<sup>17</sup> Asongu, Nwachukwu, and Aminkeng, 'China's Strategies in Economic Diplomacy: A Survey of Updated Lessons for Africa, the West and China', 1–32.

concurrently engaging in a diverse array of economic and developmental undertakings.<sup>18</sup>

Several additional factors underpin China's expanding footprint in Africa. Firstly, the availability of abundant Chinese labour that can be deployed abroad, thereby alleviating unemployment pressures domestically. Secondly, the dearth of certain raw materials in China, both in terms of quantity and quality, is crucial for sustaining its remarkable industrialization efforts. Thirdly, China's expansion into Africa is propelled by the competitive necessity engendered by the prevailing momentum of globalization, particularly within the realm of great power dynamics. Finally, the surge in Chinese investments in Africa is facilitated by the ease of access to raw materials, encompassing both fossil fuels and non-fuel resources, as well as the comparatively lower costs associated with the entire production process.<sup>19</sup>

The pronounced role of Africa in China's global economic endeavours is intertwined with the robust support China has garnered from African nations in international forums like the United Nations and other multilateral institutions. Furthermore, it can be argued that China and Africa share a deeper level of political-cultural affinity compared to their relationships with the West. Both regions exhibit similarities in their developmental levels pertaining to aspects such as the rule of law, human rights adherence, corruption levels, and communal life. These parallels serve as crucial factors in instilling exceptionally high levels of confidence among Chinese government and business officials.

Moreover, China's decision to invest in Africa is not unduly constrained by concerns over political instability. Instances such as the Sudanese civil conflict, the Darfur crisis, political instability in Zimbabwe, and the challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo have not dissuaded China from channelling significant financial resources into these nations.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Asongu, Nwachukwu, and Aminkeng, 'China's Strategies in Economic Diplomacy: A Survey of Updated Lessons for Africa, the West and China'.

Civil conflicts, rebel insurgencies, the abduction of foreign workers, physical damage to investment infrastructure, and a general atmosphere of uncertainty are the resultant outcomes of political instability.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, there is a growing body of Western critiques concerning the environmental impact of China's investment practices. For instance, apprehensions revolve around China's activities related to oil extraction, logging, and other resource-intensive endeavours in environmentally sensitive regions such as Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, and Gabon, among others. Detractors of China's involvement in Africa argue that it does not adhere to established international norms pertaining to environmental considerations, as well as principles related to democracy, human rights, debt management, foreign aid protocols, and the like. They highlight China's pursuit of African resources, markets, and investment opportunities as integral to its endeavour to support its rapid industrialization.

This pursuit of economic globalization has, in turn, shaped China's international conduct, characterized by a discernible political insensitivity towards the plight of citizens subjected to oppressive governance. An illustrative instance occurred in August 2010, when China promptly concluded a mining agreement with the Guinean regime, merely a month after Guinean troops violated the rights of their citizens through brute force. This political stance of China could be construed as a blend of (1) adherence to its non-interference policy in the political affairs of host nations; (2) its historical legacy of suppressing its populace, as evidenced by events like the Tiananmen Square massacres; and (3) its apprehension of alienating the Guinean military junta, which could potentially result in forfeiting opportunities for bauxite and oil extraction, as well as access to another market. Given China's record on human

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<sup>20</sup> Soyuyiğit and Nişancı, 'Examination of Chinese "Chopsticks" Mercantilist Policies in Africa'.

rights observance, it encounters difficulties in voicing protests against human rights transgressions in any African nation.

However, based on China's Africa Policy Paper China's active involvement in Africa is to try and benefit Africa, and help develop Africa in a win-win partnership. In the context of China's engagement with Africa, the extent of its political engagements will predominantly hinge on the levels of instability and volatility within individual African countries and their respective sub-regions. Typically, the initial emphasis on trade and investment creates obligations for China within the host country. These obligations often manifest in China providing support to the incumbent government, including the provision of arms in its efforts to combat challengers and rebel factions. Furthermore, China's economic endeavours in Africa are inevitably subject to fluctuations in global economic and political circumstances. Such shifts may lead to a substantial reassessment of China's ongoing expansion into the African continent. As it stands, China appears adept at navigating through episodes of instability and violence in Africa.<sup>21</sup>

Since the late 1950s, China's involvement in Africa has been primarily geared towards influencing African politics at the United Nations and shaping the broader foreign policies of individual African nations. Over time, a significant majority of African states have transitioned their diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China. Conversely, China has demonstrated a proclivity for safeguarding African nations from economic sanctions and international condemnation. Additionally, China has utilized its influence to temper objectionable conduct by specific African states, exemplified by its involvement in addressing the Sudanese government's actions during the Darfur crisis.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> Conteh-Morgan, *The Sino-African Partnership*, 119–47.

### 3.3.1 Overview of “Chopsticks mercantilism”: Which factors have affected Chinese investments in Africa?

For almost a decade now, China has followed a mercantilist growth strategy, which has involved maintaining a deliberately cheap exchange rate to boost exports and growth. Crucial to this policy has been China’s choice to keep the economy relatively closed to foreign financial flows otherwise foreign capital chasing the high returns in China would have put upward pressure on the Chinese exchange rate and undercut its ability to export.

In this chapter, the expression “*chopsticks mercantilism*” is used to explain the tendency of China to follow the line of a mercantilist policy. Empirical results, in fact, show that China makes foreign direct investments in Africa for market and resource-seeking purposes which display significant elements of a mercantilist policy.

The protectionist approach to foreign trade was the main feature of the mercantilist period that started with the discovery of the New World and the settlement of European colonies and lasted until the Industrial Revolution. However, mercantilism tried to find its place under the dominance of the liberal paradigm and has re-emerged within the framework of a structure called *neo-mercantilism*, which differs from classical mercantilism. Neo-mercantilism is based on the market structure and the determination of prices in the market mechanism. Moreover, certain aspects of militarism in classical mercantilism have largely disappeared in neo-mercantilism (Okeke, 2016)<sup>23</sup>.

Mercantilism was the main economic theory between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The government minimized imports to maximize exports. It was believed that in this way the wealth of the State would increase because of the surplus in the country's trade balance. The balance of trade was measured by the quantity of gold and silver that a treasury had.

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<sup>23</sup> Okeke, D., *Integrated Productivity in Urban Africa: Introducing the Neo-Mercantile Planning Theory*, The Urban Book Series, Springer Link, p. 181-192, 2016.

This objective pushed overseas commercial traffic and, in this way, an increase in European global exploration spurred the sought for raw materials.<sup>24</sup>

However, mercantilism was revealed to be such an unsustainable system to be maintained and the maximization of exports at the expense of the elimination of imports was revealed counterproductive. Consequently, mercantilism would be substituted by the laissez-faire system, where economies were allowed freely to flourish and the government's intervention was reduced.

Chinese mercantilism has not been finished yet. It is assumed that since its entrance into WTO in 2001, China has accomplished most of the prerequisites foresaw by the WTO's statute. The fact that is more questionable is that current Chinese policies pave the way for a capitalistic system, however, heavily influenced by mercantilist behaviour.<sup>25</sup>

It is a theoretical fact that countries that are the most attractive foreign direct investment recipients before, as China has been until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or later, should have some economic and institutional pull factors<sup>26</sup>. In other words, what are those aspects that make tempting investments from foreigners? Later, paragraph 3.3.2.1, will introduce the reader to the distinction between the push and pull factors. Then, this part tries to confirm whether Chinese FDI in African countries is supported theoretically by the economic and institutional factors of these African countries or whether these investments instead serve the mercantilist policies of China independently of these factors.

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<sup>24</sup> Landreth H., Colander D., *History of Economic Thought*. 4th ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 46-51, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Boden G., *China's Accession to the WTO: Economic Benefits*, The Park Place Economist, no. 1, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Soyçiğit S., Nişancı M., *Examination of Chinese "Chopsticks" Mercantilist Policies in Africa*. Politická Ekonomie Journal, no. 69, p. 99-134, 2021.

This analysis endeavours to analyse what are the factors that generate China's foreign direct investments and whether China is following the rules of good practices by investing in Africa.

### 3.3.2 China's position change in the world economic scenario: "chopsticks mercantilism"

#### 3.3.2.1 Loss of competitiveness

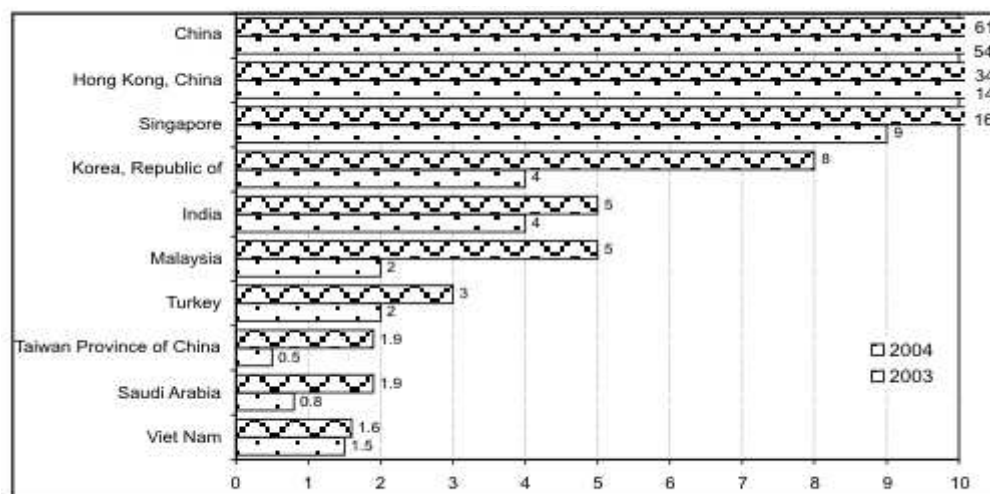


Figure 11: FDI inflows to Asia and Oceania, top 10 economies, 2003-2004. (Billions of US dollars).

Source: UNCTAD, World Investment Report 2005.

Since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a proportionate increase in the wage levels of Western countries. With globalization, however, the capital in these countries then began to shift to regions where the labour force was relatively cheaper. Through transnational corporations, capital has shifted to less developed or developing countries, where wages are measurably lower. In this sense, foreign direct investments in China as a recipient gained momentum in the 2000s. Then, the scenario would be destined to reverse. Recently, China has lost its appeal of being the world's labour-intensive production centre. On the other hand, China has also increased its foreign direct investments,

particularly in Africa. These investments are examples of what is called South-South FDI. In particular, South-South FDI refers to investments by a developing country in another developing country. Moreover, China's investment policies in Africa have also been called "chopsticks mercantilism", although China states that these investments are based on a win-win principle and also contribute to the development of the African states<sup>27</sup>. Foreign direct investments began to increase significantly after 1978. Later, the interest in foreign investment in China continued to increase and in 2003 China became the world's largest foreign investment recipient<sup>28</sup> (Figure 11). According to a study led by Wen H. et al. in 2003, this escalation was like an economic miracle that occurred at the right time. As a matter of fact, since the previous year, China was still living the consequences, even if short-term, of the SARS epidemic. To cite some of their evidence, it is worthy to mention which was the industry hit hardest by SARS and why: tourism. This occurred principally for three reasons: firstly, the number of foreign tourists sharply decreased and travel warnings were not suggesting China as a holiday destination at all. Secondly, the most infected areas were the Guangdong province and Beijing, which together accounted for 46% of the total number of foreign tourists. Thirdly, SARS spread quickly through widespread dissemination (25 out of 31 Chinese provinces).<sup>29</sup> Consequently, together, China and Hong Kong accounted for two-thirds of all FDI in this part of the world (Figure 11). Undoubtedly, the willingness of foreign investment to capitalize in China has been influenced by the desire to benefit from cheap labour, produce at low costs, and export to world markets.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Chicago, *China's Foreign Direct Investment hits US \$53bln in 2003*, China News, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Wen H. et al., *The Short-Term Impact of SARS on the Chinese Economy*, Asian Economic Papers, 3, no. 1, p. 57-61, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Soygiçit and Nişancı, 'Examination of Chinese "Chopsticks" Mercantilist Policies in Africa'.



In line with these developments, the fact that China became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2001 made the country an important global player. The country has become an important producer and exporter in the global economy, and its need for energy has increased considerably. Thus, meeting the increasing energy need has become a high-priority issue for the Chinese administration. These priorities have led the country to implement mercantilist policies which is generally called “energy mercantilism”.<sup>31</sup>

### *3.3.1.2 Impact of WTO Membership*

As a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) since December 2001, China has had to follow the international rules governing competition and trade. From the Chinese policymakers’ viewpoints, the implications were both negative and positive.<sup>32</sup> On one hand, the energy industry is exposed to world market fluctuations. Specifically, China would have been responsible for some important changes such as the gradual liberalization of retail business and the wholesale market and the eventual removal of both quotas and non-tariff barriers for imports and exports, firstly concerning oil products.

On the other hand, the eventual removal of export quotas would encourage Chinese energy enterprises to explore opportunities to acquire assets overseas and it has represented the key to the current and future growth of China’s major oil companies.<sup>33</sup> However, the response to these implications by China would have made necessary a set of reforms by the Chinese government that inevitably would have covered a quite long period of time. Accordingly, state-owned energy enterprises had to develop several strategies to prepare for the WTO challenge. It required trimming inefficient operations, demolishing monopolies, and

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<sup>31</sup> Lam P.L., *Energy in China: Development and Prospects*, China Perspectives, no. 3, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem.

strengthening core businesses. In addition, the matter of unemployment is particularly sensitive where the social security system remains underdeveloped, in this sense, China could not directly follow the path of privatization and industry restructuring experienced in Western countries risking unemployment problems and consequential social unrest.<sup>34</sup>

And more, according to Boden (2012), it helped both China and the world economy. The reason is that the accession requirements placed upon China brought the nation into a period of greater trade liberalization, weakened state-run enterprises, and gave more power to private interests. The WTO accession agreements also caused China to make international trade law more transparent and even. Other nations have benefited from more access to Chinese markets and vice versa.<sup>35</sup>

### *3.3.3 Hypothesis and Data*

#### *3.3.3.1 What are the pull and push factors of foreign direct investments (FDI)?*

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a category of cross-border investment in which an investor resident in one economy establishes a lasting interest in and significant influence over an enterprise resident in another economy.<sup>36</sup> In other words, foreign direct investment is the means by which a company takes controlling ownership of a business entity in another country. It implies that donor companies are not just bringing capital with them, but also knowledge, skills, and technology.

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<sup>34</sup> Einaudi Blog, Luci e ombre. La Cina a 20 anni dall'adesione all'Organizzazione Mondiale del Commercio, 5th August 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Boden, 'China's Accession to the WTO'.

<sup>36</sup> OECD Library, *Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)*.

| Push factors                  | Pull factors                                      |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Globalization                 | Low labour costs                                  |
| TNC                           | Investment incentives                             |
| Liberalization                | Market access to both domestic and export markets |
| Efficiency-seeking intentions | Capital account liberalization                    |
| Resource-seeking              | Financial deregulation                            |
|                               | Ethnic and cultural ties                          |
|                               | Geographical proximity                            |
|                               | Institutional quality                             |

*Table 2: Push and pull factors for South-South FDI?*

Pull factors concern aspects that attract people to go and live in a particular place or investors to move their capital to. So, the recipient country offers better opportunities. Conversely, push factors include aspects or events that make people move from there or, relating to the context, that make a capital move anywhere else according to a resource-seeking trade business or efficiency-seeking intentions.

It is important to highlight that South-South FDI means that the moving of capital occurs among less developed or developing countries. Conversely, North-South FDI is the type of cooperation between developed and developing countries. This analysis gathers, as push factors, the advent of the liberalization era, because rising wealth in some emerging economies increased the supply of capital in these economies, and soon companies in these emerging economies directed their investments to other developing economies in a search for higher returns and lower risks.<sup>37</sup> Then, the role of Transnational companies (TNC) limited market growth opportunities in the domestic economy and

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<sup>37</sup> Soyuyiğit and Nişancı, 'Examination of Chinese "Chopsticks" Mercantilist Policies in Africa', 2021.

invested in other developing economies for market-seeking projects or, as is the case, resource-seeking aims. Efficiency-seeking intentions need to enhance export competitiveness and defend export markets after increased competition. Essential pull factors concern structural indicators of institutional quality such as political stability, government efficiency, voice and accountability, rule of law, regulatory quality, and control of corruption. Figure 12 shows the increase of Chinese FDI to Africa between 2003 and 2017 by considering only pull factors. Then, geographical proximity arises as the criterion to avoid the high costs of obtaining reliable information about foreign markets. For this reason, these types of TNCs prefer to invest in neighbouring countries where they have a level of familiarity with their ethnic, cultural, or economic way of life.<sup>38</sup>

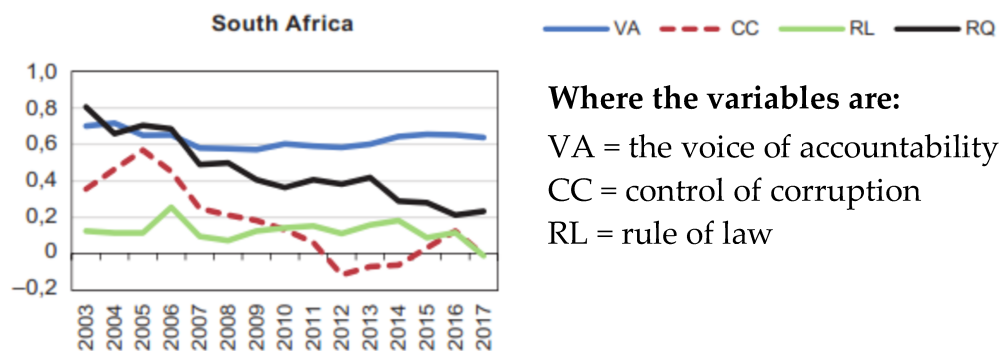


Figure 12: The increase of Chinese FDI trend to Africa between 2003 and 2017 according to main pull factors.  
 Source: Soyuyiğit, Nişancı (2021)

### 3.3.2.2 Turning point for FDI trend in 2008

Figure 13 represents the foreign direct investments of both China and the US in Africa comparatively during the period from 2003 to 2017. The focus is on Chinese foreign direct investment. It is evident that the Chinese FDI level rocketed in 2008, exactly when American FDI decreased. However, the Chinese FDI flow, which had been weak before 2006, has grown strongly since that year.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

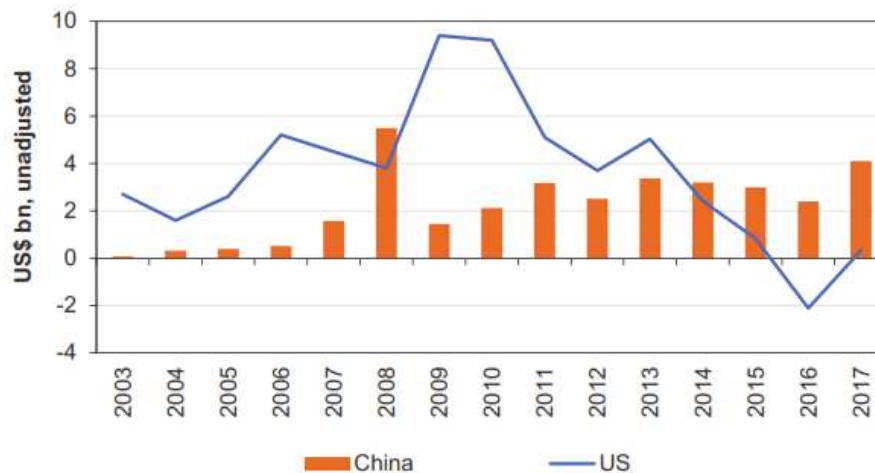


Figure 13: Chinese and US FDI flows to Africa 2003-2017.

Source: China-Africa Research Initiative 2019.

The OECD Working Paper on International Investment 2013 helps to rationalize the quick increase in 2008. Several changes in the foreign investment administration regime were announced by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) for example the raising of the ceiling on provincial examination and approval authority over foreign investment projects from a total investment of 100 USD million to 300 USD million. Then, MOFCOM allowed provinces to examine and approve the establishment of investment holding companies within certain limits for the first time. In this and subsequent evolvments, MOFCOM devolved not just to provinces (including autonomous regions like Guangxi and the four cities under direct central government control, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing) but also to second-tier cities (Harbin, Changchun, Shenyang, Jinan, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu, and Xi'an) and Economic and Technological Development Zones.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The National Economic and Technological Development Zones are the special areas of the People's Republic of China where foreign direct investment is encouraged.

The State Council circular also stipulates that approval contents shall be “adjusted” (according to criteria that are to be determined) and approval procedures have to be simplified to the maximum and strengthen the transparency of approval.

In other words, it was continuing the decentralization of foreign investment administration. From 26<sup>th</sup> August 2008, a notification of non-material changes (such as change of enterprise name, names of investors, business address, number of directors, and statutory business period) has been devolved to commercial departments at the provincial level. At the same time as attempting to streamline foreign investment administration, the government is trying to ensure that procedures are properly followed.<sup>40</sup>

In this chapter, the aim was to investigate the economic and institutional determinants of the increase in China’s presence through FDI in Africa in recent years. This trade openness reveals the result of a mixture of factors, that constrained Chinese companies to research new demands to satisfy, be able to reduce the commercial surplus gathered according to the mercantilist paradigm during the previous years. Moreover, this signal of trade liberalization was a necessary response for China immediately after it acceded to the WTO. The entry was surely a win-win opportunity because, on one side, China needed to recover (especially its tourism industry) from some economic critics, on the other side the rest of the world would have gained new import-export sections and, predominantly, other countries would have also partially solved the lack of competitiveness due to low-cost labour work. However, section 3.1, concerning pull factors, tries to explain why China has decided to allocate FDI in the African territory, and what is thought-provoking is that between China and Africa, there is strong cooperation depending also on

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<sup>40</sup> Davies K., OECD Working Papers on International Investment: *China Investment Policy Update*, OECD Publishing, January 2013.

cultural ties. Consequently, China's presence in Africa is considered to be different from the policies previously implemented by Western countries: China is engaged in activities to improve the region's infrastructure.<sup>41</sup> Just to mention some interventions: road and rail infrastructure improvement in Nigeria, construction of an airport and refinery project in Angola, a bridge project between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and general investments in Sudan. It is already affirmed previously, that China aims for Africa specially to access natural resources, but also conformingly the accession in WTO requirements, China needs to find a market for goods produced in China and to improve manufacturing activities by taking advantage of the low labour costs on the continent. Practically, changing the locus of mercantilism due to WTO dispositions. However, do China-Africa connections encounter obstacles? Definitely. On one hand, the above-mentioned push factors. On the other hand, China is reported to not provide the expected improvement by creating qualified jobs, by improving manufacturing technology, and even, China is even accused of generating corruption and environmental pollution by undermining domestic industries.<sup>42</sup>

Africa was chosen as the target because it is one of the most contentious countries in the world and the winner will be probably who will be able to lay the foundations for real win-win cooperation.

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<sup>41</sup> Ayittey B. N. George, *Chinese Investments in Africa: Chopsticks Mercantilism*, Emerging powers, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Kuttner R., *Mercantilism and Racism: The Case of China*, The American Prospect, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022.





## Chapter IV

### *The spectre of “Digital Colonialism”: a new wave of the 21st century Scramble for Africa*

Recently, Western technology companies increasingly rely on user data globally, and extensive data protection laws and regulations emerged to ensure the ethical use of that data. These same protections, however, do not exist uniformly in the resource-rich, infrastructure-poor African countries, where Western tech has sought to establish its presence. These conditions provide an ideal landscape for *digital colonialism*.

Digital colonialism refers to a modern-day *Scramble for Africa* where large-scale tech companies extract, analyse and own user data for profit and market influence with nominal benefit to the data source. Under the guise of altruism, large-scale tech companies can use their power and resources to access untapped data on the continent. Scant data protection laws and infrastructure ownership by Western rich companies open the door for the exploitation of data as a resource for profit and a myriad of uses including predictive analytics. One may believe that strengthening data protection laws will be a barrier to digital colonialism. However, regardless of their relative strength or weakness, data protection laws have limits. An analysis of Kenya’s 2018 data protection bill, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and documented actions of large-scale tech companies exemplifies how those limits create several loopholes for continued digital colonialism including historical violation of data privacy laws, limitations of sanctions, unchecked mass concentration of data, lack of competition enforcement, uninformed consent, and limits to defined nations-state privacy laws.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mario Di Giulio and Giulia Romana Mele, ‘La Protezione Dati in Africa: Il Kenya Apre La Strada Guardando al Gdpr’, Agenda Digitale, 16 March 2020, <https://www.agendadigitale.eu/sicurezza/la-protezione-dati-in-africa-il-kenya-apre-la-strada-guardando-al-gdpr/>.

China has made a sustained effort to become a “cyber superpower”, namely the propagation by Beijing of the notion of “internet sovereignty” has implied China’s supreme right to govern the internet within its borders and keep it under rigid control. Chinese companies work closely with Chinese state authorities to export technology to Africa to extend China’s influence and promote its cyberspace governance model.<sup>2</sup>



*Figure 14: Will digital technology promote democracy and development?  
Available on DIA: Democracy in Africa think tank.*

The rapid expansion across Africa of Chinese technology companies and their products has warranted vigilance. If African governments fail to advance their own values and interests – including freedom of expression, free enterprises, and the rule of law – with equal boldness, the “Chinese model of internet sovereignty” might very well become the “Africa model of digital governance”.

Digital technology often advocates freedom, openness, interoperability, interconnectivity, and principles based on the liberal-democratic approach. However, conflicting opinions about this matter counterpose the perspectives of Chinese “techno-dystopia” and “digital authoritarianism” to Chinese “model of Internet sovereignty” and “cyber superpower”, the latter a more favourable perception toward African

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<sup>2</sup> Willem Gravett, ‘Digital Neo-Colonialism: The Chinese Model of Internet Sovereignty in Africa’, *African Human Rights Law Journal* 20 (2020): 125–46.

affluence. Gravatt, in another article in 2021, mentioned even the concept of *digital authoritarianism* referring to the role of China's launch of the “Great Firewall” more than two decades ago, which China has long pioneered. President Xi Jinping’s government has vastly expanded domestic surveillance, strengthening the Communist Party’s hold on society.

Rapid advances in surveillance technology and growing police access to user data have turned China into a “techno-dystopia” and have facilitated the prosecution of prominent human rights advocates and ordinary users. Ethnic and religious minorities are surveilled and persecuted for their spiritual and cultural expression, or for exposing human rights abuses. In Xingjiang, for example, authorities collect biometric data, including voice samples and DNA, and use facial recognition technology to identify, classify, and track Uyghur Muslims. The Chinese government has shown the “techno-optimists” to be wrong by exploiting the Internet as an indispensable tool for advancing state censorship and surveillance, substantially restricting freedom. The matter (the greater concern) is that the Chinese government has transferred its domestic policies on digital technology to its foreign policy. In other words, President Xi Jinping’s strategy expects to transform China into a “cyber superpower” by exporting technology at the heart of the country’s information-control system to nations around the globe.<sup>3</sup> The global infrastructure project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is distinctively a means for spreading its vision of a government-supervised internet across the globe including Africa. China sponsors thousands of the next generation of African leaders, bureaucrats, students, and entrepreneurs to undergo training and education in China. Chinese financial support of postgraduate and post-doctoral African students is unparalleled; each year China hosts tens of thousands of universities undergraduate and post-graduate students from Africa and annually the Chinese government offers

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<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

thousands of scholarships to African students. Just to mention an example, the *Hanban* (the Chinese Language Council) has established at least 59 Confucius Institutes in Africa to spread the Chinese language and culture all over the continent.<sup>4</sup>

Xi regime has built a national version of the Internet walled off (blocked by the wall) from the global internet and allowing complete state control over the free flow of information online. The extent and the rapidity of the Chinese technological penetration in Africa demonstrates that the nascent technology industry in Africa cannot compete with the likes of China and African nations have leverage and can set policy. The application by China of economic and political pressure through technology to control and influence the actions of African nations takes the form of three principal elements: (i) advocating the Chinese model of “internet sovereignty” in African nations; (ii) exporting authoritarian surveillance technology to African states; (iii) deploying artificial intelligence technology and data-mining techniques across Africa.<sup>5</sup>

In this sense, China has subverted the popular perception that technology will act the role of a great democratizing force leading to an increase in freedom, transparency, and participation.<sup>6</sup> Just to give an example, it is well-known that many high-ranking Western websites which we are undoubtedly accustomed to using in our daily lives, both

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<sup>4</sup> 李洋 Li Yang, ‘非洲的中国新移民：现状及问题 (New Chinese Immigrants in Africa: Current Situation and Problems’, 卷宗 3, no. 11 (2013): 2. Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters, as a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, is committed to providing Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide, it goes all out in meeting the demands of foreign Chinese learners and contributing to the development of multiculturalism and the building of a harmonious world. Its functions are: (a) to create policies and development plans for promoting the Chinese language internationally; (b) to support Chinese language programs at educational institutions of various types and levels in other countries; (c) to draft international Chinese teaching standards and develop and promote Chinese language teaching materials.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Mozur, Jonah M. Kessel, and Melissa Chan, ‘Made in China, Exported to the World: The Surveillance State’, *The New York Times*, 24 April 2019, sec. Technology, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/24/technology/ecuador-surveillance-cameras-police-government.html>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

for social and working purposes, are blocked in China. For instance: Google (blocked since 2010), YouTube (since 2009), Facebook (almost since its opening in 2009), Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. However, particularly since January 2019, other domains coped with the blockage and the blatant example is Wikipedia. On the contrary, others have been reopened in the meanwhile such as the videotelephony platform Zoom and Skype. I remind that many of the world's largest technology companies either are forbidden from or are significantly hampered in the provision of services to Chinese internet users: Facebook and Twitter are blocked completely, and alternatively, they use WeChat (for everything that they need). China has managed to block such media in their country and replaced them with their home-grown sites that are safe, constructive, and popular. That said, China has advanced its notion of "internet sovereignty" as an alternative to the dominant Western view that the internet exemplifies a singular, highly interconnected web that traverses national borders.

China is massively involved in circumstances in Africa as Chinese companies trade with and invest in African countries. Not only that, but Chinese aid is also accused of assisting in propping up totalitarian governments, building the infrastructure of poor quality, employing workers brought from China, and concentrating its 'benevolence' principally on countries with oil, minerals, and other natural resources of which China has a shortage, and at the same time burdening/saddling countries with more debt than they can ever repay.

However, we have some examples:<sup>7</sup>

1. *China Telecom* has plans to lay a 150.000-kilometre-long fibre optic network which will operate in 48 African states.

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<sup>7</sup> Gravett, 'Digital Neo-Colonialism: The Chinese Model of Internet Sovereignty in Africa'.

2. *Transsion Holdings*, a Shenzhen-based company, overtook Samsung to become the leading smartphone provider in Africa; *Huawei*, the Chinese telecommunications giant, built 70% of the 4G network and most of the 2G and 3G networks on the continent easily out-competing its European rivals. The Kenyan government appointed Huawei as the principal advisor for its ‘master plan’ in respect of information and communication technologies.
3. *The Chinese telecommunications conglomerate ZTE* provides the Ethiopian government with the infrastructure that enables it to monitor and exercise surveillance over the communications of opposition activists and journalists.
4. *H3C* won the contract to construct a Nigerian airport’s new telecommunications network.
5. *Hikvision* established an office in Johannesburg and through a local video surveillance provider in 2019 rolled out 15,000 cameras throughout the Johannesburg metropolitan area.



Figure 15: logos of the most important Chinese telecommunication companies

China is continually improving its internal censorship system and promoting this model globally. The concept of "internet sovereignty" which China advocates for is enticing to governments that desire to limit freedom of expression and prevent the potential destabilization of a free internet. Many African countries have embraced this notion and are increasingly implementing regulations and barriers to hinder the Internet's operation in the name of national sovereignty. However, the true purpose is to enable governments to monitor and control their citizens' data at their own discretion. Rather than accepting a borderless internet, these countries are choosing to restrict it. The Chinese government takes an active role in advising media and government officials in countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through seminars and visits. They encourage these countries to follow their lead in adopting internet sovereignty. Freedom House<sup>8</sup> reported in 2018 that Chinese companies and officials increased their presence in Africa before Uganda and Tanzania passed restrictive cybercrime and media laws, and China remains their biggest trading partner.<sup>9</sup> In that context, the deputy minister of communication in Tanzania expressed the need for the government to establish methods that allow individuals to express themselves freely, while also holding them responsible for their words. Essentially, this implies creating a framework that allows for internet autonomy to coexist with the acknowledgment of freedom of speech, albeit within legal boundaries. Woodhams contends that internet sovereignty is fundamentally incompatible with the principle of freedom of expression, particularly in instances where laws impose stringent

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<sup>8</sup> Freedom House is a non-profit organization group in Washington, D.C. It is best known for political advocacy surrounding issues of democracy, political freedom, and human rights. Freedom House was founded in October 1941, and Wendell Willkie and Eleanor Roosevelt served as its first honorary chairpersons. It describes itself as a "clear voice for democracy and freedom around the world". It receives funds from U.S. government, other governments and various semi-public and private foundations. Freedom House is the oldest American organization devoted to the support and defence of democracy around the world.

<sup>9</sup> Gravett, 'Digital Neo-Colonialism: The Chinese Model of Internet Sovereignty in Africa'.

restrictions on speech. This assertion is exemplified by the arrest of the Tanzanian opposition leader in October 2018, following his accusation of security forces being responsible for the deaths of several herders in a confrontational encounter. The employment of internet sovereignty as a means to suppress criticism of an authoritarian regime's unwavering dominance is not inconceivable.<sup>10</sup>

Tanzania presents a compelling illustration of censure directed towards the government's enactment of legislation regulating online content, closely resembling the Chinese model. Specifically, Tanzania prohibits the posting of "false content," evocative of the "making falsehoods" language in Chinese law. The government of Tanzania maintains that this law was enacted to combat "moral decadence," analogous to how "decadent" material is proscribed from social media in China.<sup>11</sup>

The impact of the Chinese internet sovereignty model is evident additionally in Zimbabwe, as the country adopts similar strategies to manage aspects of society, including social media and communications, by imposing penalties for disseminating false information online. Other African governments have followed suit, taking inspiration from China's digital governance methods, and ordering internet shutdowns, blocking certain websites and social media platforms, particularly during critical democratic events such as elections and protests. This trend was observed in Chad, Togo, Cameroon, and Sudan, where the internet was shut down after government paramilitary forces perpetrated violence in the capital Khartoum, obstructing protesters from using social media to report the atrocities.

Similarly, the Nigerian government introduced the Protection from Internet Falsehood, Manipulation, and Other Related Matters Bill, and

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<sup>10</sup> As quoted in S. Woodhams 'How China exports repression to Africa' *The Diplomat* 23 February 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/how-china-exports-repression-to-africa/>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.



Amnesty International denounced the limitation of the space for critics, human rights, and accountability in the country.<sup>12</sup>

Certain African governments have implemented measures aimed at curtailing freedom of expression online, specifically through the implementation of social media taxes. In 2018, the governments of Uganda, Zambia, and Benin introduced new taxes on mobile internet users that led to significant financial difficulties for many Africans seeking to access the internet. Uganda, for example, implemented a daily tax on the use of popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. Tanzania sought to restrict online expression even further by introducing a "blogger tax" in April 2018, which requires individuals who operate YouTube channels, independent websites, and blogs to register and pay a costly fee of roughly US \$900 per year. Other countries, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, and China, have also adopted policies to deflect public criticism by investing in technologically advanced infrastructure that remains affordable and reliable. As an illustration, the Chinese artificial intelligence company, *Percent Corporation*, developed an intelligent system for information visualization and data analysis to support the government of Angola in its decision-making process as part of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017.<sup>13</sup> This system is capable of accurately and dynamically capturing data on the entire life cycle of individuals, including biometric information such as fingerprints and facial images, for the ostensible purpose of population resource management. However, this system has significant potential for surveillance and repression. Despite the high cost of developing or acquiring such technologies, African countries are enticed by China's offer of easy loans and investments, leading many of them to become heavily reliant on China for technology and services, and

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Liang Jun, 'China-Designed Big Data System Aids Angola's Intelligent Governance', *People's Daily Online*, August 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0824/c90000-9493984.html>.

making them vulnerable to pressure to embrace the Chinese concept of "internet sovereignty". The fundamental concern is that, given the fragile state of democracy in these countries and their less-than-stellar human rights record, they are susceptible to more than just economic influences.<sup>14</sup>

The geopolitical reality is that with such large sections of the continent's telecommunications infrastructure under Chinese control, African states will find it difficult to disentangle themselves from China.

Unless African governments take bold action in promoting values and interests aligned with their citizens' desires, such as freedom of expression, free enterprise, and the rule of law, they may inadvertently adopt the "China model" of digital governance as their own, simply because of their inaction and complacency (=lack of concern). African nations are being compelled to engage in careful evaluation of the values, both obvious and indirect, that are integrated into the technology they procure from China. It is incumbent upon (in charge of) African governmental bodies, decision-makers, and technology innovators to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the technology and be cognizant of the societal implications that they obtain. They must be mindful of their aspirations for society and compare them with the consequences of the technology yielded by their Chinese counterparts. Chinese investment and technological innovation should not result in the resurrection of the spectre of neo-colonial exploitation.

However, despite that African countries have low leverage in setting policy, in these circumstances, there can be reliance on a well-established interventional human rights framework as well as a robust regional human rights system that is available as a bulwark against the tide of dependence on Chinese repressive systems built into technology.<sup>15</sup>

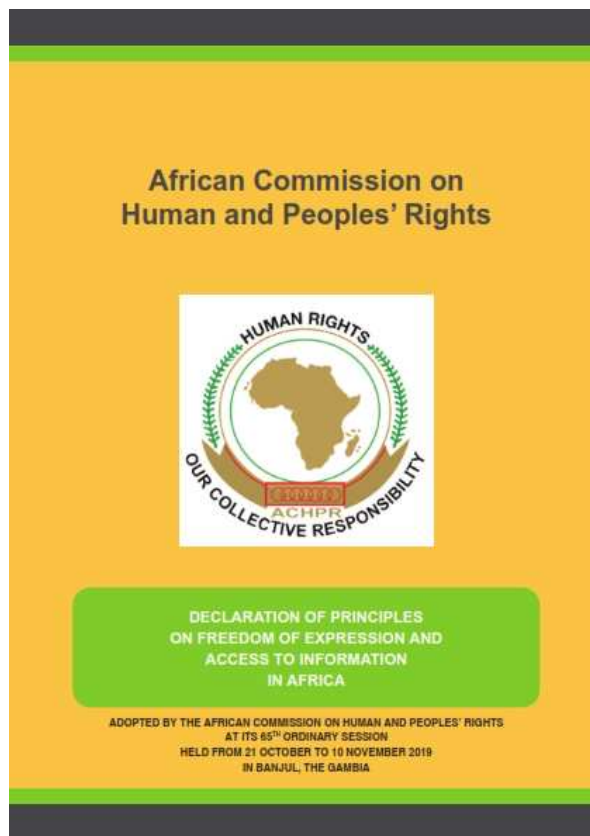
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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> Gravett, 'Digital Neo-Colonialism: The Chinese Model of Internet Sovereignty in Africa'.

In late 2019, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) published a revised Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa.

The fourth part of the Declaration entitled "Freedom of Expression and Access to Information on the Internet", including Principles 37 to 42, specifically addresses the rights to freedom of expression and access to information in the digital age which had not been addressed previously in 2002.<sup>16</sup> Below it is provided an interpretation for each of these principles, to give an idea of what African Union has already done inherently to the warranty of internet access so as democratic countries intend.



*Figure 16: Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa.*

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<sup>16</sup> African Commission on human and Peoples' Rights, 'Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa 2019', 2019, African Union, ACHPR.

*By interpretation of the principle 37: Access to the internet*

*States are called to facilitate the rights to freedom of expression and access to information online and the means necessary to exercise these rights. This freedom implies necessarily that access to the internet responds to specific requisites: universality, equitability, affordability, and meaningfulness. To this, States should cooperate with relevant stakeholders to adopt laws, policies, and other measures.*

*It is mentioned also non-discrimination and means:*

- a) developing independent and transparent regulatory mechanisms for effective oversight;*
- b) improving information and communication technology and internet infrastructure for universal coverage;*
- c) establishing mechanisms for regulating market competition to support lower pricing and encourage diversity;*
- d) promoting local access initiatives such as community networks to enable the increased connection of marginalized, unserved, or underserved communities; and facilitating digital literacy skills for inclusive and autonomous use.*

*There is a specific comma dedicated to the affordability of access to the internet for children through digital literacy skills for online education and safety, to protect them as well as safeguard their privacy and identity.*

*By interpretation of the principle 38: Non-interference*

- a) States should not interfere with the right of individuals to seek, receive, and impart information through any means of communication and digital technologies, through measures such as the removal, blocking, or filtering of content unless such interference is justifiable and compatible with international human rights law and standards.*

- b) *States should not engage in or condone any disruption of access to the internet and other digital technologies for segments of the public or an entire population.*
- c) *States should only adopt economic measures, including taxes, levies, and duties, on the internet and information and communication technology service end-users that do not undermine universal, equitable, affordable, and meaningful access to the Internet and that are justifiable and compatible with international human rights law and standards.*

*By interpretation of the principle 39: Internet intermediaries*

*States shall require that internet intermediaries enable access to all internet traffic equally without discrimination. As well intermediaries should undergo both principles 37 and 38. Moreover, States should proactively monitor content that internet intermediaries have not authored or otherwise modified.*

*Censorship should be not allowed. For this purpose, States should not require the removal of online content by internet intermediaries unless such requests are:*

- a) *clear and unambiguous;*
- b) *imposed by an independent and impartial judicial authority,*
- c) *subject to due process safeguards;*
- d) *justifiable and compatible with international human rights law and standards; and*
- e) *implemented through a transparent process that allows a right of appeal.*

*In the same way, the removal of online content is allowed when:*

- a) *it poses an imminent danger or*
- b) *it constitutes a real risk of death or serious harm to a person or child*
- c) *it is subject to review by the judicial authority.*

*States should ensure that the development, use, and application of artificial intelligence, algorithms, and other similar technologies by internet intermediaries are compatible with international human rights law and standards, and do not infringe on the rights to freedom of expression, access to information, and other human rights.*

This principle should discourage practices such as those favoured by the government of China to force international and domestic internet search engines and social media platforms to block certain content and abide by censorship domestic laws.

*By interpretation of the principle 40: Privacy and the protection of personal information*

*Everyone has the right to privacy, including the confidentiality of their communications from access by third parties through the aid of digital technologies, and the protection of their personal information through the use of pseudonyms. In this sense, States should not adopt laws or other measures prohibiting or weakening encryption, including backdoors, key escrows, and data localization requirements, unless such measures are justifiable and compatible with international human rights law and standards.*

*By interpretation of the principle 41: Privacy and communication surveillance*

*States should not engage in or condone acts of indiscriminate and untargeted collection, storage, analysis, or sharing of a person's communications.*

*Conversely, States should only engage in targeted communication surveillance that is authorized by law, that conforms with international human rights law and standards, and that is premised on specific and reasonable suspicion that a serious crime has been or is being carried out or for any other legitimate aim. An adequate safeguard for the right of privacy includes:*

- a. *the prior authorization of an independent and impartial judicial authority;*
- b. *specific limitation on the time, manner, place, and scope of the surveillance;*
- c. *notification of the decision authorizing surveillance within a reasonable time of the conclusion of such surveillance;*
- d. *proactive transparency on the nature and scope of its use; and*
- e. *effective monitoring and regular review by an independent oversight mechanism.*

*By interpretation of principle 42: Legal framework for the protection of personal information*

*States should adopt laws for the protection of the personal information of individuals in accordance with international human rights law and standards. The processing of personal information should be:*

- a) *with the consent of the individual concerned;*
- b) *conducted lawfully and fairly;*
- c) *per the purpose for which it was collected, and*
- d) *adequate, relevant, and not excessive;*
- e) *accurate and updated, and where incomplete, erased, or rectified;*
- f) *transparent and disclose the personal information held; and confidential and kept secure at all times.*

*Consequently, States should ensure that the person has the rights to:*

- a) *be informed in detail about the processing;*
- b) *access personal information that has been or is being processed;*
- c) *object to the processing; and*
- d) *rectify, complete, or erase personal information that is inaccurate, incomplete, or prohibited from collection, use, disclosure, or storage, especially if this happens because of the unauthorized entity.*

*This principle refers also to the harmful sharing of personal information, such as child sexual abuse or the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, which should be established as offences punishable by law.*

*Not less important, legal recourse to effective remedies in relation to the violation of their privacy and the unlawful processing of their personal information should be affordable universally.*

*It is supposed the existence of an oversight mechanism for the protection of communication and personal information established by law as independent entities and includes human rights and privacy experts.*

In October 2019 a specialized technical committee on communication and information technologies of the AU (African Union) held at Sharm El Sheikh, in Egypt, recognized that achieving digital transformation in Africa requires political commitment at the highest level to align policies and sector regulation and involve a massive scaling-up of investment and dedication of resources.

The specialized technical committee noted that the harmonization of legal and regulatory frameworks is a prerequisite for the creation of a common digital single market and that the internet and digital infrastructure an essential component in the development of Africa's digital ecosystem.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Gravett, 'Digital Neo-Colonialism: The Chinese Model of Internet Sovereignty in Africa'.



## Chapter V

### *A trip into China's second continent*



Figure 17: Routes of Overland travel by Howard W. French

This chapter aims to provide practical evidence of what occurs in the field. For this purpose, it will be inspired by one selected book by Howard W. French who is a veteran correspondent for The New York Times.<sup>1</sup> He studied in Liberia and has often returned there to cover the civil war in the 1990s. In particular, its project has consisted of collecting as many witnesses as possible by interviewing both locals and Chinese migrants. Along his journey, he was supported and guided by some Chinese inhabitants who reside in Africa and are now building careers there, since enough time to lead him in the exploration of these lands.

Pragmatically, embracing French's ethnographic approach, it is thought-provoking to wonder what pushes Chinese people to emigrate. The multiplicity of factors is evident not only in the motherland but also in the host African states, where the Chinese people's impact is diversified according to the potentialities of each country.

<sup>1</sup> Howard W. French, *China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa* (Vintage, 2014).

## 5.1 Mozambique

Mozambique is a country nearly twice the size of California and it is located in south-eastern Africa. Mozambique was recently registered as one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries in the world ranking low in GDP per capita, human development, measures of inequality, and average life expectancy. Here the official language is Portuguese.

In this country, Chinese people began to settle in the territory in the early 1870s, when Portuguese influence in East Africa was growing stronger. Portuguese colonialists recruited Chinese carpenters and unskilled labourers in Macao, then also part of the Portuguese Empire. Migration of all Asians was officially blocked in 1899 due to an outbreak of plague, blamed on Indians, despite this, the Chinese population continued to grow. Ethnic Chinese in Mozambique once numbered around 5,000 individuals, but their population fell significantly during the Mozambican Civil War from 1977 to 1992 when many of them emigrated to Portugal. After the return of peace and the expansion of Sino-Mozambican economic cooperation, their numbers have been bolstered by new expatriates from the People's Republic of China. Here, W. French interviewed three Chinese people: one native from Henan, one from Fujian, and a woman from Guangdong. They immigrated to this land to create a fortune, and their choice was led by a Chinese motto: "*Go to Africa where you can acquire good land cheaply*". They have also attempted to start a new business that failed in the motherland due to the recent financial crisis, in other words, it is an attempt to do business overseas. There is a matter of competition as well, in the sense that Chinese migrants think that Africans are not so clever, and they choose this land looking for an opportunity based on their personal capabilities. These inexperienced businessmen are aware that they cannot compete firstly with the entrepreneurs in America or Germany because they are too smart and success would be quite impossible to achieve.

Mozambique has some of the continent's most fertile soils, extraordinarily coastal fishing waters, extensive tropical forests, and a generous allotment of minerals of various kinds.

The ideal kind of business here has been the opening to farming because any of these activities existed before. As a matter of fact, Mozambique lacks local industry for transforming raw food materials for export. The penetration of foreign companies into Mozambique represented a huge break from the country's sad past, which had involved enduring war and essentially Portugal as the sole economic partner. Yearly, China's trade with Mozambique was growing by as much as 20% and had recently surpassed its trade with both Europe and the USA. Chinese success derives especially from their propensity to create collaborative networks for supplies. In addition, both beverage factories, tea for sale and export, and charcoal processing factories have been profitable businesses.

Thanks to the presence of China, Mozambique has been finally globalizing, but unlike what is expected, the country is still one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries in the world. Chinese government projects here have all failed because Chinese bureaucrats don't know how to communicate on the same level as local authorities. The governance of the territory is currently the bequest of the precedent Marxist ruling party, an empty and unstable democracy.

The impact of Chinese people on Mozambican society is not so comfortable. As often happens in Africa, locals do not fully accept working under Chinese investors without having their lands and properties. Moreover, in Africa Chinese were not under the policy of one child, in fact, the witness has 5 children. It triggered a mechanism for which the population grew and mixed couples became more usual. Here, customs and traditions did not fully melt also for what concerns children's education. Stronger cultural stereotypes have implied that the school is not so important, and the young usually serve as translators.

Sexual colonization is a theme tackled by the journalist because one of the witnesses experienced it. He said: "*Chinese guys can easily choose a girl, even if they haven't found one before in their motherland too. It's enough that the girl is willing to cook and to wash clothes, to serve the family*". According to the national values, the girl is a need, not a partner. Even with the disastrous complex situation in Mozambique, it is interesting to see the other side of the coin and trace the positive facets of Chinese presence here beyond the industrialization boost. A crucial agreement with China, indeed, has allowed more finances to protect magnificent Mozambique forests that are currently threatened. Moreover, it could be a crucial opportunity to make Mozambique become an influential example to other countries in how to develop practical systems for processing forest products based on sustainable sourcing.

*What happens when a Chinese migrant arrives here?* Probably if he/she has started a business that goes well, they choose to stay here forever and they call Chinese farmers and agricultural experts to expand their business. It outlines that Chinese migrants are aware that they are creating a new image of the Chinese population in the world based on what they do around the world.

## 5.2 Zambia

The second stop was in Zambia. It is a landlocked country at the crossroads of Central, Southern and East Africa.

Here, W. French met a man from Jiangxi province and his story touched his heart. He arrived in Zambia in 1995 as a twenty-two-year-old simple labourer, but soon got into business for himself, raising chickens at first with another Chinese immigrant. He became rich soon, buying land and building ever-bigger houses (thanks to his work with engineering and construction companies). He learnt everything by himself, including English, a rare skill for a Chinese person, especially among those in Africa. He initially moved to Africa with a three-year contract with one of

the biggest players in construction in Africa, the China and Bridge Corporation (CRBC). Sino-Zambian relations are exceptional to a remarkable degree and do not seem to fall into the common pattern used to describe the Sino-African relationship. Indeed, it is also defined as an “all-weather friendship” just to outline the commendation feeling towards Chinese in general despite, as some studies reveal, Chinese bosses had developed a reputation for dangerous conditions, low pay, and punishing hours. Since Zambia has a huge unemployment issue, probably Zambian workers don’t complain to the government, because they know that it is the government that is bringing Chinese people here as investors. Even though *it seems that the IMF and World Bank have tried to block local copper businesses in favour of foreign investors*. Zambia is one of the top copper-producing nations, is one of China’s biggest migrant communities in Africa and investments in education are booming. These are indicators that the French considered countering his scepticism about the friendly reaction by Zambians.

However, already since the 1970s, Chinese investors have financed Zambian infrastructures: it is well-known the building of the Tazara railway represented a gesture of solidarity by China especially because it reduced its dependence on a hostile South Africa that was still governed under apartheid. Another example is the construction of a 159-bed General Hospital in the capital, Lusaka. Go out policy also opened Chinese state-owned corporations to begin scouring the globe in search of business opportunities, and because Zambia was largely ignored by the West, the pickings were plentiful and often seemed easy.

With the TAZARA Railway, China successfully insinuated itself into a game that had previously been dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union.

### 5.3 *Senegal*

Senegal is in West Africa and shares the maritime border with Cape Verde. Here Chinese presence is keenly felt since the late 1990s and consolidated in every sector: as private businesspeople and even as peasants. In this country, an anti-Chinese sentiment ventilates: Senegalese complained that the Chinese project was a kind of Trojan horse to arrive as the country's new conquerors, armed not with guns but with plentiful cheap finance and powerful commercial networks linking them back to the motherland. Sinophobia culminated with a protest in Dakar in 2004 when striking Senegalese traders demanded government action to protect them from the Chinese newcomers.

However, the government calmed the waters and, in the end, defended the Chinese merchants. Moreover, the relationship is worsened by a language barrier that seems hard to overcome. Here the official language is French and the lingua franca is Wolof. Chinese have difficulties haggling with Senegalese traders only through short sentences. Senegal has long had one of the freest media climates in Africa, along with one of the best-developed civil societies on the continent.

Probably this is correlated to the dissent manifestation and many African governments, instead, have adopted a laissez-faire approach to this kind of migration.

### 5.4 *Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea*

The fates of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea had been tightly linked since the Atlantic slave trade and black returnees from 19th-century America and Britain founded the first two of them. Even by the standards of a continent full of economies driven by natural resources, each of these three societies was unusually rich in mineral wealth.

Now they are drawing intense interest from foreign investors but the matter is the presence of largely unstructured environments and there is the risk that, in the end, poor citizens benefit nothing from the extraction of natural resources.<sup>2</sup>

### *Liberia*

Liberia, officially the Republic of Liberia, is a country on the West African coast. Liberia is a multilingual country where more than 20 indigenous languages are spoken. English, as lingua franca, is the official language, reflecting the country's ethnic and cultural diversity. Liberia had an important role in the international scenario. Liberia was the first African republic to proclaim its independence and is Africa's first and oldest modern republic. It was among the few African countries to maintain its sovereignty during the *Scramble for Africa*. During World War II, Liberia supported the United States' war effort against Germany, and in turn received considerable American investment in infrastructure, which aided the country's wealth and development. Liberia was a founding member of the League of Nations, the United Nations, and the Organisation of African Unity.

This country was a 19th-century creation of the United States and figured the closest thing America had ever had to an African colony. It was an example to the continent of a modern, Christian, and democratic state. Liberians strongly believed to have a special relationship with the USA. However, also here is developing a fast-growing Chinese community interested in this relationship. In this country, W. French interviewed Li, the owner of the hotel where he stayed. According to him, the Liberians would appreciate Chinese intervention in the territory seeking a renovation, but he is aware that China needs a kind of expression, as a request. This is probably because Americans are in every sector of the government.

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<sup>2</sup> See more on <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1385>.

Despite this, the bilateral relations between China and Liberia officially began in 1977 but were broken on multiple occasions, such as between 1989 and 2003, in response to Liberia's recognition of the Republic of China (Taiwan). Taiwan had offered \$200 million in aid to Liberia for education and infrastructure in exchange for this recognition.<sup>3</sup>

*Why Liberians would welcome the Chinese for a renovation?* Because the approaches are different. Americans provided a lot of money for this country, but it did not reach people. Instead, the Chinese prefer investing economic resources in buildings, starting business activities, and improving the African healthcare system.

Activities are closed on Sundays; the Chinese instead try to make money also on Sundays. Liberian people instead, whose lives are particularly affected by American habits, go to church.

### *Sierra Leone*

Sierra Leone, on the southwest coast of West Africa, established diplomatic relations in 1971. As Guinea (with capital Conakry), it was founded by the British Crown and only in 1961 gained independence. This was the start of an increase in political activities, and humanitarian and socio-economic crises and culminated in 1992 in a brutal civil war that destroyed the city buildings and infrastructures too. China's presence here started in 2000 providing official finance projects to assist in highway repair interventions and constructing Charlotte Hydropower Project. In addition, as witnessed by Kelvin who has been a local reporter during the terrible insurrections in the 1990s, groups of Chinese businessmen arrived in Freetown and successfully negotiated for purchasing, and then restoring, a notable number of locally destroyed buildings and economic activities. Then Chinese revived the local mining industry, an immense source of iron, rutile, and titanium.

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<sup>3</sup> See more on <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2003/10/13/2003071474>



## 5.5 *Mali*

Mali is a landlocked country in West Africa and the official language is French. Mali established diplomatic relations with China in 1960. The Sino-Mali relationship existed as an important exchange and cooperation in the fields of culture, education, medical work, and military affairs. They were undertaking big projects in house-building, road and bridge construction, well-sinking and reconditioning farmlands, and putting them in order.<sup>4</sup> Mali has been in the spotlight thanks to its astute development of a foreign policy of ingratiating to outside powers, its willingness to bar the spread of Islamic terrorism, and its exemplary democracy that attracted investment from the US.

Here, W. French met Dramé, a senior official in Amnesty International who explained what American diplomats thought of China's interest in Mali. In general, also among Malian people, the perception is that the relationship with China ran so fast that Mali will lose control soon. On the American side, there is not so much interest in investing money for building in Mali because of the high operating costs, complicated bureaucratic regulations, and, above all, builders from the US are unfamiliar with the African territory and society. Their stereotypes regarding Africans refer to violence, corruption, disease, and lack of schooling.

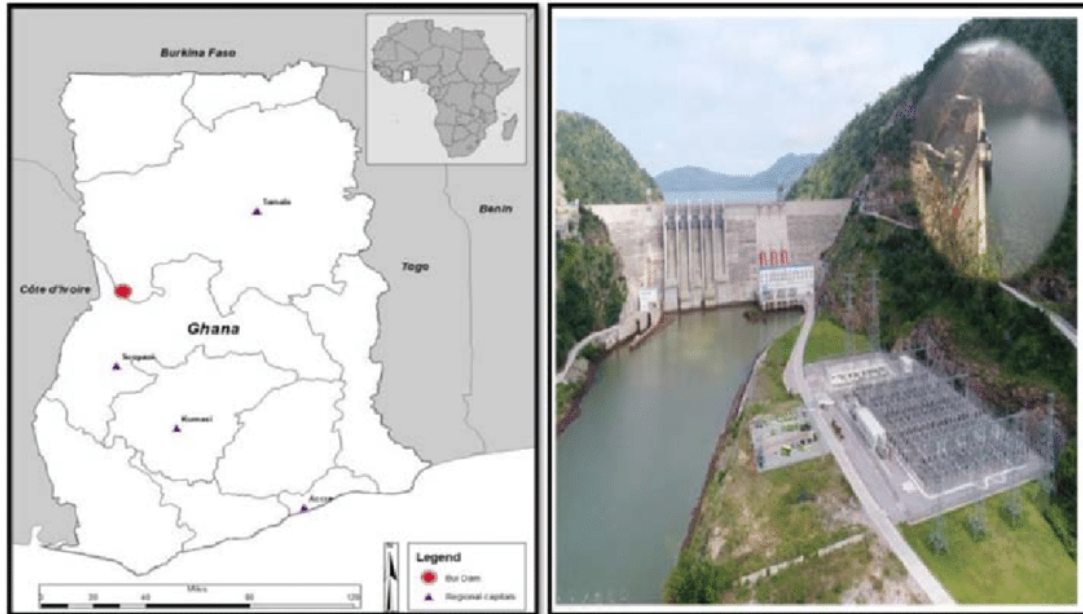
## 5.6 *Ghana*

Ghana is a medium-sized country in West Africa, but it has an outsized figure in both continental history and politics. In 1957, under President Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan country to win independence from Britain. Nkrumah ruled as a left-leaning nationalist and pioneered Pan-Africanism, a political creed premised on breaking down colonial boundaries and forging a unified government for the continent. Hoping to rapidly industrialize his country, in 1961 he began

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<sup>4</sup> See more on <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/focac/183436.htm>.

construction of one of the biggest public works projects ever undertaken in Africa, a massive dam over the Volta River designed to supply cheap and reliable electricity for the nascent local industrial sector.<sup>5</sup>



*Figure 18: Location and Image of the Bui Dam*

The Akosombo Dam was widely criticized as being far too big and costly, but it was completed ahead of schedule, and even today it still provides the lion's share of Ghana's electricity. He was overthrown in 1966 opening a chapter of rule by a succession of conservative civilians and ruinously corrupt and incompetent army officers. They were followed in the 1980s by Jerry Rawlings, a young flight lieutenant with an economic about-face and turn to the West. He represented a crucial political phase since he belatedly allowed a transition to democratic rule, a tradition that by now runs as deeply in Ghana as anywhere in Africa. In addition, during its democratic era, since 1992, Ghana's GDP has grown at a more than handsome average rate of 5 percent. A booming natural resources exporter, with large exports of gold, cocoa, and now oil, Ghana was one of a rapidly growing number of African countries where China had

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<sup>5</sup> Kwame Adovor, 'Ghana's Bui Hydropower Dam and Linkage Creation Challenges', *Forum for Development Studies* 48 (15 December 2020): 1–22.

recently structured a huge package deal of loans and investments in order to gain a seat at the banquet. In Ghana's much more vibrant political system, public debate helped nudge things in a different and arguably more prudent direction. Ghana would remain free to sell its oil on the international market, even if under the contract terms China legally reserved the right to pocket income from its production if Ghana fell behind in its payments. In recent years, China's development financing practices have drawn intense scrutiny from the West, whether Beijing's "win-win" rhetoric promises – as a step toward the rearrangement of the international system along terms that are more favourable to developing countries – or whether it is setting the stage for a new era of massive African indebtedness or even, of Chinese imperialism. Ghana, where so much is going on with China, and where debate and open conversation are deeply ingrained in the national character, gives a great voice to an African perspective. ACET (African Centre for Economic Transformation) is a pan-African economic policy institute supporting Africa's long-term growth through transformation.<sup>6</sup> This think tank, represented by Edward Brown in this case, claims that of all the countries in Africa, Ghana was among the best positioned to take advantage of its booming natural resource wealth, and of the eagerness of its new Chinese partners to drive a sound development policy. This was because of Ghana's increasingly robust democracy, its relative openness and transparency, and the existence of a substantial and fast-growing middle class, including swelling ranks of technocrats and highly educated professionals. Moreover, new roads would be built, and old, decrepit railroad lines in the centre and west of the country rehabilitated. Despite all of these advantages, Brown has not been optimistic or hopeful about the impact that engagement with China would have on his country. His scepticism is rationalized firstly by the

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<sup>6</sup> Find out more information on official website <https://acetforafrica.org/>

higher convenience and accessibility to financial resources by China instead of the World Bank and IMF.<sup>7</sup>



*Figure 19: Sinohydro, a Chinese state-owned hydropower engineering and construction company*

In 2011, a memorandum of understanding for a \$13 billion Chinese loan package concluded and the President stated that it was the means to “*transform our country’s economy and the lives of the people of Ghana*”. In this scenario, with the lasting decade-long financial crisis, the freewheeling alternative that China represents in the eyes of African governments is compared as more available to the traditional leaders of the global financial system. Secondly, financial packages like this are predominantly drawn up by the Chinese, and on the African side, there is no meaningful input. There is no certainty about the possibility of analysing risk management for instance, of finance, of the cost-benefit, of integration into some strategic vision. *Will investment lead to transformative growth? How will African countries use it to diversify and transform? Will it lift productivity?*

Conversely, another representative of an independent think tank, Kwadwo Tutu, poured scorn on Chinese sloganeering toward Africa, especially about the phrase “win-win”, and on China’s insistence that it

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<sup>7</sup> See more on ‘Ghana Seeks Restored Policy Credibility Asking IMF for Help’, *Bloomberg.Com*, 5 August 2014, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-08-05/ghana-seeks-to-restore-policy-credibility-by-asking-for-imf-help..>

was not a wealthy country, but rather a peer member of the Third World. Brown firmly criticized his colleague, because, firstly, it is well-known that China is not a developing country; secondly, the sudden Chinese investment in a project like Bui Dam, which was on the books for forty years, gives the idea of the unwillingness for forthcoming financial support from the rich countries; thirdly, whether the partners were Western or Chinese, Ghana remained the passive party in the sense that locals not have benefited.

The fact that China contributes concretely to the development of public infrastructure in a foreign country, makes me think well. However, examples such as the Chinese-built National Theatre and the legion of stories about illegal mining by Chinese, who cut down forests and despoiled the land with mercury to produce their gold, have shaped the Chinese propensity for bribery and corruption, for shoddy goods and for cutting corners. Also, these experts are fully aware of the dangers of generalization of Chinese intervention in Africa. Merely, after a little more than a half-century of independence, new money was flooding in Ghana thanks to big oil and gas discoveries, the population was young, signalling strongly favourable demographics for labour and industry. Especially, the country seemed comfortably settled in its democratic ways and enjoyed a positive image internationally, as witnessed by Barack Obama's decision to visit Ghana on his first African trip as president.<sup>8</sup> Obama supports his decision because he is convinced that the protagonists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be only Rome or Moscow or Washington, but an eye should be kept on what happens in Accra as well. In particular, he claimed:

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<sup>8</sup> Meghan Slack, 'From the Archives: President Obama's Trip to Ghana', [whitehouse.gov](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2012/06/14/archives-president-obamas-trip-ghana), 14 June 2012, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2012/06/14/archives-president-obamas-trip-ghana>.

*“This is the simple truth of a time when the boundaries between people are overwhelmed by our connections. Your prosperity can expand America's prosperity. Your health and security can contribute to the world's health and security. And the strength of your democracy can help advance human rights for people everywhere.”*

However, big new players were seeking business opportunities, not only China. The main issue seems to be the lack of good leaders who are capable, selfless, and who have a vision.

It is mentioned Sinohydro, a dam-building specialist, whose more than seventy hydropower projects around Africa made it one of the busiest of China's construction companies on the continent. In this case, workers are exclusively Chinese and could not even understand English. Similarly, the senior officials are neither open to collaboration nor in search of an approach with both locals and Ghanaian counterparts. Indeed, the lack of integration of their communities into the regional economy, summary relocation, and their trivial compensation primed the Bui Dam area residents to insist on their rights and to push for better treatment. Sinohydro was not involved in the relocation negotiations themselves and the Chinese had loaned Ghana \$622 million to finance the project. The three affected communities had conducted all of their negotiations with the Ghanaian government. But Chinese contractors had built the new replacement villages, as simple and functional complexes. It conformed to a general pattern in Africa where most of the money China lends ends up in the pockets of Chinese contractors and suppliers.



Figure 20: Viral image purported to be Accra-Kumasi highway false<sup>9</sup>







Figure 21: Accra-to-Kumasi Road signed in red.

Thanks to China, signs of urbanization gradually increased with buildings painted in the bright reds, yellows, and greens of the rival cell phone companies. Kumasi highway is the 125-mile-long highway to Accra, linking Ghana’s two biggest cities. It is still a rare infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa and in the summer of 2023, the construction of 4 bypasses is planned. The Kumasi Road was built by the China Railway Corporation and here it was a great advantage. In fact, the non-

qualified local road builders, as well as local textile manufacturers cannot be compared to the Chinese ones in terms of quality.

<sup>9</sup> Roselena Ahiabile and Kennedy Twumasi, ‘Viral Image Purported to Be Accra-Kumasi Highway False’, Dubawa Ghana, June 2021, <https://ghana.dubawa.org/viral-image-purported-to-be-accra-kumasi-highway-false/>.

The Chinese have to meet standards in place wherever they go around the world but in Africa the standards are weak, and so, easy to match. The Chinese were not only beating its members badly on price, but they were stealing popular Ghanaian designs, like the country’s most distinctive traditional fabric, kente cloth, or textiles bearing the adinkra symbols (just to give some examples see Figure 22).

| Symbol  | Adinkra label or Name | Interpretation                      | Meaning   |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
|    | Mframadan             | Wind resistant house                | Symbol of fortitude and readiness to face life's vicissitudes |
|   | Adinkrahene           | Chief of the adinkra symbols        | Symbol of greatness, charisma and leadership                  |
|  | Fawohodie             | Independence                        | Symbol of independence, freedom, emancipation                 |
|  | Mpatapo               | Knot of pacification/reconciliation | Symbol of reconciliation, peacemaking and pacification        |

Source: Arthur Kojo, 2001

*Figure 22: image showing only four among more than 200 adinkra symbols, representing popular proverbs and maxims.*

However, to draw conclusions from what experts that W. French has interviewed in Ghana explained, they prefer to not take any sides: they are neither pro- nor anti-Chinese. They asserted that the solution to get a good deal out of this relationship could be firstly to plan commercial strategy by the Ghanaian government (no strategies now) and to train local workers in new educational patterns and new pieces of knowledge.



## 5.7 Tanzania

Tanzania is a country located on the east coast and it is known for its diverse landscapes, including the iconic Mount Kilimanjaro, the Serengeti National Park, and the beautiful Zanzibar archipelago. The capital city is Dodoma, though Dar es Salaam remains the largest city and major economic hub as well as the seaside economic capital. Not by chance, here the Chinese presence had grown enormously and created a low-end commercial district selling plastic flowers, curtains, fresh fruit, shoes, and Chinese medicines. The interviewee in this case was Tamimu Salehe, the assistant secretary general of the Tanzanian Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers (TUICO<sup>10</sup>), who was reporting an extreme, if not even dangerous, openness and friendliness toward Chinese business. Friendship is a keyword on which the Chinese government put pressure echoing the idea of a trade union and the reinforcement of immigration laws with Chinese nationals. Concretely, the Chinese government is helping Tanzania with loans, construction, and assistance of various kinds – as camouflage for immigration, as Salehe stated.

China participated in significant infrastructure projects in Tanzania, such as the construction of roads, bridges, ports, and railways. The most notable project is the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA), which was built with Chinese assistance and connects the landlocked countries to the port of Dar es Salaam

The two countries maintained diplomatic ties, and there were visits and exchanges between their leaders to enhance cooperation in various fields, including trade and investment. Tanzania adhered to the One-China policy, recognizing the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://streetnet.org.za/>

<sup>11</sup> Information about Sino-Tanzanian political relations are available on the official site of the FOCAC Beijing Summit <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/focac/183419.htm>

## 5.8 *The Peculiar Case of Eswatini*

Eswatini, officially named the Kingdom of Eswatini formerly, in 2018, was known as Swaziland. The name "Swaziland" is an amalgamation of the English language and the national language, Swazi. By renaming the country, the king hoped to eliminate a relic of the colonial era.<sup>12</sup>

Eswatini is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It was not a part of the trip conducted by W. French. It is bordered by Mozambique to its northeast and South Africa to its north, west, south, and southeast. At no more than 200 kilometres north to south and 140 kilometres east to west, Eswatini is one of the smallest countries in Africa; despite this, its climate and topography are diverse, ranging from a cool and mountainous high-veld to a hot and dry low-veld.

There are two major recognized ethnic groups: Swazi (84%) and Zulu (10%). Moreover, Eswatini is one of the last three monarchies in Africa together with Lesotho and Morocco. Precisely, Eswatini is an absolute monarchy and so the head of the State is the King, currently Mswati III, and he is the symbol of unity and the eternity of the Swazi nation.

Eswatini is a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth Nations, the African Union, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the Southern Africa Development Community. As of 2019, it is the only country in Africa that has maintained ties with Taiwan and not the People's Republic of China.<sup>13</sup> At the signing of a joint communiqué in Beijing in 2018, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (in charge since 2012), expressed his "sincere hope" that Eswatini will soon join Beijing's allies on the continent. China is putting pressure on Eswatini in the name of the One-China policy, according to which, substantially, only one China exists and so Taiwan is undoubtedly unrecognized as a sovereign state. In response to Eswatini's refusal, China has turned up the visa

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<sup>12</sup> See more on <https://learngerman.dw.com/en/from-swaziland-to-eswatini-whats-in-a-name-change/a-45372631>.

<sup>13</sup> See more on <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46831852>.

restrictions on Swazis to force Eswatini to establish diplomatic links with itself. Declaring “No diplomatic relations, no business benefits.” China also subsequently paid for advertorials in Swaziland News and The Nation magazine on trade benefits, attracting a lot of criticism.<sup>14</sup> Then, in response, Taiwan underlined that the “ugly nature of the Chinese regime [...] should be deterred by international public opinion”.<sup>15</sup>

Nowadays, Eswatini depends economically quite totally (for about 85%) on neighbouring South Africa. Despite this, the king prefers to have economic and diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In particular, Jeremy Liang, Taiwan’s Ambassador to Eswatini, regularly denounces China’s debt-trap diplomacy as a one-way ticket to poverty and servitude and the actual risk of falling into a new generation of dollar diplomacy.<sup>16</sup>

Personally, I found it interesting to know the countries with which Taiwan has diplomatic relations<sup>17</sup>:

*In Latin America and the Caribbean:* Belize, Haiti, Nicaragua, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Guatemala, Paraguay, Honduras, and Saint Lucia.

*In Africa:* Swaziland.

*In Europe:* The-Holy-See.

*In the Pacific:* Kiribati, Nauru, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, and Palau.

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<sup>14</sup> See more on <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/eswatini-taiwans-last-partner-in-africa/>.

<sup>15</sup> See more on <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20200202/1636446.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> See more on

[https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1328&sms=273&s=34027](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1328&sms=273&s=34027).

Dollar diplomacy refers to a foreign policy promoted by President William Howard Taft from 1909 to 1913. The goal of diplomacy was essentially improving American commercial interests both at home and overseas. American economic power was the mean for maintaining global influence. The shadow side of this policy was aiming at that goal by ensuring the financial stability of a region while protecting and extending U.S. commercial and financial interests and influence there.

See more about it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79sxHMSJSYQ&t=148s>.

<sup>17</sup> WorldPopulationReview.com, an independent for-profit organization committed to delivering up-to-date global population data and demographics, ‘Countries That Recognize Taiwan 2023’, n.d., <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-that-recognize-taiwan>.

## *Conclusions*

This research aims to be a multidisciplinary analysis that offers a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon through the scrutiny of empirical data relevant to the main research question. This diverse approach allows for a comprehensive examination that integrates theoretical frameworks with real-world events. Through this methodology, the thesis aims to ensure clarity and structured presentation, establishing it as an informative resource for readers and a basis for further exploration of its facets. Later in the chapter, I have outlined only some aspects that can serve as a starting point for examining in greater detail this globally significant and constantly evolving phenomenon.

Through an examination of the findings in this study, it emerges the primary concern for China that is to secure access to resources, and the pivotal inquiries revolve around the terms at which Africans are able to negotiate for them, as well as the extent of local processing and transformation. In order to secure the most favourable arrangements for their respective nations, African countries found it imperative to refrain from pursuing negotiations in isolation. Given the fifty-four distinct countries comprising Africa, any single nation possesses limited bargaining power. However, by collaborating to negotiate collectively, African nations can achieve markedly improved terms. Moreover, China's involvement can be harnessed to facilitate the development of infrastructure that enables more robust intra-African trade. The engagement of China should empower Africans to redefine their interactions with Western nations, ultimately fostering greater equity and parity in the global arena.

The most prevalent and frequently reiterated critique of China's involvement in Africa pertains to the perception that China's strategy within the continent is entirely self-serving, driven by aggressive business-oriented objectives, and primarily concentrated on securing access to vital resources, particularly oil, to sustain its rapidly

industrializing society. This critique posits that China, in its persistent pursuit of Africa's natural resources, disregards the blatant violations of civil rights and political freedoms perpetrated by African states. Consequently, China is seen as undermining the promotion of democracy within the continent. China's straightforwardness in conducting business in Africa has been facilitated by its willingness to capitalize on the prevalent corrupt practices in the oil and mineral sectors. This aligns with China's own societal context, which is marred by its own issues of corruption. Notably, at the international regime level, China does not endorse the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a framework designed to enhance transparency and accountability in the management of natural resources.<sup>1</sup>

Given Africa's historical experience of colonization and economic exploitation since the 1884-1885 partition by European powers, China's engagement with Africa is now frequently framed as an economic incursion or a contemporary manifestation of neocolonization within the continent.

Conteh provides some examples of Africans who are very critical of China's role in Africa and associate it with the practices of European Colonial rule. Lamido Sanusi, an ex-Governor of the Nigerian Central Bank wrote the following:

“In much of Africa, they have set up huge mining operations. They have also built Infrastructure. But, with exceptions, have done so using equipment and labour imported from home, without transferring skills to local communities. So, China takes our primary goods and sells us manufactured ones. This was the essence of colonialism.”

In fact, these infrastructural projects are seen as a means of China making it easier for itself to transport African raw materials just like the European colonialists did.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eiti.org/>. Conversely, the majority of the African countries are engaged in.

Furthermore, China's amicable association with authoritarian leaders draws particular criticism for its perceived diminishing of Western influence over dictatorial regimes. It is also viewed as a challenge to principles of good governance, democracy, and the advancement of universal human rights. Representative Chris Smith, Chairman of the US Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations, voiced apprehension about China's alignment with dictators, expressing concern that China's expanding role in Africa may inadvertently bolster oppressive regimes, secure strategic control over vital African resources, and potentially reverse much of the progress achieved in democracy and governance across African nations over the past 15 years.<sup>2</sup>

Given China's divergence from Western objectives to foster democracy in Africa, its affiliations with Sudan and Zimbabwe have drawn particular criticism and contributed to negative perceptions. This has further fuelled allegations that China's engagement in Africa is solely driven by economic motives, without any ethical constraints. Assistant Secretary of State Johnnie Carson articulated this sentiment during a meeting with representatives of Western oil companies in Nigeria in February 2010, emphasizing that the United States does not consider China a military, security, or intelligence threat.

From the Chinese perspective, three primary interests guide their approach: gaining access to resources, expanding market opportunities, and cultivating diplomatic partnerships. None of these inherently poses a threat to US interests. Viewing China's involvement, whether economic or diplomatic, in Africa as a zero-sum game between the US and China is not deemed necessary. The paramount objective is to encourage China to engage with Africa in a manner that aligns with established international norms, rather than undermines them. In essence, the perception of China's role in Africa has evolved over time. In the early 2000s, China

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<sup>2</sup> More information available on <https://www.cecc.gov/smith>.

was not regarded as menacing as it is presently depicted. The prevailing narrative on China's engagement in Africa has taken a more critical turn. While China is increasingly viewed as an assertive actor in Africa, sometimes characterized as a predatory state or a neo-colonial force primarily focused on economic transactions to the detriment of good governance, the narrative held a more neutral or even positive tone. China was seen as a desirable global partner, capable and willing to align its expanding capabilities with its international responsibilities.

Conversely, Conteh provides also examples of Africans who consider the Sino-African relationship as just part of the normal process of international economic relations and not a case of China adopting a predatory economic role in the continent. Some African public officials even see China as a role model for Africa. It is the reason why it is findable, in several academic papers, the expression "*China as a new model approach for Africa*".

In his 2013 statement, Senegalese President Wade expressed his perspective:

*"When it comes to China and Africa, the EU and the US want to have their cake and eat it. In an echo of its past colonial rivalries, European leaders and donor organisations have expressed concerns that African nations are throwing their doors open too wide to Chinese investors and exploitation by their Asian partners. But if opening up more free markets is a goal that the West prizes, why is Europe fretting about China's growing economic role in Africa!"* This statement underscores the tangible manifestations of China's presence in Africa. However, additional observations highlight the psychological and morale-boosting impact that China's engagement with African nations has had on the continent since the conclusion of the Cold War. China's involvement has provided a sense of hope to a continent that had largely felt abandoned in the aftermath of the Cold War. The withdrawal of superpowers from Africa and the adverse effects of the Washington Consensus contributed, in varying degrees, to the severe economic decline and violent conflicts that plagued Africa in the

early 1990s. This era witnessed a notable decline in Western interest in Africa, resulting in a sharp reduction in demand for the continent's primary exports.

Therefore, China's emergence in Africa during the late 1990s carried significant psychological significance as it served to uplift the self-esteem of African nations. With the establishment of FOCAC in 2000, the subsequent rapid expansion of economic engagement, and the emphasis on revitalizing Africa's long-neglected infrastructure, China became a symbol of hope and inspiration for much of Africa. It provided certain African nations with an alternative to the stringent policies of the Washington Consensus. In the realm of international cooperation, it is intrinsic to recognize that every nation, including China, approaches such endeavours with inherent self-interest. Consequently, for Sino-African cooperation to yield more substantial outcomes, the African continent should advocate for heightened transparency and broader civic involvement. Failing to do so may inevitably give rise to apprehensions regarding the potential influence of "dollar diplomacy" at the global level. Currently, Beijing exhibits a greater inclination toward endorsing peacekeeping endeavours rather than delving deeply into conflict prevention and mediation. China tends to assume a more cooperative role, particularly in collaboration with Western nations, as seen in countries like Mali and Ghana.

China's engagement with Africa experienced a gradual progression over a span of two decades, but it witnessed a remarkable surge in 2013 subsequent to President Xi Jinping's introduction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This expansive soft-power international development strategy aims to extend China's influence in host countries through the provision of bilateral loans and the construction of infrastructure projects. Given the BRI's substantial emphasis on information technology, a majority of African countries have enthusiastically embraced this initiative.



I would conclude my research by inviting other students interested in the current global scenario to examine additional aspects of this multifaceted and present phenomenon.

Firstly, the seeming contradictory role of China's Arms in Africa: China's Arms sales strategy to Africa and the negative impact on African conflicts. The provision of Chinese arms in Africa constitutes a component of China's multifaceted diplomatic strategy, irrespective of its positive or negative ramifications. This strategy encompasses various dimensions including aid, trade, investment, healthcare, education, and cultural exchange, among other areas. While the arms transfer sector is experiencing a growing trajectory, it still lags significantly behind the prominence of the aid and investment strategy. Consequently, arms transfers serve a dual function: reinforcing relationships with African states and, to a lesser extent, functioning as a commercial endeavour in its own right. An argument can be posited that given the limited equipment and financial resources of African armed forces, Chinese military assistance proves advantageous in bolstering internal, if not territorial, stability within African states. Nonetheless, adopting a more critical perspective reveals that the scarcity of interstate conflicts among African nations prompts regimes to employ weapons primarily for self-preservation purposes, as observed in the case of Guinea. In the broader context, it is plausible that China will further expand and intensify its military engagements with Africa through arms transfers, military liaison appointments, high-level military dialogues and interactions, and even collaborative military exercises. China's extensive involvement in Africa, characterized by its multi-dimensional approach, has undeniably elicited a response from Western nations, particularly the United States.

Secondly, the peace-keeping efforts by China despite its firm philosophy of political non-interference. China does not only transfer military equipment on a bilateral basis, but it has also given monetary assistance

to the African Union Peace Fund in order to enhance the organization's ability to resolve African conflicts.

Thirdly, China's emphasis on socio-economic security. As suspected by Conteh, the question to ponder is why it is China, since the 1960s in particular, so focused on establishing or constructing all these projects (agricultural, infrastructural, medical, education, and so on) in Africa. Is it attempting to replicate in Africa what has produced one of the greatest economic development success miracles in the history of the modern world (like China)?

Fourthly, it would be interesting to reflect on digital neocolonialism, a more and more current and intriguing topic, especially with regard to diplomatic ties. In the spotlight, there would be the matter of potential misinterpretation, on one hand, due to linguistic barriers and, on the other hand, due to a different conception of Human Rights (and even International Human Rights). As a matter of fact, in the above-mentioned article 40 of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, the respect for international human rights is declared as the only one exception for which *States could adopt laws or other measures prohibiting or weakening encryption, including backdoors, key escrows, and data localization requirements*. China's viewpoint considers the right to live or subsist as the preeminent human right. In this sense, both technical and industrial development is one of the necessary conditions for universal human rights. Substantially, China agrees on creating an environment that would enable people to achieve economic and social progress so that they meet basic needs of food, clothing, and overall decent living standards. It is crucial to underline that the emphasis that China gives to this interpretation is definitely not on civil liberties and political rights as understood in the West.

Fifthly, proxy wars are currently occurring in several African states: especially the public focus is nowadays on Niger, one of the 36 states in Nigeria, a theatre of a looming proxy war. The coups in West Africa are often attributed to escalating complaints about poor governance, heightened poverty, and rising insecurity. However, a deeper underlying factor lies in the geopolitics of resource access and control. This pertains to the vested interests of foreign entities in exploiting and managing the abundant mineral resources of West African nations. Consequently, the mounting tensions in Niger and the broader subregion are driven by the imperialist and economic rivalry between Eastern and Western powers. When reflecting upon the unfortunate situation in Ukraine, which has become a battleground for confrontations between Russian mercenaries and Western (US/NATO) Special Forces, resulting in devastating consequences that will require several years, if not decades, for recovery, it is imperative to exercise caution. It is crucial to prevent West Africa from becoming the next stage for a proxy war between foreign powers, motivated by agendas far removed from the liberation of the subregion and the broader continent from their debilitating challenges. While ECOWAS is striving to ensure an amicable resolution to the crisis in Niger, some Nigerians exhibit provocative behaviour and make inflammatory statements. Regrettably, those who have never experienced a civil war or a military coup are advocating for military intervention in the world's most populous black nation based on narrow-minded sentiments.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Yushau A. Shuaib, 'Niger Coup: ECOWAS and the Looming Proxy War, By Yushau A. Shuaib', *Premium Times Nigeria* (blog), 16 August 2023, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/616319-niger-coup-ecowas-and-the-looming-proxy-war-by-yushau-a-shuaib.html>.



*Figure 23: The three protagonists involved in the conflicts in Niger, August 2023. From the left: Vladimir Putin (President of Russia), Bola Tinubu (President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and spokesman for ECOWAS), and Joe Biden (President of the United States of America).*

The curiosity to find an empirical reason for justifying the substantial presence of Africans, integrated and proficient in speaking Chinese in a manner indistinguishable from a native speaker, prompted me to delve deeper. Through further research, I discovered that what I personally witnessed in Guangzhou in 2019 was merely one of the outcomes of an undoubtedly more global phenomenon.



## Tables and figures

### Chapter I

- Figure 1:** The leaders of non-aligned-nations ..... 16  
Sourced on <https://angelowijaya.medium.com/70-years-of-china-indonesia-cooperation-from-asian-african-conference-to-the-belt-and-road-746eaf7bed48>
- Figure 2:** Bandung: the first Asian African Conference, 1955..... 16  
Sourced on [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Bandung-The-First-Asian-African-Conference-1955\\_fig4\\_301755898](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Bandung-The-First-Asian-African-Conference-1955_fig4_301755898)
- Figure 3:** Tazara railway compared to another more recent Chinese built infrastructure ..... 17  
Sourced on <https://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/tanzania-zambia-railway>
- Figure 4:** Poster of Chinese worker in Africa, helping to build the Tanzam or TAZARA Railway (1968-1976), linking Tanzania and Zambia..... 18  
Sourced on <https://chineseposters.net/posters/e39-614>
- Figure 5:** The Friendship Road – The TANZAN Railway ..... 19  
Sourced on <https://chineseposters.net/posters/e39-614>
- Figure 6:** Logos of African organizations ..... 27  
Sourced on their respective official websites
- Figure 7:** FOCAC Logo..... 31  
Sourced on the FOCAC official website

### Chapter II

- Figure 8:** A framework of analysis of the Sino-African relationship..... 37  
Sourced on Conteh, 2017
- Table 1:** Values in the China-Africa Friendly Night 2019..... 50  
Sourced on <https://chineseposters.net/posters/e39-614>
- Figure 9:** China’s “exploitation” of Africa translation gaffe causes outrage..... 51  
Sourced on the article by Abdi Latif Dahir published by The Quartz Africa Weekly Brief
- Figure 10:** Chinese Provinces map ..... 59  
Sourced on [https://media.istockphoto.com/id/590598160/vector/china-map-illustration.jpg?s=612x612&w=0&k=20&c=iSGFz\\_kfescjTyzzy-sjebEYJr-7DemJoOtlSmWrd18=](https://media.istockphoto.com/id/590598160/vector/china-map-illustration.jpg?s=612x612&w=0&k=20&c=iSGFz_kfescjTyzzy-sjebEYJr-7DemJoOtlSmWrd18=)

### **Chapter III**

**Figure 11:** FDI flows to Asia and Oceania, top 10 economics, 2003-2004..... 79

Sourced on UNCTAD, World Investment Report 2005, available on <https://unctad.org/es/node/20983>

**Table 2:** Push and pull factors for South-South FDI?..... 83

Sourced on Soyyiğit, Nişancı (2021)

**Figure 12:** The increase of Chinese FDI trend to Africa between 2003 and 2017 according to main pull factors..... 84

Sourced on Soyyiğit, Nişancı (2021)

**Figure 13:** Chinese and US FDI flows to Africa 2003-2017..... 85

Sourced on China-Africa Research Initiative 2019

### **Chapter IV**

**Figure 14:** Will digital technology promote democracy and development?..... 90

Sourced on DIA, “Democracy in Africa” think tank. Available on <https://democracyinafrica.org/the-impact-of-chinese-digital-neocolonialism-on-human-rights-and-civil-liberties-in-africa/>

**Figure 15:** Logos of the most important Chinese telecommunication companies.94

Sourced on their respective official websites

**Figure 16:** Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa..... 99

Sourced on the Archive of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights

### **Chapter V**

**Figure 17:** Routes of Overland travel by Howard W. French ..... 105

Sourced on French, 2014

**Figure 18:** Location and Image of the Bui Dam..... 114

Sourced on [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Location-and-Image-of-the-Bui-Dam\\_fig1\\_347648134](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Location-and-Image-of-the-Bui-Dam_fig1_347648134)

**Figure 19:** Sinohydro, a Chinese state-owned hydropower engineering and construction company ..... 116

Sourced on its official website

**Figure 20:** Viral image purported to be Accra-Kumasi highway false..... 119

Sourced on the article by Ahiabile R. and Twumasi K. published by the Ghanese Newspaper Dubawa

**Figure 21:** Accra-to-Kumasi Road signed in red..... 119  
Sourced on Google images

**Figure 22:** image showing only four among more than 200 adinkra symbols,  
representing popular proverbs and maxims ..... 120  
Sourced on Arthur Kojo, 2001

**Conclusions**

**Figure 23:** The three protagonists involved in the conflicts in Niger ..... 133  
Sourced on Yushau A. Shuaib, 'Niger Coup: ECOWAS and the Looming Proxy War,  
By Yushau A. Shuaib', *Premium Times Nigeria* (blog), 16 August 2023.



## Bibliography

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*Appendix I: African political map*



*Appendix II: African political map and dissemination of natural resources*



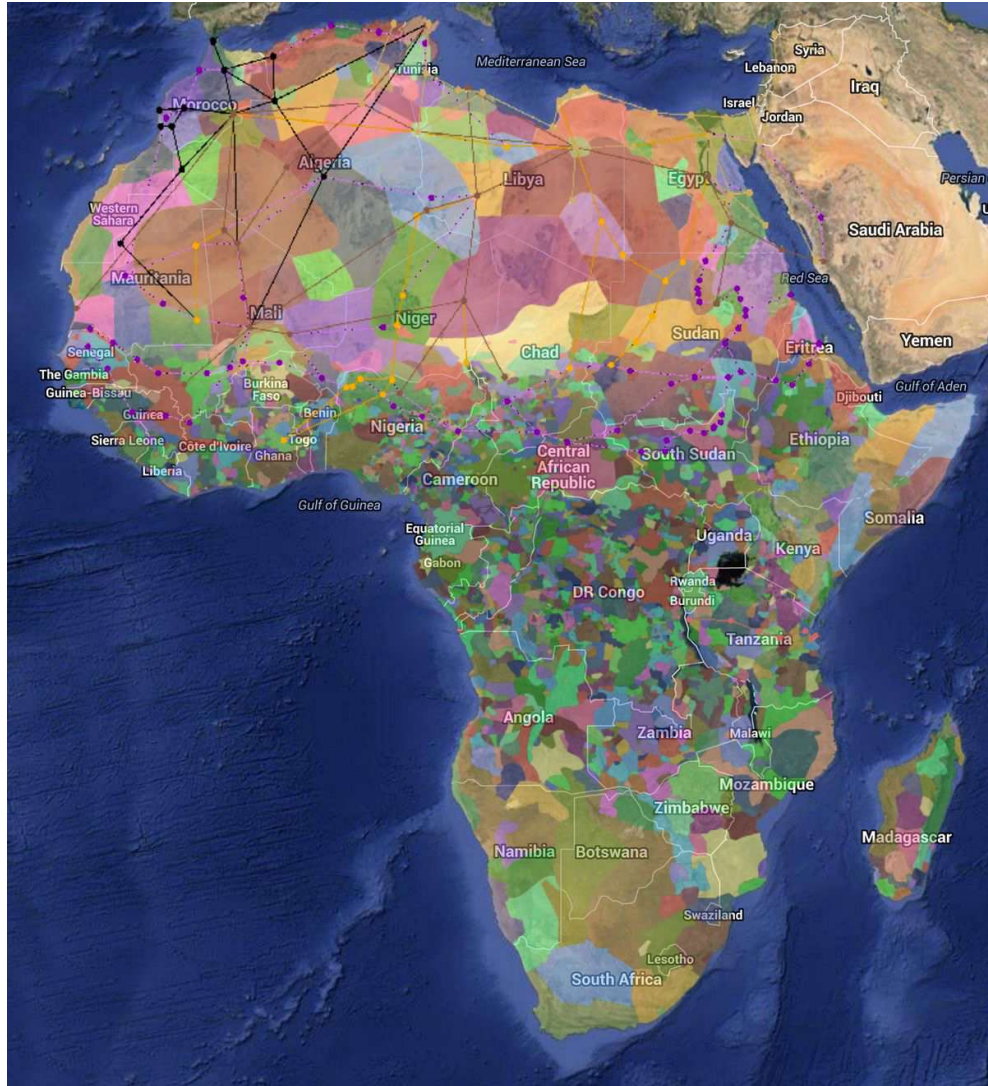
### *Appendix III: Chinese Dynasties*

There have been approximately 26 Chinese dynasties in history. Intentionally, I selected the most inherent to this analysis. The purpose of this table is to provide the reader with a broad overview of the period and the nomenclature of the dynasties mentioned in this analysis.

| <b>Dynasty</b>                       |                |                     |                  |               |             |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| <b>Name</b>                          |                |                     |                  |               |             |
| <b>English</b>                       | <b>Chinese</b> | <b>Hanyu Pinyin</b> | <b>Ethnicity</b> | <b>Period</b> | <b>Term</b> |
| Northern Song                        | 北宋             | Běi Sòng            | Han              | AD 960–1127   | 167 years   |
| Southern Song                        | 南宋             | Nán Sòng            | Han              | AD 1127–1279  | 152 years   |
| Western Xia                          | 西夏             | Xī Xià              | Tangut           | AD 1038–1227  | 189 years   |
| Jin dynasty                          | 金朝             | Jīn Cháo            | Jurchen          | AD 1115–1234  | 119 years   |
| Yuan dynasty                         | 元朝             | Yuán Cháo           | Mongol           | AD 1271–1368  | 97 years    |
| Northern Yuan                        | 北元             | Běi Yuán            | Mongol           | AD 1368–1635  | 267 years   |
| Ming dynasty                         | 明朝             | Míng Cháo           | Han              | AD 1368–1644  | 276 years   |
| Qing dynasty                         | 清朝             | Qīng Cháo           | Manchu           | AD 1636–1912  | 276 years   |
| <b>Republic of China 1912 – 1949</b> |                |                     |                  |               |             |
| <b>Modern China 1949 – present</b>   |                |                     |                  |               |             |

*Appendix IV: Comparison between the several Chinese minorities*

Because you should not consider Chinese immigrants as one entity.



Each colour roughly corresponds to an ethnic group that constitutes the majority in that region, based on how people self-identify. The measurement and delineation of ethnicity are known to be challenging due to variations in personal interpretations of ethnic identity. Everyone sees their own ethnic identity a little differently — but the results here



roughly track with a 1959 ethnography by anthropologist George Murdock and with a 2002 Harvard Institute study on ethnic diversity. The latter study discovered that a significant number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Uganda and Liberia, were among the most ethnically diverse globally. The above map certainly suggests enormous ethnic diversity across western and central Africa.

Ethnicity is a complex and multifaceted concept, and self-identification may not always align with traditional or historical categorizations. The map mentioned in the question suggests significant ethnic diversity in western and central Africa, which is consistent with previous studies and research. However, it should be understood that ethnic boundaries can be fluid and subject to change over time.

