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Understanding Sino-African Relations: Neocolonialism or a New Era?

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What motivates increased relations between China and African countries? While Chinese interests in natural resources throughout Africa is well known, less attention is given to whether these interests are short-term or long-term in nature. We challenge the assumption of Chinese neocolonialism without portraying growing relations as void of problems for African development. Instead of viewing these relations from one of two polarized positions, we suggest that reality is somewhere in the middle, with the potential for deeper mutually beneficial relationships coexisting with some level of exploitation.

Keywords: China, Africa, Foreign Relations, Economic Development

1. INTRODUCTION

What motivates increased relations between China and African countries? Once hesitant to assume the responsibilities of a rising superpower, China in recent years has joined United Nations peace-keeping missions in Liberia, Western Sahara, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). China has also supported UN reforms that would give an African country a permanent seat on the Security Council (Meidan, 2006). Perhaps more importantly, China's economy has grown rapidly over the past two decades, leading the Chinese government and private businesses to broaden their investment activities in order to meet domestic demand and remain competitive in the global market. China is now more engaged with many African countries while at the same time overlooking political and human rights abuses in order to appease oppressive but resource rich governments. Furthermore, the African continent has a long history of exploitation from western nations. Like China, these nations extracted resources arguably with marginal benefits for Africans themselves. The question remains whether China's approach is truly benefitting Africans or if the current trend is nothing more than 21st century exploitation from yet another emerging economy.

While a growing body of literature evaluates Chinese investment in Africa by presuming growing relations are predicated on access to natural resources, few place Sino-African relations within the greater historical context. Relations first built upon Cold War rationales have evolved towards a convergence of economic interests. To understand patterns of Sino-African economic relations, we argue one must first navigate this evolving political environment and what Brautigam refers to as the "waves of misinformation" regarding Sino-African relations (Brauitgam, 2009). While the continent remains underdeveloped, African countries have access to, and control of, an abundance of natural resources that are critical for China's continued economic growth. Whereas Sino-African relations historically have flucuated between engagement and indifference (Large, 208; Van Ness, 1998), China's rise as a superpower suggests perhaps the beginning of a more enduring economic relationship. If

China is interested in pursuing ties with African governments with long-term interests in mind, then we should expect to see long-term development strategies, promotion of financial stability, and explicit benefits for African governments. However, if Chinese investments are aimed at short-term benefits, investment in Africa should be directed more at resource extraction and quick profits than sustainability. Such activities would likely continue the resource curse plaguing much of the continent. Long-term investment strategies would ostensibly require that resource availability in Africa is not threatened due to ongoing or imminent civil conflict and political instability while short-term strategies would not necessarily take this into account. Understanding the history of Sino-African relations is thus important in determining how contemporary interactions may help or hinder stability in nations rich in resources and poor in governance.

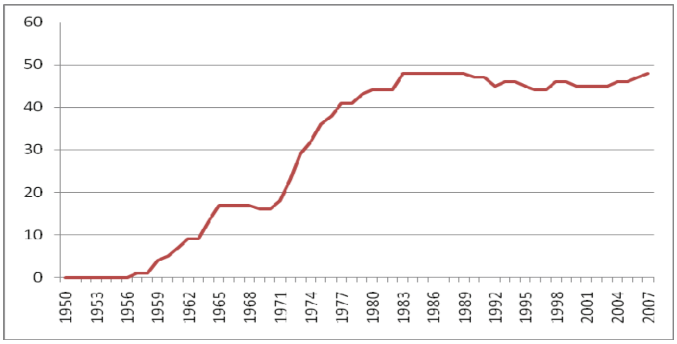
Chinese efforts to secure natural resources through greater relations with Africa are well documented, with the efforts often labeled as neocolonialism (Zweig and Bi, 2005; Frynas and Paulo, 2006; Taylor, 2006a; Melber, 2007; Herman, 2007; Norberg, 2006). Even South African President Thabo Mbeki cautioned about growing Sino-African relations resembling neocolonialism (Mahtani, 2007; Russell, 2007). Others attempt to uncover broader motivations behind Chinese aid and investment throughout the continent (Brautigam, 1998; Pehnelt, 2007; McLaughlin, 2005; Timberg, 2006; Brautigam, 2009). Instead of focusing solely on what China receives from African nations, we suggest one should view Sino-African relations as mutually constructed and dynamic relations. Any attempt to understand current Sino-African trends thus require a study from several simultaneous perspectives, rather than the general tendency of the literature to focus on China and Africa (or African countries) as unitary actors (Muekalia, 2004; Tull, 2006). Few empirical analyses from Africans on the subject have been forthcoming, further hampering a balanced understanding of these relations (Ampiah and Naidu, 2008; Kweisi, 2007). In addition, what constitutes aid remains poorly defined. Our approach thus attempts to contextualize contemporary Sino-African relations, give adequate weight to both Chinese and diverse African interests, and provide clarity to some of the jargon within the relevant literature.

This paper will first briefly introduce the history of Sino-African relations during the Cold War and how it shapes present relations. An unpacking of the economic assistance to African countries follows, suggesting how African relations with the West have shaped current views of the "Beijing Consensus". In conclusion, we attempt to shed light on the impact of growing Sino-African relations and discourage framing such relations in extreme terms.

2. HISTORICAL RELATIONS

China's first contact with Africa dates to the Ming Dynasty (Filesi, 1972) but only after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 did consistent substantive relations across the continent become commonplace. Improving China-African relations served multiple goals. First, securing African support was crucial in China's diplomatic battles with Taiwan (Republic of China), not only to prevent support for a "two China" policy, but to ultimately gain entry into the United Nations. Recognition was thus viewed as a reflection of sovereignty, the "golden ring that political leaders hope to grasp" (Krasner, 2009). This Cold War diplomatic battle coincided with the end of nearly a century of colonial rule throughout Africa, leaving extensive social and political upheaval post-

Figure 1. Number of African Nations Recognizing China by Year[1]



independence. With African nations comprising a third of UN membership by the mid 1960s, Africa became fertile ground for China's recognition goals (see Figure 1).

Outmaneuvering Taiwan for recognition among these newly independent states became crucial to ultimately attaining UN representation. In 1959, Mao Zedong referred to Africa as a partner in the "struggle against imperialism", implicitly tying recognition to grander ideological battles (Mao, 1998). Still, from 1960-1963, 13 of the 23 African countries recognized Taiwan, compared to five for the PRC.[2] In 1963-1965 Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited eleven African countries attempting to frame China's position in the region as an ally in anti-colonialism, while committing the PRC to nearly $120 million in aid (Brauitgam, 2009). Despite the poor reception for Zhou at the time, by mid-decade support on the continent was nearly evenly divided between China and Taiwan, highlighting Africa's role within this Cold War conflict. By the end of the 1970s and after gaining a seat on the UN Security Council, the tides had turned with forty four African countries recognizing China compared to five for Taiwan (Taylor, 2002). Cold War rationales for recognition in most cases did not equate to deeper relations, nor did this fundamentally change in the immediate post Cold War era. Where diplomatic relations globally are rarely revoked once established, African countries continually play a bargaining game between China and Taiwan. Nine countries − Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia, Lesotho, Liberia, Niger, Senegal and Central African Republic − have switched relations more than once, with the latter switching five times since 1962.

Secondly, expanding relations in Africa tied into growing Sino-Soviet conflict. While Beijing made appeals from at least the Bandung Conference of 1958 to position itself as the benefactor of the Third World, China also used its newfound influence in Africa to support revolutionary and national liberation movements in present-day Namibia, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Cape Verde, and elsewhere. Specifically Beijing attempted to associate African independence with communist revolution as a means to ensure Chinese interests on the continent (Yu, 1988). Furthermore, to African leaders China appeared as a less threatening version of communism, aiding Chinese interests. Even during the Cultural Revolution when

[1] Countries are coded as recognizing China if they had formal relations for more than half of the year in question.

[2] Despite the competition Central African Republic, Cote D'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Niger, and Sierra Leone, all UN members, recognized neither government at first (Klein, 1963:45-50).

China's focus largely turned inward, China used Africa as a proxy for souring relations with the Soviet Union. This often led to Chinese support for movements opposing Moscow-backed organizations, most notably in Mozambique and Angola (Yu, 1988:851; Snow 1998:78, 121-134). Similarly relations with Tanzania allowed China to respond to an increasing Soviet naval presence nearby (Copper, 1976:15) Other than ideological support however, Chinese assistance remained rather minimal. China's foreign aid remained concentrated in Southeast Asia primarily in assisting the North Vietnamese. From 1970-1977, China committed $1.9 billion to 29 African countries (US Central Intelligence Agency, 1978), yet with the exception of the TanZam Railway connecting Tanzania and Zambia (one of the largest infrastructure projects to that date on the continent), Chinese public projects failed to match the size and scope of American and Soviet efforts. Similarly, Sino-African commercial exchanges remained minimal throughout much of the Cold War, reaching only $817 million in 1977 (Servant, 2005). The point here is that China may have missed the boat early on in establishing deeper substantive relations with African nations and leaders and have in recent years have attempted to catch up, a diplomatic Great Leap Forward.

For over 40 years Sino-African relations could be explained through an ideological lens. Once the Cold War ended, China largely retreated from these ideological frontlines. However, it was also during this time that China began its ascent as a global economic and political powerhouse. Promoting rapid economic development, which the PRC has in part based their legitimacy on in the post-Cold War environment, would require greater access to international markets and natural resources. Concurrently, many African governments found themselves struggling to develop due to a lack of external investment and interest even though many of these newly independent countries had an abundance of natural resources.

As African states attempted to improve economic conditions, relations with China became more important as an export destination. Although the focus has been natural resources such as oil, the sheer size of the Chinese domestic market should make any developing country interested in increasing exports to China. Besides boosting export levels, increased Sino-African relations increased public revenues (Reisen, 2007). As a country becomes accustomed, perhaps even dependent, on the potential gains from exports to China, breaking relations with the PRC thus becomes more politically and economically costly. This is similar to how many African governments became dependent on their ties with international financial institutions (IFIs) beginning in the 1970's with the oil crisis and subsequent period of the 1980's when the cycle of poverty really took off due to massive loans and repayment agreements. Over time the terms of agreement for loans increasingly came to favor the western lenders at the expense of the developing nations of Africa. Relations with China thus potentially become self-reinforcing due to African development needs.

Empirical analysis of Sino-African diplomatic relations reaffirms post-Cold War trends. Using data from Rich (2009), the following random effects probit regression analysis highlights the variables influencing African countries to recognize China (1960-2007).[3] To measure economic effects, we include exports as a percentage of GDP as well as GDP growth. To capture level of democracy, we use Polity Scores which rate countries on a scale

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[3] The dependent variable for the following model is binary, with recognition of China coded as 1. While in most cases a 0 corresponds with recognition of Taiwan, this is not necessarily the case. Several countries, especially newly independent countries would not have had previous relations with either government.

Table 1. Probit Regression of Africa's Diplomatic Relations with China
(Dependent variable: 1 =diplomatic recognition of China)

	Coefficient	Standard Error
Polity Scores	-0.0151	0.0122
Area	0.0003	0.0004
Distance to Beijing	-0.0006 ***	0.0002
ExportsGDP	0.0202 ***	0.0055
Cold War	-0.2794 **	0.1303
GDPGrowth	-0.0169 ***	0.0057
State Age	0.0039 ***	0.0004
Constant	6.9957 ***	2.3079
N	1682	

***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

from -10 (most authoritarian) to 10 (most democratic). Besides a dummy variable for the Cold War years (-1991) and control variables for distance from Beijing and size of the country (both in square kilometers), we add a measure of state age (based on the year of independence).

Table 1 presents the results. The economic variables are both statistically significant but in opposite directions. GDP growth negatively correlated with recognition of China while exports positively correlated, suggesting a more nuanced role that economics may play in Sino-African relations.[4] Meanwhile the distance from China and the Cold War dummy variable were both statistically significant and negatively correlated with recognition of China, consistent with China's increased relations since the 1990s. In addition, both the measure for level of democracy and size of the country failed to reach statistical significance. Furthermore, state age is positively correlated with relations with China. Overall, this analysis reaffirms both the economic rationale behind diplomatic relations and the shift in the post-Cold War environment.

In the short run, China provides economic opportunity while ignoring the systemic problems that plague African nations, specifically human rights violations and other social and political abuses that have come to define African institutions and post-Cold War development. The nexus of China's demand for natural resources and African demand for investment and export markets has thus created a mutually beneficial situation where economic interests appear to trump political concerns. Meanwhile growing Sino-African relations attempt to construct a common identity in contrast to the West, perhaps in part rebranding Cold War frameworks.[5] Whether this dynamic relationship can blossom beyond

[4] An additional model specification included GDP as well, but this failed to reach significance.

[5] The number of China-Africa conferences since 2004 further suggests the development of a shared identity, including the Symposium of Sino-African Human Rights, the Conference of Sino-African Cooperation for Environmental Protection, International Symposium on African and Chinese Music,

its economic roots however remains uncertain.

3. RESOURCES NEEDED: ENERGY AND FOOD

China's growing need for natural resources is well documented. China has already emerged as the largest consumer of oil behind the United States, moving from a net exporter just twenty years ago. Africa provides an attractive alternative to other sources as proven oil reserves increased fivefold compared to the rest of the world between 1996 and 2006 (British Petroleum, 2007). As of 2011, China was importing twenty-four percent of its oil from Africa (US Energy Information Administration, 2012). Eighty-five percent of African exports to China originate from five oil-rich countries—Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, and Sudan (IMF, 2005; Hanson, 2008). In the past ten years, petroleum from Africa comprised nearly a third of China's oil imports, much coming after Chad reestablished diplomatic relations with China in 2006. China has also shown great interest in developing oil reserves in Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, and Cote d'Ivoire. Despite this and warnings regarding China's grab of national resources throughout Africa, China's actual holdings remain rather limited. The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) only dominates one oil market in Africa, Sudan, while still pumping more oil out of Kazakhstan. Chinese companies overall hold approximately two percent of known African oil reserves (Hanson, 2008) and constitute three percent of all companies invested in African oil (Downs, 2007). Even if Chinese companies desired a greater share of African oil, they face an uphill battle competing with other foreign companies with greater experience and stronger relations in the region.

Conventional wisdom assumes that China focuses its efforts primarily on those countries with natural resources, yet the contemporary historical record is more mixed. While the majority of Chinese imports may originate from resource-rich countries, Chinese business interests are far more geographically diverse, with over 800 Chinese companies conducting business in 49 African countries by 2007 (Alden, 2007:14) and growing to 2000 by 2012 (Cheng, 2012). Only one country, Swaziland, has received no economic assistance from China as it is the only African country never to have formal relations with China.

Although coordinated economic packages in part intend to provide markets for Chinese exports and gain greater access to natural resources, the African side of trade should not be ignored. From 2006 to 2008 alone, African exports to China increased by 110%, with thirty two countries exhibiting a net gain in earnings from exports to China (George, 2009:97). Neither is China's exports simply undercutting domestic production as machinery and high-tech products composed nearly half of all exports to the continent in 2005 (Barboza, 2006). Overall, China-Africa trade increased by 681% from 2001 to 2007, reaching $73 billion in a mere 6 years (Jiang, 2009; Hanson, 2008). According to Stevens and Kennan (2006) more Sub-Saharan African countries gain in more economic sectors than those who lose. Furthermore, many African oil producers are trying to tie foreign investment in the oil industry to industry in other economic sectors, something which China often has been willing to meet (Downs, 2007: 53). Thus it is hard to view Sino-African relations as a unidirectional relationship.

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the Forum of Sino-African University Presidents, the Symposium of China and Africa Shared Development (Liu, 2008).

That said, growing Sino-African relations does not benefit all groups in society equally. What may separate China from other countries engaging with African countries is the explicit Chinese exportation of labor. Examples such as the increasing incidence of the abduction of Chinese oil field workers in Nigeria and protests over the hiring of Chinese labor for projects in Angola is further evidence that Chinese investment favors the Chinese in Africa at the expense of diversifying African economies by hiring Africans to work on infrastructure projects. A popular argument among Africans is that when the Chinese enter their country they bring in their own workforce, leaving the domestic African workforce no better off than they were prior to the arrival of the Chinese (Alden and Davies, 2006). While some of this importation may be due to expertise or a lack of trust in African partnerships, as a development strategy it remains short-sighted.

Given the history of relations between China and the African continent, many observers are now asking how China's "Green revolution" of the 1960's and 1970's can be replicated in Africa. Or, more specifically, why it is not being replicated given the chronic food insecurity facing many African countries. Given recent famines and food shortages in Mali, Somalia, and Zimbabwe, the current level of food production is insufficient to feed Africa's population due to a number of factors that vary from improper soil to violent conflict that has engulfed numerous countries since the late 1960's. Some would argue it is a more fundamental issue of underdeveloped markets, which may in fact be a symptom of conflict anyway due to the devastating impact of war on local economies. What we do know is that Africa would be able to feed not only itself but the entire world several times over if agricultural production could be improved and increased.

One key to maximizing Africa's agricultural potential is for governments to share knowledge and technology (Otsuka and Kalirajan, 2006). In recent years, and particularly since the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001 and the subsequent Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) in 2003, African leaders have reemphasized the importance of agricultural production for long-term development. The CAADP is a result of cooperative agreements within NEPAD, which in turn is an institution created by members of the African Union to establish and maintain trade relations throughout the continent.

A successful green revolution throughout Africa would be beneficial to China. As China continues to experience increasing economic growth, the emerging middle class will demand foods that have traditionally been unavailable to formerly impoverished Chinese citizens. With 20% of the world's population, China will provide a significant portion of the global demand for African agriculture, thereby presenting incentive for African governments to invest and innovate in the agricultural sectors of their economies. The combination of underdeveloped administrative capacity for agricultural commercialization in Africa and rising demand in China are strong motivations for Chinese investment in modernizing Africa's agricultural sector. Couple this with the reality of limited land in China and environmental degradation due to rapid industrialization over the past 35 years and China will need access to Africa's agricultural resources to support continued and long-term growth as much as they need mineral and oil resources.

What type of Chinese investment would we expect to see given these circumstances? In Rwanda, for example, hand tools such as hoes, picks and shovels are often imported from China. These are imported by wholesalers in the capital city Kigali. Retail outlets in the districts and sector level shops are procuring from the Kigali wholesalers and then selling directly to farmers. Hoes are readily available even in the remote areas at prices ranging from

1300-1500 FRW (US $17-$24). The handles are either procured in Kigali or crafted by the farmers from tree branches cut down in their vicinity. Knapsack sprayers are also readily available in hardware shops and in District centers all over the country. The sprayers are being sourced from China, India, and Brazil (MINAGRI, 2010).

Two retail stores (BrazAfric and Tasha Enterprises) located in Kigali sell animal drawn implements. These outlet imports the implements from China, Uganda and Kenya. While there are no supply related constraints, the demand for such implements are low in Rwanda. Through various programs and projects in the past, some co-operatives have also accumulated drum seeders (rice), land levelers and rotary weeders (MINAGRI, 2010:14). The two retail outlets in Kigali supply coffee bean washers, rice threshers, graters, shellers, dehullers, bag stichers, electric motors, and pumps. They are imported from Uganda, Kenya, China and India. (MINAGRI, 2010:14)

It is investment in the agricultural value chain, particularly at the point of financing the inputs for agricultural commercialization, that we may gauge the extent of Chinese investment in African agriculture. We can also see Chinese influence in policies such as forced resettlement that are occurring in Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe. These resettlement schemes indicate a number of African governments are not only adopting the policies of China's green revolution but the techniques as well. Mao's rural revolution relied upon the relocation of significant numbers of the rural poor in China and was justified based on ideas of socialist revolution. In Africa, the same policies of resettlement are occurring but this time around the justifications are centered on market development and commercialization. The ends may be different but the means are the same.

4. THE CHINESE ALTERNATIVE

Economics clearly motivates growing Sino-African relations. In assessing these relations, disentangling traditional aid packages from other forms of investment and assistance is crucial. This however is complicated by the lack of Chinese transparency. As a result, outside observers commonly lump loans, investment and aid into one category, which may project an inaccurate image of Chinese influence when much of the resources from China meet neither the Chinese nor the traditional Western standards of aid. As Brautigam (2009) points out, the amount of Chinese aid reported is often wildly inaccurate, including the confusion of Chinese renminbi (RMB) for US dollars (Nasrawi, 2006; Zhang, 2006b). Much of the reported aid is in actuality loans specifically tied to buy Chinese equipment and/or consumer goods. Such packages led to $50 billion of Chinese exports entering Africa in 2008 alone.

Within twenty five years, China moved from the eighth largest bilateral donor to Africa to playing a more prominent role on the continent by 2007 as the second largest investor, second only to the US. With the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China hosted 40 African heads of state, pledging to double economic packages by the end of the decade (Taylor, 2009:18). More importantly China offers African leaders an alternative model of development based on trade instead of foreign aid and subsidized loans (Moyo, 2009). One would be hardpressed to identify long term economic success from the decades of Western aid to Africa. For example, from 1970 to 1998, the peak era for aid to Africa, poverty rose from 11 to 66 percent.[6] Meanwhile Africa's share of world trade and global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has declined from the latter part of the 20th century to the present (Sautman and Hairong, 2007). Furthermore, western approaches to African development and assistance have been criticized as myopically focusing on market liberalization without a safety net (Zhang, 2006a). While one can debate African leaders commitment to development (Taylor, 2006b), the "Beijing Consensus" suggests, perhaps naively, that the type of assistance and how it is distributed is key.[7] Unlike the Western model of providing assistance and handing over projects to domestic officials and agencies, a policy which several scholars argue has failed abysmally (Easterly, 2006:189-190). China maintains a continued stake in joint projects. All of this seems to be doing what once was thought to be impossible: discouraging increasing levels of debt among African countries (Reisen, 2007).

While traditionally Western assistance seldom covers infrastructure, Chinese packages often target this very need, seeing it as a crucial prerequisite for mutually beneficial economic development. China's financing commitments across the continent are diverse—appoximately 28% in the energy sector, 19% in telecommunication, and 13% in transport by 2007 (Reisen, 2007). For example, from 2002 to 2006, China granted $5billion in credit and aid to Angola, making it China's largest foreign aid destination (China Economic Review, 2007). Of this, more than $2billion was dedicated solely for infrastructural projects, including roads, railroads, and fiber optic networks. Such investments have led Reisen (2007:8) to argue that "there rarely has been such rapid and intense investment in African infrastructure as is going on today." Chinese assistance for infrastructure are not without strings, as many tie loans and grants to Chinese mining rights, however this still does not negate that such projects are crucial in providing an environment for African development. FDI follows a similar pattern. Whereas 3/4th of US FDI in Africa targets access to oil, nearly two-thirds (64%) of Chinese FDI in Africa went towards manufacturing ventures (Ferguson, 2004). These differences in priorities further contribute to African views of a Chinese model in contrast to Western models locking Africa into underdevelopment and unequal exchange (Srkar, 2001). This may partially explain why western assistance is increasingly focused on infrastructural needs, from water projects and transportation networks to information technology connectivity.

In addition to "hard investments" in infrastructure and ICT networks, China has provided educational loans and opportunities to young Africans by attracting students to Chinese universities (Cheng, 2012). Such efforts are consistent with a broader Chinese "charm offensive" of humanitarian assistance (often in terms of providing doctors) and other programs to counteract domestic anti-China sentiment due to alterations in traditional economic practices. Any long-term relationship between China and Africa will rely heavily upon an educated class of workers and entrepreneurs who understand new technologies and business practices; hence even this type of "investment" is key to China's interests throughout the Continent. Cheap consumer goods such as cell phones and computers are important for African development as many struggle to afford such necessities. In Rwanda

[6] Admittedly aid alone is not the cause for African poverty, especially in that time period, considering oil crises and particular kleptocratic leadership. Still, if the goal of continuing aid is to alleviate poverty, one could argue that this in large part has failed in Africa (French, 2010).

[7] It should be noted that Chinese officials have denied that it promotes any particular model of development (French, 2005).

cell phones from China are offered for a lower cost than similar phones from the United States or Japan, giving even the rural poor access to technologies once thought to be beyond the reach of the most vulnerable populations.[8]

In contrast to the West, China has married its long held policy of non-intervention with its economic interactions in Africa. From its Cold War origins, China's non-interventionist policy had domestic concerns in mind, preventing any precedent which would justify intervention in what China views as domestic issues: Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan. China's modern strain of non-intervention has been an attractive approach considering that African nations have been increasingly reluctant to accept aid from western donors and institutions due to the stipulations that are often attached to such assistance. For example, China remained largely silent on Sudanese actions in Darfur and the south, deferring to the African Union, while Chinese trade with the country jumped from $103 million in 1990 to $5.66 billion by 2006 (Jiang, 2009:598). Even though the Chinese alternative appears to provide positive incentives in terms of development, China must also contend with the often perverse incentives due to previous and current development packages and African reliance on natural resources. De Soysa (2000:121) has argued that resources contribute to a "rentier state" where the production and sale of such resources fule the corruption that is already present due to udnerdeveloped political institutions. This in turn makes both the state and society susceptible to external influences that may exploit these vulnerablities for ther own benefit at the expense of long-term, post-conflict development in the host countries. The result is the long term entrenchment of corruption centered around the exploitation of natural resources to serve political ambitions, which may contribute to prolonged conflict.

It should be noted that the Chinese have not always adhered to a policy of non-intervention in Africa. As early as 1963, China began providing military equipment and training to the FNLA and UNITA liberation movements in Angola as a show of solidarity with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements in southern Africa (Campos and Vines, 2008:2). By 1974, at the dawn of Angolan independence, the Chinese were financing UNITA while the Soviet Union backed the MPLA (Campos and Vines, 2008:2). In Mozambique, a country that achieved independence under similar circumstances and in the same year as Angola, the socialist FRELIMO government accepted aid from both the Chinese and the Soviets during their civil war against RENAMO (Roque, 2009:2). Unlike Angola, however, Mozambique has a long history of western investment and engagement which led to market reforms in the late 1980's and an end to the civil war with South African backed RENAMO by 1992.

The cases of Angola and Mozambique support claims that Chinese engagement with Africa has evolved from a relationship centered on Cold War politics and ideology to one based on mutual benefits within the context of rapid globalization and market competition. Today, Angola receives the largest amount of Chinese investment due to its comparative advantage of oil wealth, a highly sought after commodity for China's expanding economy and emerging middle class. In addition to Chinese investments in infrastructure, public facilities, and manufacturing, the Chinese have been one of the largest donors for post-conflict reconstruction in a number of countries, yet another shift in the focus of Chinese post-Cold War aid that coincides with immediate needs for many African countries.

More recently, Sierra Leone's civil war was financed by the production and sale of "blood diamonds" to western markets and offers a direct link between resources that were in

[8] Field research, June and July 2011

high demand and conflict (Collier, 2000:91). Conflict in the DRC has also been facilitated by the presence of mineral resources such as diamonds and coltan, essential in producing cell phone and computer batteries. Even when resources were not the cause of civil conflict, their abundance helped fund its continuation, as evident in Sudan where oil revenues reinforce ethnic and religious tensions. More broadly countries as diverse as Nigeria (oil), the Ivory Coast (cocoa), and Tanzania (a burgeoning fishing industry centered around Lake Victoria) have faced similar resource related problems.

In addition to the resource curse, there are concerns related to the use and distribution of land throughout the countryside in many African nations (Cotula et al., 2009). Increasingly, African governments are adopting ambitious land reform policies which allow for the expropriation of land at which point the land can be sold by the state to private foreign investors. China is said to be one of the major sources of this investment because the Chinese government anticipates that its growing population will need additional resources for agricultural production in the near future. Based on this presumption, the Chinese government offers subsidies and incentives for private investors who are buying farmland in Africa, making this type of investment an attractive source of revenue for African governments while simultaneously depriving their own constituents access to land and consequently their main source of subsistence. In sum, evaluating Sino-African relations requires not only viewing state to state relations, but domestic pressures as well.

There are a number of ways in which to understand Chinese investment in African agriculture. First, there is the direct investment in infrastructure, including modern irrigation systems and the building of roads and railways to transport crops from fields to markets. Second, there are 'land grabs' wherein private Chinese investors will buy land to then be used for large scale farming. Sometimes this land is taken from the rural farmers by their government or land laws are rewritten in a way that makes the selling of private land to foreign investors 'easier.' Third, in recent years countries such as Senegal and Angola in have adopted free market reforms that encourage foreign investment. This type of agricultural investment allows for Chinese firms to 'set up shop' in an African country, import Chinese employees, and manage their business with little political interference in return for paying taxes to the state for the privilege of operating in the country. This is where the current relationship between China and Africa, especially oil rich nations such as Sudan, becomes controversial. China has expressed a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy which states that as long as China has access to resources, they will not criticize or involve themselves in the domestic affairs of African states. Finally, the Chinese are investing in their own future by investing in African agriculture. As the Chinese population grows, and the middle class demands more meat and dairy, food security will become a problem in the foreseeable future. Therefore, Chinese investment in African agriculture is a way to establish relations before a food crisis occurs

Another area of similarity between Chinese and African rural development may be found in policies of collectivization and resettlement. Tanzania experimented with forced resettlement in the 1960's and 1970's in the name of *Ujamaa*, or 'family hood,' that was designed to usher in a socialist state through rural reform. A key component for modern Rwanda's development strategy is the policy of *imidugudu*, of 'villagization', which is essentially the same type of forced resettlement experienced in Tanzania but predicated on arguments that it supports large reforms such as commercialization and increased food security. Ethiopia is currently preparing to construct Africa's largest hydro-electric dam, the Gibe III Dam. Since early 2010 the government has already forcefully resettled 60,000 rural

Ethiopians to make way for the project (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2009). The point here is that all of these governments have at some point in time received financial assistance from the Chinese and the projects have also resembled similar projects carried out during China's green revolution in the 1960's. This suggests that Chinese influence has penetrated the policy process itself throughout Africa. This is not necessarily a negative thing, though. China has a shared interest in ensuring that rural reform is successful in Africa as it may well be the critical component to ensuring long-term food imports for China's growing population, specifically the middle class.

5. CONCLUSION

There continues to be a tendency to look at Sino-African relations from one of two polarized positions, either as inherently exploitative and neocolonialist or as the great hope for long-term African development. We suggest that reality is somewhere in the middle, with the potential for deeper mutually beneficial relationships coexisting with some level of exploitation . Chinese investment generates new challenges for African countries but also opportunities for better positioning in the world market without Western conditions. As China builds deeper roots in Africa, even if primarily based on economic incentives, one should expect a more nuanced and pragmatic strategy to development.

That the "Beijing Consensus" will have similar deleterious results for African development as Western policies of assistance is a valid concern. While China has coupled investment with the canceling of debt, both sides must realize debt forgiveness is no substitute for a mutually beneficial development strategy. Similarly, economic interests should not trump efforts to encourage good governance or transparency among African leadership (Mohan and Power, 2008). However, China faces the same challenges as other countries do in investing in unstable regimes and considering continued Western support for oil producing authoritarian governments one should not expect China to carry the burden of such reforms in Africa.

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