

CHINA IN AFRICA COLONIALISM / NEOCOLONIALISM: A HISTORICAL SURVEY

Folusho Michael Fakayode, Ph.D¹

C. Alexander Ugwuka, Ph.D²

Ganni Kashetu Mamudu, Ph.D¹

&

S.I Ajayi¹

¹Lagos State University education, Otto Ijanikin

²Babcock Univeristy, Ilisan

Abstract

The renewed engagement of China with African states and China's growing assertiveness on the global stage have spurred a polarising debate on the conceptualisation of China's involvement in Africa within the wider academic literature. Indeed, the African policy, as part of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) foreign policy of the "Going Global Strategy", poses some serious questions about the role of China as a rising power and its impacts on the current international system order- as a status quo or revisionist power. Traditionally, China's presence in Africa has been viewed through three different strands of thought: as a development partner, an economic competitor or as a coloniser. What has been coined as the "Dragon Slayers" versus "Panda Huggers" debate - on whether China represents a threat or an opportunity for the African continent - presents valid arguments on both sides. In this light, this paper argues that this polarising debate on China as a neocolonial power (threat) or as a genuine development partner (opportunity) highlights the growing uncertainty.

Research Method: The authors used Historical Research Methods (Primary and Secondary Sources)

Introduction

The renewed engagement of China with African states and China's growing assertiveness on the global stage have spurred a polarising debate on the conceptualisation of China's involvement in Africa within the wider academic literature (Chen 2016, p. 100; Swedlund 2017, p. 389). Indeed, the African policy, as part of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) foreign policy of the "Going Global Strategy", poses some serious questions about the role of China as a rising power and its impacts on the current international system order-

as a status quo or revisionist power (Chen 2016, p. 101; Chen 2016, p. 178; Reeves 2018; p. 990). Traditionally, China's presence in Africa has been viewed through three different strands of thought: as a development partner, an economic competitor or as a coloniser (Alden 2007 pp. 5-6). What has been coined as the "Dragon Slayers" versus "Panda Huggers" debate - on whether China represents a threat or an opportunity for the African continent - presents valid arguments on both sides (Balasubramanyam 2015, p. 25). In this light, this paper argues that this polarising debate on China as a neocolonial power (threat) or as a genuine development partner (opportunity) highlights the growing uncertainty about.

China's rise as a great power and its implications for the conception of international relations; in addition, it is too early to make any decisive conclusion on the neo-colonialist nature of the People's Republic of China. Clearly, China's foreign policies demonstrate some form of neocolonial tendencies with imperialistic undertones. However, abiding completely by this perspective might hurt African states' interests in the long-run. First, an account of the ideological, political and economic underpinnings of China's African Policy will be explored. Second, the heart of the debate of China as a threat or opportunity for Africa will be discussed by exposing arguments from both camps. And lastly, the paper will conclude on the need for a cautious approach in understanding Chinese foreign policy in Africa.

Conceptual Clarification

Sino-African Relations: The Underpinnings of China's African Policy

China's African Policy is founded on a mix of historical narratives, win-win relationships and South-South Solidarity discourse, undergirded by the Chinese Communist Party's fierce adherence to the advancement of its core national interests under the national rhetoric of "Great Rejuvenation" (Langan 2017, p. 90; Reeves 2018, p. 978). Indeed, Sino-African relations are not new and have been figured prominently in the Chinese foreign policy discourse as a continuous pattern of South-South development cooperation and the shared identity with African people on the account of imperialism, and socio-economic developmental struggles (Okolo & Akwu 2016, p. 46; Swedlund 2017, p. 390; Reeves 2018, p. 91). Building on this seemingly shared identity, the CCP has constructed its African approach upon the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" which emphasises mutual respect for states' sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference, equality and mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence (Chen 2016, p. 112). In 2006, China has released its first African Policy Paper characterising Chinese engagement with Africa as enshrining the concepts of equality, non-interference and mutual benefits (Ncube 2012; p. 22; Chen 2016, p.113; Zhu 2017, p. 32). In practice, this

policy of "rayonnement" has been translated into effective diplomacy, comprehensive financial incentives in the form of development assistance, trade and investments, and limited military cooperation as well as peacekeeping operations (Alden 2007, pp. 34-35). Such holistic approach to African relations has elevated China as a major player in shifting the global balance of power, marking its inevitable rise as an influential state. Since President Xi Jinping has taken office in 2012, the CCP has pursued more aggressive policies abroad which legitimately raised questions about China's role in the international system as a revisionist or status quo power. Xi Jinping's ideological drive for greater international ambitions is enshrined in the ideals of China's "Great Rejuvenation" and the Chinese Dream". According to Zheng Wang (2013, p. 9), the concept of "Chinese 'Dream' and 'Great Rejuvenation' represent the national endeavour for China to claim back its rightful place as a great power within the international system. This international blueprint is in fact of crucial importance for China's core national interest. Indeed, as argued by Aoyama (2016, p. 3), the "Great Rejuvenation" discourse serves important functions such as domestic political legitimacy for the CCP leadership, mobilisation of citizens around a cohesive national identity and as a national strategy goal advising foreign policy-making. Hence, in order to understand China's growing assertiveness in Africa, it is essential to grasp the linkages between its national and international policy strategies.

Theoretical Framework: Dependency Theory

Economic neocolonialism extracts the human and natural resources of a poor country to flow to their economies of the wealthy countries. It claims that the poverty of the peripheral countries is the result of how they are integrated in the global economic system. Consequently, this theory is germane to the proper understanding of China in Africa colonialism and neocolonialism. Thus, the motivations behind Chinese investment in Africa have been driven by three motivations. Firstly, with its leadership legitimacy resting upon the fragile pillars of economic performance, Africa's abundance of natural resources in terms of oil and minerals represent an absolute priority for China's continued economic growth (Ncube 2012, p. 22; Chen 2016, pp. 102-103; Zhu 2017, p. 23). Secondly, Africa represents an expanding market to which China can export its cheap manufactured goods and represent long-term financial investment (Okolo & Akwu 2016, p. 47). And third, China's development aid assistance to Africa represents an effort to enhance its soft power and influence abroad by providing an alternative development model to the Washington Consensus, and securing support of African states within international institutions (Zhu 2017, p. 26; p. 29; p. 32). Hence, as concisely summarised by Mark Beeson (2018, p. 245), "Africa is providing an important testing ground for

China's evolving resource diplomacy and its efforts to ensure long-term economic security and influence".

China in Africa: Threat or Opportunity

Scholars who view China's involvement in Africa as negative have generally described such relations in terms of power asymmetry between the economic giant and the politically vulnerable African governments. Indeed, the concepts of neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism have been often used to describe Chinese interest in Africa. In his critique of the under-theorisation of Sino-African relations, A'Zami (2015, p. 725) exposes the contradictions in the concept of equal partnership propagandised by the CCP (unequal equal). Clearly, such rhetoric contrasts starkly with the power asymmetry between China and African states, calling for attention on the ability of African governments to maintain their sovereignty upon domestic and foreign policies. In this light, Mark Langan (2017) offers a convincing and enlightening analysis of China in Africa through the neo-colonialist approach of Nkrumah. According to Nkrumah, neo-colonialism can be interpreted as the diminution of African states' sovereignty through asymmetric economic relations and inequitable trade and investment between the parties (Langen 2017, p. 89). Hence, according to Langan (2017, pp. 94-95), China has effectively used trade to co-opt African elites and governments into abiding to and advancing Chinese mercantilist interests and for the protection of Chinese businesses at the expense of African people's social and environmental concerns. Zambia under the presidency of Michael Sata represents a compelling case in point which illustrates the dangers of economic dependency for state sovereignty as decried by Nkrumah. After winning the 2011 presidential elections upon the labeling of Chinese businesses as neocolonialists and the promise of stricter regulations of trade practices, Michael Sata has been left powerless in face of increasing Chinese firms lobbying and threat of closing down crucial economic operations. This effectively resulted in the Sata government backing down on major tax reforms (Langen 2017, pp. 95-96). Another neo-colonialist argument draws upon the parallels between Chinese economic activities within African states and past activities of

Western colonial powers. Balasubramanyam (2015, p. 21) highlights the combination of trade, financial investment, and aid to facilitate export of raw materials to China as resembling the extractive and exploitive colonial systems of the Old Powers. Hence, Chinese economic pragmatism dogma coupled with low concerns for welfare of African population and human rights abuses, and its closeness to political elites do raise some legitimate questions upon the neo-colonialist nature of Sino-African relations. On the international stage, China is ingloriously known for its systematic opposition to

international criticisms of its human rights records. The repeated blockings of UN resolutions in condemning China on violations of Tibetan's rights have been actively supported by African states which effectively enabled the deflection of sanctions (Waetherley 2014, p. 157; Chen 2016, p. 112). In return, China has been a consistent enabler of illiberal African regimes. The "no strings attached" principle view of Chinese aid programmes gave the CCP an economic and political advantage vis-à-vis Western powers by investing, hence gaining leverage, over pariah regimes (Alden 2007, p. 42; Zhu 2017, p. 38). For instance, China has been a major factor in sustaining the Darfur crisis in Sudan through the illicit sale of military weapons and threats to block any UN resolutions directed towards Sudan on the basis of self-interest in the Sudanese oil industries (Chen 2016, p. 105; 107; Zhu 2017, p. 38). Another case in point is the support China provided to Francois Bozize's dictatorial regime in Central African Republic in 2003 through financial investment in building mining and telecommunications infrastructures, hence keeping the economy, and by extension the regime, afloat (Halper 2010, p. 81). The growing appeal of the Beijing Consensus among African states and the effective use of economic leverages as diplomatic instruments can best be illustrated on China's resounding success in isolating Taiwan through the imposition of the "One-China Policy" embedded within official bilateral relations and agreements (Halper 2010, pp. 108-110; Chen 2016, p. 103; Langan 2017, p. 91; Zhu 2017, p. 28; Reeves 2018, pp. 982-983). As a result, there are only three African States (Burkina Faso, Sao Tome and Principe and Swaziland) out of 56 African states that still maintain official diplomatic ties with Taiwan (Chen 2016, p. 104). The cases presented clearly illustrate China's ability to influence or even direct African states' foreign policies, denoting a diminution of African states' sovereignty.

Sino-Africa Relations

Proponents of Sino-African relations tend to view these relations through a more optimistic lens. Far from denying the potential threat that China represents toward Africa, the "Panda Huggers" emphasise on the practical benefits that African states can reap from a Chinese state willing to invest in developing the continent's infrastructure. The sway of African governments toward Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA) programmes is the result of a general disillusionment after decades of Western developmental aid projects which resulted in the entrenched "underdevelopment" of Africa (Campbell 2008, p. 99). Indeed, Chinese economic activities are more practical with less red tape due to its lack of concern for good governance and good practices (Swedlund 2017, pp. 404-405). Hence, Chinese investors are quick to get things done and deliver projects that would have taken much more time

for Western investors to deliver. Pragmatism is of rigour when considering the African context. In this vein, Ehizuelen (2017, p. 342) sheds light on Africa's staggering need for infrastructure with an estimated \$ 93 billion dollar per year for the next decade in order to seal Africa's infrastructure gap. Under these circumstances, pragmatic, quick and generous Chinese foreign direct investments have been gladly welcomed by various African governments. In the long-run, these infrastructural development projects will contribute to improved regional economic integration of the African continent through transports connecting states and enabling swift exchange of goods and labour (Balasubramanyam 2015, p. 26). Moreover, according to Horace Campbell (2008, p. 100), African states and populations in general could greatly benefit from knowledge spill-overs from China leading to a technological revolution. Another powerful argument brought forward by scholars who view Sino-African relations in a favourable light is the perceived increased agency of African states. China's alternative model of development and its combination of investment, aid and trade has been argued to provide African states with the ability to choose their own path for development and hence, increasing their independence in face of Western powers (Swedlund 2017, p. 392). Moreover, some scholars like Corkin have advanced the idea that the exploitative relationship need not be one way only.

Through the Angolan case study, Corkin argues that African governments can make use of their sovereignty over natural resources extraction such as oil for export and use the proceeds towards reinforcing their regime legitimacy (A'Zami 2015, p. 730). Such view displaces the idea of power asymmetry resulting in unequal trade relations to a more win-win relation where both parties mutually benefit from the transaction. Other scholars have advanced a more speculative argument on China's sincere sympathy for African states developmental struggles. In this vein, Deborah Brautigam (2009, p. 21) argues that China is simply repeating patterns of development that it experienced under Western and Japanese investment policies during Deng Xiaoping's Open Door Policy. Hence, China is promoting a developmental model that the CCP believes has worked for the Chinese nation. In addition, in refuting Chinese exclusive investment focused on extractive resources, some scholars have pointed to China's debt relief activities (up to 10 billion yuan of loans to African states) and investment in non-resource rich states such as Guinea-Bissau (Chen 2016, p. 113; Zhu 2017, p.

Sitting on the Fence and Cautious Approach to China in Africa

Despite the polarising debate about China's impacts on African societies, there is a general consensus among scholars and observers that China cannot be fully trusted (Lumumba-Kasongo 2011, p. 237). Indeed, one will be utterly misguided to conceive of

Sino-African relations as purely an opportunity to be seized (Langan 2017, p. 94). Conversely, viewing China as only a predatory neo-colonial state will only generate unproductive relations and undermine African states' interests in the long-term (Chen 2016, p. 111; Okolo & Akwu 2016, p. 56). Some scholars have attributed the labeling of China as a neocolonialist state due to Western anxiety over China's growing global affluence (Chen 2016, p. 106; 109; Okolo & Akwu (Chen 2016, p. 106; 109; Okolo & Akwu 2016, p. 51; Langan 2017, p. 91). Hence, arguably, it is valid to consider that the labeling of China as a neo-colonialist or imperialist power is symptomatic of a shift in global balance of power, and hence the growing uncertainty on how to engage or contain China. Nonetheless, it is too early to succumb to apprehension and hastily categorise China-Africa relations as neo-colonialist. As argued by Beeson (2018, p.241), our current modern world has only experienced one major international transition (American Hegemony) and hence, it is difficult to ascertain on the meaning of China's economic and strategic expansion, including its activities in Africa. In addition, Chen's (2016) study of the polarising debate on China as a threat to Africa revealed that the stance of each side depends on the choice of unit for analysis.

This observation sheds light on the contradiction between the CCP's official African policy and the misconduct of Chinese businesses on the ground. If following this line of thought, greater responsibility is then attributed to African states to implement better governance and regulation on Chinese businesses. In this regard, Campbell (2008, p. 101) and Alden (2007, p. 82) placed their hope within the growing African civil society in keeping Chinese deeds in check and enforcing compliance from their respective governments. Indeed, one feature of colonialism that China cruelly lacks in Africa is cultural hegemony where language, culture and bureaucratic institutions remain highly influenced by previous Western colonial powers (Campbell 2008, p. 102; Lumumba-Kasongo 2011, p. 258; Balasubramanyam 2015, p. 25).

The Pros and Cons of Chinese Investment in Africa

Thanks to billions of dollars from China, new roads, bridges, stadiums and other projects are being built all over Africa. Even the building of the \$200 million headquarters of the African Union was funded entirely by the Chinese. China is also making industrial investments all over the continent, running mining and oil firms. As a result, China has now become Africa's most important trading partner, passing the United States. There are certainly benefits to Chinese investment in Africa, such as improvements in infrastructure and economic development. As economies grow, poverty decreases and populations become better educated and more politically involved, leading to better governance. However, there are also some questions about the negative impact that China's

involvement on the continent could be having. For example, the Chinese have been less discerning in terms of the countries they invest in, entering countries that are tend to be less developed and often less democratic than would be acceptable for the US or other Western countries. Whereas Western countries may pressure the countries they invest in to become more democratic or have a stronger respect for human rights, Chinese investors have not shown any interest in doing this. Instead, Chinese investment in Africa seems to be motivated solely by the prospects of Chinese economic gains. They are looking for the opportunity to extract raw materials and sell manufactured products to the African market, a scenario that somewhat resembles Africa's colonial past. In addition, many Chinese investments also involve the use of extensive Chinese labor, which creates problems for local unemployment. Whether Chinese investment in Africa will have predominantly negative or positive consequences in the future remains to be seen. However, it is important to note that Chinese investment in Africa will certainly increase its however, it is important to note that Chinese investment in Africa will certainly increase its clout there, allowing China to have a stronger influence than the US. What this will mean in practice is unclear, although if Chinese support helps prop up authoritarian regimes, the geopolitical consequences for the US could be serious. It would be wise for the US and other Western nations to take this into account as they consider both their development and aid projects as well as their level of investment in the region.

Evergreen of China-Nigeria Relationship Tree

In March 2021, with a lofty mission on my shoulder and great excitement in my heart, I landed in Abuja and my journey as the 14th Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria and the sixth Chinese Ambassador to ECOWAS began. In the past three years, I have visited different states in the country, made friends from all walks of life, and devoted myself to the growth of China-Nigeria friendship. China is the second largest economy and the most populous country in the world. Nigeria is the largest economy and the most populous country in Africa. The importance of the bilateral relations between China and Nigeria cannot be overstated. In order to foster the relations between our two countries, I proposed the 5-GIST Growth, Development and Progress Strategy, aiming at promoting all-round relations of our two countries crossing from political trust to people-to-people exchange. With our joint efforts, the past three years have witnessed more frequent high-level visits between our two sides, and our mutual political trust has been continuously consolidated. In particular, H.E. Kashim Shettima, Vice President of Nigeria, attended the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in October last year and met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Vice President Han Zheng, respectively. Leaders of both sides mapped out the blueprint of the future development and cooperation of our two countries.

Besides, the China-Nigeria Intergovernmental Committee was established and five sub-committees held their first meetings successfully. China-Nigeria legislative exchanges, political party exchanges and local provincial and state cooperation continued to advance.

China firmly supports Nigeria in exploring a path of development in line with its national conditions, and appreciates the Nigerian government for upholding the one-China principle and supporting China in international arena. I'd like to say that China and Nigeria are now partners standing to rise and fall together. Meanwhile, China-Nigeria practical cooperation has been significantly fostered. Nigeria has long ranked as China's largest project contracting market, second largest export market, major trading partner and investment destination in Africa, China and Nigeria have achieved fruitful outcomes in the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, featuring a series of infrastructure projects undertaken by Chinese enterprises such as the Zungeru Hydropower Project, the Lekki Deep Sea Port, the Ajaokuta-Kaduna- Kano (AKK) Gas Pipeline Project, the Lagos Blue Line and Red Line, the Abuja-Keffi-Lafia-Makurdi road dualisation, the Nigerian Railway Modernization Project, Kano Galaxy Backbone's National Tier IV Data Center, etc. The Lekki, Ogun, and Shagamu Free-trade zones (industrial parks) are attracting many companies world- wide to invest in Nigeria. The China-aided Nigerian Agricultural Technology Demonstration Center and the second phase of the solar traffic lights project in Abuja are put into operation, and the construction of ECOWAS secretariat building aided by the Chinese government is under good progress. Our practical cooperation is far more than the above. It's also covering agriculture, mining, industry, infrastructure, digital economy, talent cultivation, finance, and other fields. China-Nigeria practical cooperation has become a role model of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. The friendship of nations lies in the affinity of people, and the affinity of people lies in the affinity of hearts. Driven by my initiative of Sharing Chinese Harmony, Performing Nigeria-China Symphony, the people-to-people exchanges between our two countries have dramatically increased over the past three years. We organized a series of culture events including the Happy Chinese New Year Temple Fair, Chinese Film Festival, China-Nigeria Cultural Fiesta Singing & Dancing Competition, the Chinese Bridge-Proficiency Competition, etc, which greatly brought the hearts of our two peoples closer. In 2023, the China Central National Orchestra and the Sichuan Orchestra of China visited Nigeria, and together with the Nigerian Orchestra, they played a strong beat of "Harmony and Symphony" between China and Nigeria. Since the new administration of Nigeria took office last year, China-Nigeria relations opened a new chapter. This year, China will host the meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in autumn, during which Chinese and African leaders will gather in Beijing again after six years to plan our future development and cooperation. Nigeria has always been a steadfast partner of the FOCAC, and we

keenly look forward to the participation of Nigeria of this important event. I firmly believe that as long as our two countries continue to work together to promote traditional friend-ship, expand practical cooperation and strengthen people-to-people exchanges, the "cake" of China-Nigeria cooperation will grow bigger, and the tree of our China-Nigeria friendship will become evergreen. Nigeria is a country beloved by me. It has splendid ancient culture, peace-loving and hardworking people, and immeasurable development potential. As I am about to complete my tour of duty as Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, I will miss every precious moment of my stay here. On the occasion of parting, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my friends in Nigeria, my Chinese compatriots, and people from all walks of life that have cared for and supported China-Nigeria friendship. I hope that you will, as always, support the work of the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria and contribute your valuable strength to China-Nigeria friendship. I sincerely and firmly believe China and Nigeria will grow, develop progress and prosper together, and wish us a happy Chinese Lunar New Year, a dragon year! •Cui is the outgoing Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Nigerian.

China's Economic Statecraft in Africa

Africa, preeminent recipient of Chinese aid, has benefited greatly from Chinese low-rate loans, infrastructure projects and trade relations: Consequently, these massive investments cause analysts to question whether this Chinese expansionism constitutes a new form of colonialism. The author examines the different economic intervention tools of Beijing, the Chinese capitals economic engagement in the continent, and the long-time strategy of China in Africa: He also addresses approval ratings of Chinese engagement to both the elites and the general population of African. Africa is the top recipient of Chinese aid. In the early 2000s, China became Africa's largest trading partner and a leading investor and provider of aid. China's economic involvement in Africa has generated much commentary and especially in the Western press. Earlier this year, Le Monde reported that the African Unicos headquarters in Addis Ababa -a building built by the Chinese - was bugged and targeted by Chinese hackers who were siphoning off data from the Chinese capital towards servers in Shanghai. Also sounded the alarm with Hillary Clinton warring that Chinese expansionism could lead to a "new colonialism" in Africa. More recently Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, declared in a meeting with the chair of the African Union that Chinese investment on the continent had led to rising debt adding "when coupled with political and fiscal pressure, this endangers Africa's natural resources and its long-term economic and political stability. This paper will step away from the headlines to provide an overview of the academic debate about Chinese economic statecraft in Africa. The paper will underscore the changes in aid to Africa with the growing Chinese

assistance to the continent. Second, the paper will look at the various economic intervention tools of Beijing including some moderately positive results. Third, it will analyze how Beijing's economic engagement with the continent is part of a long-term strategy and not simply a dash for natural resources. Finally, the paper will focus on how Chinese economic engagement with Africa is viewed positively by elite and lay opinion.

China and Africa: The New Neocolonialism

President Zuma's visit to China in August, accompanied by a retinue of business and political leaders, brings into sharp relief the kind of relationship which has begun to develop between China and the African continent. Zuma was met by Hu Jintao, with the intention of expanding the commercial relationship between their two states. Apparently, China is now South Africa's major trading partner, accounting for 11.1% of South Africa's total trade volume, according to statistics published online by the Department of Trade and Industry. Indeed, an overview of diplomatic and other relations between China and Africa suggests the potential for mutual development. However, some (western) commentators regard China's accelerating engagement on the continent with suspicion, fearing that relations between two such drastically unequal economies could perpetuate dependence.

China approaches Africa with a policy of non-conditionality, which is welcomed in some countries as an alternative to perceived Western legacies of neocolonial influence; but this policy does, however, undermine international censure of despotic regimes. China cannot be blamed for pursuing its own economic interests, but its resource and market hunger hold the potential either to create devastating dependency or provide the stimulus for development. Some patterns of China's engagement in Africa are reminiscent of "neocolonialism", but whether this engagement is detrimental to development is in large measure determined by domestic conditions in African states. Where governments are corrupt, non-conditionality compounds this problem. Where domestic industries are uncompetitive, Chinese exports may curtail or skew development, and investment leads to repatriation of profits. Where economies are unevenly developed in favor of mineral exportation, Chinese demand and investment can exaggerate the inequality. However, where African governments possess a significant degree of legitimacy, a variety of domestic industries are developed, domestic capital is to some degree competitive, and labor is organized, the growth in Chinese investment, aid, unconditional loans and trade can prove beneficial to comprehensive development.

Neocolonialism and its Discontents in Africa

“*Neocolonialism*” is a convoluted term endowed with significant rhetorical power. It refers to influence exercised by foreign powers over the policy and economic trajectory of less developed states through means other than direct political control². The term can also imply a mercantilist model for economic relations: decolonised states remain dependent upon the exportation of raw materials to fuel growth in the developed world. The term was first used in the 1960s to explain the influence maintained by colonial powers in decolonised states. Limits to the new independence of African states were recognised in 1961 by the ‘All African People’s Conference’⁴. The literature on neocolonialism suggests several mechanisms by which influence is exercised. These mechanisms may be useful in understanding China’s relationship with African states. Post-colonial states entered the world economy from a disadvantaged position, and reliance on foreign capital facilitated neocolonialism. The competitive edge enjoyed by foreign direct investment (FDI) produced a vicious cycle; profits were repatriated abroad, rather than contributing to the domestic accumulation of capital.

The institutions remaining after the departure of the metropolitan power continued to function in ways which facilitated exploitation. The domestic elite of many decolonised states lacked the means to maintain power; infusions of capital and weapons were thus one mechanism of neocolonial control. Post-colonial states entered the world economy from a disadvantaged position, and reliance on foreign capital facilitated neocolonialism. The competitive edge enjoyed by foreign direct investment (FDI) produced a vicious cycle; profits were repatriated abroad, rather than contributing to the domestic accumulation of capital⁶.

Africa is rich in mineral resources, and with commodities prices fueled by accelerating growth in Asia⁷, there are strong incentives for investors to focus on development of extractive industries. This renders future development dependent upon fluctuations in price and promotes uneven development across sectors of the economy⁸. The opposing argument is that mineral exportation is Africa’s comparative advantage. But mineral extraction is technology-intensive, with limited potential for the job market⁹, so social development will be thwarted unless greater economic diversification is managed. Governments can prioritise and be sustained by foreign investment; the need to encourage developmental and social programmes to maintain legitimacy is therefore eliminated. Foreign aid may also be most responsive to the elite, maintaining power relations beneficial to foreign capital. The term “neocolonialism” might not be applicable to describe the relationship between China and Africa if it does in fact promote mutual development, even where the imbalance of power fits the model described above.

Patterns of Contact between China and Africa

An account of China's contemporary role in Africa begins during the Cold War. China competed with capitalist states and Russia for spheres of influence in the less developed world by providing support and aid to regimes amenable to their foreign policy. Immediately after the Cold War, diplomatic relations between China and most African states dwindled, but has re-intensified over the past decade. Some continuity must be noted between China's Cold War engagement and the present; China now highlights its support of anti-colonial struggles¹². China presents itself as a distinctive model of development, which provides an alternative to free market capitalism. Levels of Chinese investment in Africa today are unprecedented. Trade between China and Africa has suffered somewhat during the recession, estimated at a value of US\$91 billion in 2009 compared to US\$106.8 billion in 2008¹⁴. In 2007, Asia received 27% of African exports, an increase from 14% in 2000, although still slightly lower than trade between Africa and the United States (32%) or Europe (29%). Petroleum is the dominant export, followed by ores and metals¹⁵. Levels of Chinese FDI in Africa have also grown, estimated at US\$1 billion in 2008¹⁶, while levels of investment from Africa to China have grown at a more modest rate; Chinese investment has concentrated primarily on mineral extraction, but is beginning to diversify. The intensification of economic relations between China and Africa is indicative of China's bid for global economic power and great need for resources to fuel rapid industrialisation. Diplomatic relations between China and Africa are characterised by rhetoric of development partnership and competition with the capitalist West¹⁸. This rhetoric is manifest in China's 'non-conditionality' policy. China professes itself to be without political motivation, and will engage with pariah states¹⁹. They will also provide loans without the economic restructuring demanded by the IMF. But are the ambitions of a fast-developing country in line with the development goals of less developed states? China provides massive sums of aid to African states, presented as an unconditional stimulus for development. Up to 2006, the Chinese government claims to have provided US\$5.74 billion in aid to African states²⁰. In 2007, official development aid from China was estimated at between US\$1.4 and US\$2.7 billion annually, with further concessional loans of around US\$8 billion and infrastructural projects of around US\$7 billion. Top recipients of Chinese aid were Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sudan²¹. Where aid is provided in the form of infrastructure, it can facilitate productivity and trade. However, these infrastructural projects are often rendered less beneficial to the African economy by the importation of Chinese labor, contracting to Chinese firms, and importation of materials.

Interpreting the Relationship between China and Africa

Mutual dependence between China and Africa provides one argument against the characterisation of relations as neocolonial. However, this mutual dependence is vastly unequal. China relies upon cheap resources, for which Africa presents a particularly non-competitive source, but it is by no means the only source; in 2007, one quarter of African exports were destined for Asia, but these accounted for only 1.6% of Asia's imports²³. Additionally, the importation of capital results in repatriation of profits: While productivity grows, domestic capital does so to a limited degree. Chinese exports also compete with African exports and domestic markets due to similarly cheap labor and resource wealth, with the difference that China's industrialisation and availability of capital provide for greater productivity; competition drives efficiency, but it also creates unemployment. While China's thirst for resources provides leverage to African states, Africa's dependence upon China outweighs China's dependence upon Africa. However, mutual dependence reopens the question of 'non-conditionality'. China's need for resources has an unavoidably political element. Unstable African states present very risky investments; China's resource needs encourage the government to shoulder some of the risk by creating stability. For example, the Chinese government has provided support for the ZANU-PF in order to secure Chinese investments in Zimbabwe²⁴. However, this may be changing as international negative reactions to China's support of genocidal regimes have demonstrated costs to international goodwill.

Sino-Angolan Relations

The substance of China's economic engagement differs from state to state in Africa, as do domestic conditions of that engagement and the resulting potential for development. In 2008, Angola was China's chief trading partner in Africa²⁶. It is the second largest producer of oil on the continent, and one of few states to enjoy a trade surplus with China²⁷. The leverage Angola enjoys due to the high price of oil is significant; but the focus on oil exportation is a mixed blessing for development. In 2005, Angola was disqualified for loans by international financial institutions because of poor governance. Trade with China was an attractive alternative for revenue for the reconstruction of the post-war economy. China's relationship with Angola was seen by Western financial institutions as unlikely to promote transparency, due to the tendencies of Chinese relations in Africa to be bilateral, Chinese corporations to be secretive, and China's non-conditionality policy.

Neo-Colonialism in Africa: The Economic Crisis in Africa and the Propagation of the Status Quo by the World Bank / IMF and WTO

It is no secret that Africa is wallowing in extreme poverty, well behind other developing nations in Asia and South America, and definitely centuries behind the Western civilizations that are the United States and Europe. Africa is deep in debt, hunger, diseases, illiteracy and civil strife. Many argue that the condition in Africa is in fact far worse today than it was at the end of colonialism under the European nations in the 1960s and 1970s. Observing the living conditions of the rapidly growing population, it is apparent that this is actually the case. I painfully agree that living conditions are worse now, but reiterate that colonialism is not over as such. There is merely a new form of colonialism, by the same western countries, masked under the pretext of economic support for Africa, directly enforced or institutionalized in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The policies enforced on poor African countries through these organizations have chained Africa to continued dependence on western economies for mere subsistence, by preventing self help to the continent's economic problems. Moreover, the same policies seem to favor a trade imbalance to the already wealthy Western economies over the struggling ones in Africa. This economic colonization of Africa has done and continues to do as much damage to the continent as the imperial colonialism and its after effects did. The World Bank and the IMF, jointly known as the Bretton Woods institutions, were created in 1944 with an aim to help rebuild the economies that had been greatly affected by World War II. The original plans included an international trade organization, but it was not until 1995 that the World Trade Organization (WTO) was formed. The IMF would create a stable climate for international trade by harmonizing its members' monetary policies, and maintaining exchange stability. It would be able to provide temporary financial assistance to countries encountering difficulties with their balance of payments. The World Bank, on the other hand, would serve to improve the capacity of countries to trade by lending money to war-ravaged and impoverished countries for reconstruction and development projects. By 1944 none of the colonized African countries had attained their independence and hence were neither members nor intended beneficiaries of this grand plan. Currently the World Bank is the largest public development institution in the world, lending around US\$ 25 billion a year to developing countries for the financing of development projects and economic reform. It comprises of 183 member countries, including 47 in sub-Saharan Africa, and is headed by the World Bank director, currently James Wolfensohn, who is directly appointed by the US government. The bank is governed under a board of governors, whose voting powers are based on the members' capital subscriptions which means the members with the greatest

financial contributions have the greatest say in the Bank's decision-making process. The US government holds 20 percent of the vote and is represented by a single Executive Director while the 47 sub-Saharan African countries, in contrast, have two Executive Directors and hold only seven percent of votes between them. It is evident early on from this fact that the board decisions are not likely to be in favor of the poorest members which are in Africa.

The WTO was established in 1995 based on a set of rules for global trade that had been negotiated in round table negotiations since the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The aim of the WTO is to ensure that global trade is conducted smoothly and peacefully and it does this by creating rules that govern global trade, which have to be followed by member countries. Countries become members by ratifying WTO regulations and in so doing are governed by the regulations not only when involved in international trade, but also within their respective borders. This means that WTO rules become a part of a country's domestic legal system. The membership to the WTO currently stands at 148 with 41 of these being in Africa. The WTO is run by its member governments. All major decisions are made by the membership as a whole, either by ministers (who meet at least once every two years) or by their ambassadors or delegates (who meet regularly in Geneva). Decisions are normally taken by consensus. In this respect, the WTO is different from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. In the WTO, power is not delegated to a board of directors or the organization's head. In this manner the poorest countries are in a better position to influence decisions of the WTO, than they are in the World Bank/IMF.

The Current Debt Situation in Africa

Saying that Africa is currently in an economic crisis is probably a great understatement. Basic infrastructure in most African countries is dilapidated, economic growth is minimal, access to the basics like food, health and education is sparse and expensive, arid areas are encroaching into previously arable land, and so on and so forth. The list is enormous. All this while the continent is deeply entrenched in debt to the developed Western countries, much of which was acquired to fight the economic hardships, but have obviously failed to make any marked improvement in the situation.

There are many arguments as to the cause of the current economic crisis in Africa from political instability, to underdeveloped human resources, to the oil crisis of the 1973-4, to increased government spending after the colonial period, to inheritance of poor colonial economic systems and trade practices (which were set to serve as source and sink to the "mother" country rather than serve the people), to the sole dependence on primary industries (i.e. failure to diversify), and many more. All these points are to a great extent

valid, but how the situation has been handled has resulted more to maintaining the status quo or worsening the situation altogether as the rest of the world looked on if not directly benefited. Though the title of my paper befits a much broader perspective on the economic crisis in Africa, my focus is primarily on the debt problem.

Structural Adjustment Programs

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were prescribed for Africa beginning in the early 1980s when it became apparent that there was a big economic crisis looming over Africa. There were concerns that government spending was careening out of control in many of the countries, which was not reciprocated with huge revenue and thus big budget deficits. A bigger concern was the inability of many of the African economies to service the huge debts that they had incurred. To ensure debt repayment and economic restructuring the IMF/World Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Programs modeled on the neo-liberal ideology that the optimal economic system is achieved by giving free reign to market participants, privatization, free trade, and the shrinking of government intervention in the economy. The Structural Adjustment Programs were a precondition to new loans from the World Bank and renegotiations of current debts. Many African governments were reluctant to the policies prescribed from the onset but obliged just to maintain support. Over the years it has turned out that the policies have neither alleviated the huge debts nor improved the economies of the developing countries. If anything, poverty in African countries has increased as a direct result of these policies. So what were these policies? The Structural Adjustment Programs prescribed to all African countries, regardless of unique situations can be summarized as follows: privatization of government enterprises and decreased government spending; liberalization of trade and lifting of import and export restrictions; increased interest rates; liberalization of the money markets and devaluation of currencies; and lastly, market pricing and the removal of price controls and government subsidies. All these measures have negative effects that can arguably far outweigh the intended economic benefit. I will briefly explain the theories of these arguments then give examples, and in the following section highlight Mozambique as a case study on SAPs gone wrong. Privatization of government enterprises is meant to curb huge government budgets and deficits, and to essentially free up money for repayment of loans. It makes sense to privatize government enterprises that are unprofitable and non-productive. However, it cannot be done on a large-scale swoop as prescribed by the IMF/World Bank. There are many hindering factors such as the lack of local private capital and entrepreneurs to take over the huge corporations. This opens the gates to foreign investors who ultimately will repatriate profits instead of reinvesting locally to promote growth. Ultimately the result is massive layoffs and pay cuts, and increased

repatriation of income. In addition, reduced government expenditure robs the citizens of essential services including health and education. Social services, such as health and education cannot be run with the aim of profit, so privatizing them and/or reducing government spending hurts social welfare in general. It is also important to note that oftentimes unproductive sectors such as military do not undergo budget cuts.

Liberalization of trade is meant to create a market-based pricing and have exporters get better prices for their products and make available more affordable alternatives from abroad. However, it also leads to dumping of cheap products from outside such as clothes, food, and stationery. This undermines the local industries that produce or those that would have started to produce these products. It is well known that budding industries need nurturing and protection at the early stages. A new fabric manufacturing plant in Tanzania, for example, cannot be expected to be as efficient as established manufacturers in China, and hence cannot compete equally; so African infant industries fail to take-off under extensive trade liberalization. This is also very critical with respect to imported food such as rice, wheat, milk, etc. Developed countries which have an excess of these food items reduce their price and export them to Africa to get rid of this excess at any price. If such a situation is not controlled, Africa will never be able to produce its own food. In addition, liberalization of export of raw materials robs local industries of raw materials which can fetch higher prices from more efficient external competitors. Increased interest rates are meant to encourage savings and investment in the capital market. However, this makes capital inaccessible to local and small businesses which are the mainstay of most growing economies. Also, this creates speculative investment especially from external sources which brings quick paper money profits to a few people while adding nothing to productive capacity. So the industries do not benefit at all. Liberalization of the money markets, that is lifting of control of foreign exchange transactions, coupled with unrestricted imports causes increased spending on imports at the expense of local spending, and also contributes to the devaluation of the local currency. Devaluation of currencies is supposed to increase self-sufficiency by making imported products more expensive and exports cheaper. Another perspective is that exporters get more money for their products while external buyers are more able to afford African exports. However, this gain is artificial because the local industries still rely a lot on imports such as fuel and machinery thus their production costs increase accordingly and commodities become more expensive locally. Additionally, most of the developed countries that buy African products set quotas on how much can be imported or have fixed prices in foreign currencies to shelter their own producers from foreign competition. (It is ironic that the same protectionist practices being abolished by the SAPs are still practiced by the US and European Union that preach their abolition.) Under these

conditions, African products, even when they become cheaper externally, do not necessarily gain new outside markets or earn more foreign exchange. In the long run there may be no real benefits, merely inflated prices. A good example is in Kenya, where The 81 percent devaluation of the Kenyan Shilling in 1993 resulted in an overnight jump of the external debt to 143 percent of GDP, and commodity prices escalated 3 to 4 times in a week. That year for the first time in decades, the price of salt, one of the cheapest staple products, rose. Market pricing, achieved by removal of price controls and government subsidies are meant to reduce government spending and to promote competition and improve production efficiency. However, the removal of subsidies designed to control the price of basics such as food and milk hurts the poorest of the poor. By devaluing the currency and simultaneously removing price controls, the immediate effect is generally instantaneous hikes in prices of commodities. Basic needs, such as food become unaffordable thus increasing the poverty rate overnight. Also, removal of government subsidies coupled with open importation may hurt local production economies which may have to compete with dumping from foreign countries. Thus, farmers end up having depleted revenues and in turn produce less which in turn causes shortages of basic commodities.

In summary SAPs are a poor prescription intended to relieve a misdiagnosed problem. SAPs were designed to address the symptoms of the economic problems and not the root causes of the economic crisis. The need for policies to increase economic productivity of the African countries and improving their social and technological infrastructures remained unaddressed, meanwhile the IMF/World Bank made policies aimed at increasing government's ability to repay loans. SAPs led to the postponement or total abandonment of development programs such as new roads, schools and hospitals. Existing infrastructure became cash strapped, with lack of books in schools, lack of medicine in hospitals, roads in perpetual disrepair, etc. None of the countries even those that implemented SAPs religiously have improved their economic situation to date. After over two decades of Structural Adjustment Programs most African countries are suffering from high inflation, lower spending on health, education, housing, sanitation and water. Illiteracy has not declined unemployment is incredibly high and average income for the ones lucky to be employed barely suffice for subsistence. In 1994, the World Bank admitted that out of the 29 African countries it had provided more than \$20 billion in funding to sponsor adjustment programs during the ten- year period, 1981-1991, only 6 had performed successfully: The Gambia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. This means a failure rate of 79%. Barely a year later, however, had this number shrunk to two out of 29: Burkina Faso and Ghana. By 1995, SAPs were on the verge of collapse in Ghana. By 2001, Ghana, the World Bank's poster child was on the list

of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), the World Bank's intensive care unit for the poorest countries whose debt is classified as unsustainable. By 2002, Ghana's real per capita income was about 10-15% below 1983 level when the structural adjustment program was launched. In 1998, the World Bank identified four new countries, Guinea, Lesotho, Eritrea and Uganda, as the new poster children for success of SAPs. Similarly, in less than two years, this list had shrunk, leaving Uganda as the Bank's only economic success story. A lot of political capital was invested in Uganda with praises from all corners. As it turned out, the accolades were premature. Uganda's rate of economic progress is non-sustainable. About 55 percent of its budget is aid-financed. Different African countries have different scenarios but the same story has played out over and over from one country to the next. After structural adjustments all countries in Africa are worse off than when they started. To paint a better picture I will consider Mozambique as an example. At independence in 1975 Mozambique was the world's leading cashew producer, and processed cashew kernels were the country's most important export. Mozambique was still under Portuguese colonial rule. The overthrow in 1974 of Dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and the declaration of independence that ended the colonial rule caused the Portuguese to flee and marked the beginning of a 16 year civil war. By the end of the war in 1992, production had tumbled, the national cashew orchard had a high proportion of old or diseased trees, and state-owned processing plants badly needed new investment. As expected the prescription for revival by the World bank was "privatize, then trade freely". So the state cashew company was broken up and sold off in 1994-95. Mozambican companies bought the processing plants on the assumption that the industry would continue to enjoy government protection from foreign competition. But in late 1995, as a condition for over US\$ 400 million in loans, the World Bank demanded the liberalization of the raw cashew trade. This meant reducing the export tax on raw nuts, even though all those involved - the industry, the traders in raw nuts, and the government - had agreed on a 26 per cent export tax, designed to encourage domestic processing.

Under World Bank pressure, the tax came down to 20 and then to 14 per cent, a level which allowed traders selling raw nuts to India to compete with the local processing plants. By late 1998, 10 of the 15 sizeable processing factories had closed, with over 5,000 workers laid off. The World Bank argued repeatedly that liberalization would improve the prices paid to farmers for their nuts. However, an independent study by the international consultancy firm Deloitte and Touche, commissioned by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and funded by the World Bank, found that the benefits of liberalization mainly went to the traders, not the farmers. It rejected as inaccurate World Bank claims that the industry was so inefficient that Mozambique would earn more money by exporting raw nuts rather than processed kernels. On the contrary, the Deloitte

study found that, on average, Mozambique would gain an extra US\$ 150 per ton by exporting processed nuts. The Mozambican parliament reacted to the World Bank pressure by calling for a total ban on the export of raw nuts for the next 10 years, a proposal backed by the remnants of the processing industry. In September 1999, the government passed a compromise bill raising the tax to 18-22 per cent, with the exact level to be determined each year, based on prevailing conditions. World Bank officials were reported to have tacitly agreed to the compromise. The sad reality is that, despite many years of World Bank-sponsored policy reform, barely any country in Africa has successfully completed its adjustment program with a return to sustained growth. In fact, the path from adjustment to improved performance has often been a road to nowhere or a dead-end. Poverty rates have increased sharply in Africa, suggesting rather cryptically that more Bank lending leads to increased poverty. If the World Bank/IMF and their policies are keeping the economic crisis in Africa alive, what are the alternatives? This is a natural question to ask following this discussion. The Bretton Woods institutions were formed after the World War II to address the economic problems of that time. Though the European economies needed massive restructuring, their situation was distinctively different from that of Africa after independence. These were already relatively developed nations for the times, merely set back by years of fighting. The medicine prescribed was to pour in money to reconstruct what was lost in the war. Africa on the other hand was coming out of colonialism with unfavorable colonial economic structures that needed complete overhaul. Land reclamation and use by indigenous farmers was limited by concessions given to white settlers, so there were limited agricultural opportunities for the people beyond subsistence levels. In addition, the majority of the Africans were secluded in a very rural environment while development programs mostly supported the urban areas. Access to the education that would build manpower able to sustain development was limited. Looking at all these conditions that were peculiar to Africa at the time, pouring in money in the same manner as was done in Europe, and with the same economic ideology, was a recipe for failure. Moreover, appointing the World Bank/IMF, which was run by countries that were unwilling to give up their colonial mercantile practices in Africa in the first place, to be the watchdog spelled a big conflict of interest? It is no surprise that the IMF/World Bank policies have driven Africa deeper into debt and poverty, while the western economies still benefit enormously from African production and markets. The West cannot succeed in restructuring the economic environment in Africa because it is not in its best interest to do so. The only role that the developed countries could take to help would be a humanitarian one.

Conclusion

In my opinion, the African debt problem is the biggest hindrance to any possible solutions to the overall economic crisis. This is ironic because the purpose of the loans in the first place was to help alleviate economic hardships in the receiving countries. Most African countries were in debt almost as soon as they gained independence. The amount of debt has been constantly rising since then. Currently African governments spend huge chunks of their annual revenue just to service loans, money that could go quite a distance in developing their economies. Sino-African relations are complex and multi-layered. A cautious approach is needed when evaluating the polarising debate on China as a neo-colonial power devoted to resource-grabbing and devoted to resource-grabbing and exploitation. The peculiar preference of Beijing for bilateral agreements with other states is legitimately seen as a showdown of power politics where China ensures its economic leverage over less powerful states. China does exhibit some neocolonial tendencies and has the potential to undermine African states' sovereignty. However, African states have also enjoyed some degree of agency and have, to some extent, benefitted from economic and infrastructural development. Nevertheless, China's growing influence on the African continent seems inevitable and it is safe to advance that China will always play by the geopolitical game of maximizing its own national interests, defying other states. In this regard, China is acting like any other emerging power would act. I propose solutions to the current crisis at two levels that should be very independent. The first is to establish organizations and policies to directly address poverty and economic strife in Africa. The second is to find ways to alleviate the current debt. It may be true that by increasing its economic wealth Africa would be better able to afford its debt, but at the same time the debt burden is preventing Africa to meet the first objective of poverty reduction. These two objectives have to be addressed independently. I propose that Africans worry about building their economies in lieu of paying back World Bank debt. No more loans should be taken from the IMF and the World Bank, and no more resources should be spent in repaying existing loans. Economic policies should be made from within and development funds also built from within, with African countries being the only stakeholders. To replace the World Bank and the IMF Africa should rethink the idea of the African Development Bank that currently plays second fiddle to the other two economic giants. In my opinion one big flaw in the banks structure is the inclusion of non-African members so that they can contribute to the development fund. Because contributions are inadvertently made under certain policies, Africa's autonomy in decision making can be compromised. Even worse, the African Development Bank currently negotiates bilateral lending from Western countries. There is enough money and resources to build a fund without looking towards external sources. Africa spends over US\$12 billion annually in

debt repayment. This could instead go into a locally managed development fund from which member countries can acquire loans under fairer terms than from the World Bank. African countries are rich in resources such as oil and diamond whose revenues can be channeled for development through this bank. For example, Nigeria's revenue from oil is channeled through banks in Europe. The African Development Bank could be used instead to manage this revenue. If Africa can also embark on serious and aggressive diversification of their economic from mono-economy they would be free from the yoke of neocolonialism.

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