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**China in Africa: Contemporary Colonialism or Symbiotic
Partnership? An Analysis of China's Economic Engagement in
the African Continent**

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to introduce Sino-African relations, looking back on China and Africa's recent economic and political histories, whilst focusing on China in Africa today. It contrasts the traditional Western paradigm of aid with China's contemporary alternative, and argues that whilst engagement has the potential to become exploitative, in fact the converse is the case. This paper initially explores the recent economic history of China, and then the histories of the West and China in the African continent. Following this it considers the level of Chinese economic engagement, through investment, aid, and, loans in Africa in the recent past, before explaining why such calculations of China's economic engagement are so often flawed. The paper considers the argument that China in Africa is simply another chapter in the longer term 'scramble for Africa', before concluding that China offers a distinctly innovative and potentially highly beneficial alternative to the traditional Western model of African economic engagement.

‘If you want to feel the future, if you want to taste the future, try China.’

CONFUCIUS

‘China is a sleeping lion, and when she awakes, the world will shake.’

NAPOLÉON

‘The darkest thing about Africa has always been our ignorance of it.’

G KIMBLE

**‘I’ll love you, dear, I’ll love you till China and Africa meet and the river jumps over the mountain
and the salmon sing in the street.’**

W AUDEN

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	African Development Fund	IFIs	International Finance Institutions
AfDB	African Development Bank	IMF	International Monetary Fund
AFRODAD	African Forum and Network on Debt and Development	LDCs	Least Developed Countries
AU	African Union	MOF	Ministry of Finance of China
BOAD	The West African Development Bank	MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce of China
BOC	Bank of China	NEPAID	New Partnership for Africa's Development
CDB	China Development Bank	NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa	OAU	Organisation of African Unity
CRS	Congressional Research Service	ODA	Official Development Assistance
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo	PBC	People's Bank of China
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	PRC	Peoples' Republic of China
EU	European Union	RMB/RMBY	Renminbi (¥), the official currency of the PRC
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment	UN	United Nations
FOCAC	Forum for China Africa Cooperation	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
HIPCs	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries	USA	United States of America
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	WTO	World Trade Organisation
IDA	International Development Association		

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past China has expanded its involvement in Africa¹ to unprecedented levels. Since the start of the 1990s it is clear that China has significantly widened the scope of its relationship with Africa in a range of diverse areas: finance and investment, development assistance and aid, technology, education and training, tourism, and cultural engagement. In many measures China and Africa are natural partners: a large part of Africa is eager for investment, lacking in infrastructure, and abundant with resources, whilst China is cash-rich, requires opportunities for investment to feed its flourishing private sector, and is in need of natural resources to support its fast-growing economy. Hence, this synthesis of respective economic requirements has, for a while, bolstered a strong Sino-African interdependency.

Whilst Chinese engagement in Africa is not entirely uncontroversial amongst African leadership and citizens, it is largely seen as more favourable than the Western alternative. This is predominantly a result of the fact that China has no legacy of colonial power in the region. Further still, as China views Africa as a business partner, many African leaderships view the Chinese engagement as likely to be more sustained, not only out of a sense of honour and benevolence, but also out of self-interest. Hence, the prevailing view within Africa is that the Sino-African partnership is a more equal one than Africa's relationship with the West, a relationship which has been oft-tainted by a perception that the net flow of resources between Europe and Africa remains largely in Europe's favour, given supposedly unequal terms of trade, as well as debt servicing and macro-economic policies which have promoted the extraction of resources whilst simultaneously marginalizing the vast majority of African people.

Understanding this context, it remains to be known whether the modern-day Sino-African relationship is a mutually-beneficial one, or simply a contemporary resurrection of the 'Scramble for Africa' which took place at the turn of the twentieth century. Is the relationship symbiotic, or is it, rather, a dangerous game whereby Africa is risking its longer-term fiscal health and wealth of natural resources in the pursuit of short-term easy cash? In today's economic climate China needs to be in Africa given its vast natural resources, large consumer markets, potential to fuel Chinese private sector growth, and political capital perhaps as much as Africa appears to need China. As it stands currently, Chinese investment successfully enables and supports Africa in areas where it is 'resource-poor' in return for access to areas in which Africa is 'resource-rich'.

This quid pro quo arrangement ostensibly supports African development, and yet considering the longer term such a conclusion is not so clear. As Sino-African relations develop, and the economic interconnectedness becomes even more significant, it is imperative that African countries ensure that they develop greater leverage in order to guarantee that they are able to benefit as much from the relationship as China does. If China in Africa serves only to bolster the Chinese machine, then Africa risks not only the ruin of Chinese exploitation, but also the continued paralysis of missing such a potentially valuable opportunity for economic, political, and social development in the region. However, if the leverage of China in Africa's interconnectedness is attained and maintained then it is very much possible to envisage a future in which Chinese engagement in Africa complements the social sector focus of Western aid

¹ Unless otherwise stated, 'Africa' refers to the entire Continent, including North Africa.

through serving to strengthen African countries' dangerously inadequate infrastructural machine and worrying deficiency in private sector growth.

This paper will initially explore the recent economic history of China, and then the histories of the West and China in the African continent. Following this it will consider the level of Chinese economic engagement, through investment, aid, and, loans in Africa in the recent past, before explaining why such calculations of China's economic engagement are so often flawed. This paper will consider the argument that China in Africa is simply another chapter in the longer term 'scramble for Africa', before concluding that China offers a distinctly innovative and potentially highly beneficial alternative to the traditional Western model of African economic engagement.

A RECENT ECONOMIC HISTORY OF CHINA

In order for us to understand China's contemporary economic engagement in Africa it is imperative to first consider both the present-day form and the past history of China's economy. Today, China's economy is at a turning point²: it is now the world's second largest economy³ having experienced over thirty years of exponential GDP growth⁴, and yet China faces an economic slowdown⁵ which means that it must answer previously ignored but nonetheless highly significant questions which explore its most fundamental macroeconomic foundations.

In response to a global economic landscape which is constantly in an evolutionary flux, China must make important decisions which will determine not only its own place on the world's stage for the next thirty years but will also have wide-ranging and far-reaching impacts for the rest of the world. China's reaction to this economic landscape is found in its 12th Five Year Plan⁶ launched in 2011 — before the 2012/2013 leadership changes⁷ — which seeks to: (1) increase domestic consumption as opposed to the export-led growth strategy of the past; (2) re-denominate trade flows into the Chinese Renminbi⁸ (RMB) as a strategy to cope with any inflationary pressure resulting from a trade surplus paid for on the whole in US dollars; and, most significantly for Africa, (3) increasingly invest China's very large foreign exchange reserves⁹ in tangible overseas assets rather than the Western government bonds which it previously favoured. In essence, China seeks to both liberalise its capital account and increase outbound investment in order to maximise its potential for sustained and long-term economic growth.

² Minami, Ryoshin, and Xinxin Ma. "The Lewis turning point of Chinese economy: Comparison with Japanese experience." *China Economic Journal* 3, no. 2 (2010): 163-179.

³ BBC News. "China Overtakes Japan as World's Second-biggest Economy." BBC News: Business. February 14, 2011. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁴ Sharma, Hari. "Sources of economic growth in China, 1952-1998." *Issues in Political Economy* 17 (2008).

⁵ Eichengreen, Barry, Donghyun Park, and Kwanho Shin. "When Fast-Growing Economies Slow Down: International Evidence and Implications for China*." *Asian Economic Papers* 11, no. 1 (2012): 42-87.

⁶ The World Bank. "China Overview." The World Bank: Country Economic Overview. March 25, 2015. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁷ König, Thomas. 2012. 'A Guide To China's Leadership Changes'. *The European Council On Foreign Relations*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁸ Cheung, Yin-Wong, Guonan Ma, and Robert McCauley. "Why does China attempt to internationalise the renminbi?." *China rising: global challenges and opportunities, Australian National University Press and Social Sciences Research Press (China)* (2011): 45-68.

⁹ Bin, Xia, and Chen Daofu. "On China Foreign Exchange Reform in the Unbalanced International Monetary System [J]." *Economic Research Journal* 2 (2006): 001.

Since the start of Chinese market-orientated reforms¹⁰ over thirty years ago China has been successfully utilising inbound foreign direct investment (FDI) in order to finance the growth of both its manufacturing industry and export capacity. It has been the case that since 1980, demonstrating exponential economic growth, Chinese GDP growth figures have consistently been greater than those of Western economies¹¹. However, in order to ensure that such growth is able to be maintained and sustained in the next thirty years and longer, it will be necessary for China to take a new macroeconomic approach. Future economic growth for China will require technological progress, something which makes outbound FDI only more important. In 2000, China launched its ‘going global’¹² policy which complements its ‘open door’¹³ policy through the way in which it encourages firms to ‘go out’ and invest. Through this strategy for future growth China seeks to move further up the global value chain and overcome the ‘middle income country trap’ — the point at which a country’s growth slows down having reached about US\$13,500 of income per capita, which China is forecast to reach by 2020. Hence, this shift in China’s growth paradigm will focus predominantly upon outbound investment — something exemplified through the example of China in Africa.

Since the mid-2000s the level of China’s outbound investment has increased greatly. The first commercial-investment of a Chinese firm took place in 2004 with the TCL Corporation’s (TCL¹⁴) purchase of Thomson (France). Following this turning point outbound FDI has increased by 428 per cent from US\$12.3 billion in 2005 to highs of over US\$65 billion in 2011. Since 2005 China has invested more than US\$327 billion in outbound mergers and acquisitions (M&A) and China’s share of the global outbound M&A has increased from 0.8 per cent in 2005 to 5.5 per cent in 2011. Furthermore, China’s exports to Africa have almost doubled since 2008 and are expected to have increased to over US\$80 billion in 2014. China has proposed to invest¹⁵ a minimum of US\$100 billion¹⁶ into commercial projects in Africa since 2010. China’s commercial activity in Africa has traditionally been focused on the consumer business and energy and resources sectors, totalling approximately US\$90 billion, or about 90 per cent of China’s commercial activity in Africa since 2010.

Whilst it is clear that Africa plays a significant role in China’s outbound investment, the particular importance of China to Africa is also easily evident. It is estimated that China’s construction companies built 12 per cent of all projects which took place in 2013 in the African continent, whilst European and American companies together built only 37 per cent. Moreover, given that the southern region of Africa is blessed with particularly successful infrastructure development and serves as a model of economic leadership on the continent, the region is seen by many — including China — as the first gateway into Africa. Hence, the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), is the world’s largest bank, acquired a 20 per cent stake in the Standard Bank Group (SBG), a South African listed bank, for US\$5.4 billion in 2007,

¹⁰ White, Gordon. *Riding the tiger: The politics of economic reform in post-Mao China*. Stanford University Press, 1993.

¹¹ World Bank Group, ed. *World development indicators 1980-2000*. World Bank Publications, 1980-2000.

¹² Bellabona, Paola, and Francesca Spigarelli. “Moving from Open Door to Go Global: China goes on the world stage.” *International Journal of Chinese Culture and Management* 1, no. 1 (2007): 93-107.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A Chinese multinational electronics company headquartered in Huizhou, Guangdong province, China, which is the world’s 25th largest consumer electronics producer.

¹⁵ Abadie, Richard. 2015. ‘Separating Fact From Fiction In The China-Africa Relationship’. *Pwc*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

¹⁶ Broadman, Harry G. “Africa’s silk road.” *Washington DC: The World Bank* (2007).

which is one of China's largest outbound investments to date. Furthermore Chinese firms focus upon the potential for investments beyond the African financial services sector. Increasingly, for example, Chinese firms have shown an increasing desire to focus upon East and Central Africa which are potential hydropower hubs in the continent: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is seen to hold great untapped potential not least because of its strengths in the commodities, agriculture, hydropower, and water sectors, and so China serves as the second largest investor in the region, having funded 17 per cent and built 12 per cent of all selected construction projects in East and Central Africa.

THE 'SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA': AN HISTORY OF THE WEST IN AFRICA

The 'scramble for Africa' is a late 19th century term often used to describe the three decade period during which Western European countries conquered and partitioned close to 90 per cent of the African continent. The scramble began around the 1870s and ended in 1902, following the Boers victory over the British in South Africa.

Whilst it was the case that in the middle 19th century the European presence in Africa was severely limited, and consisted mainly of coastal regions and a small selection of interior areas in the Eastern and Southern parts of the continent, it was announced by King Leopold II of Belgium in 1876 that it was his intention to explore the Congo region. Thus, in 1879 the French began to build a railway from Dakar with a view to utilising the large Sahelian markets to further its economic development. Furthermore, in that same year the French partnered with Great Britain in consolidating its financial control of Egypt.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, tensions between exploiting European powers desiring to further the breadth of their African spheres of influence began to increase. Hence, the German Chancellor Otto von Bismark called the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference which recognised King Leopold II as the legitimate authority in the Congo region, and most significantly determined that any European power would only be able to lay claim to an area of Africa which it 'effectively occupied'¹⁷. However, as early as the 1890s it was clear that treaty making had given way to conquest¹⁸ as advances in both military technology and modern medicine¹⁹ meant that European countries were more easily able to send troops into the very heart of the continent. It was in the midst of this "heart of darkness"²⁰ (Joseph Conrad) where the constant turmoil of inter-African wars facilitated the subsequent European conquest.

The European scramble for Africa was a fast and very successful one: in less than half a generation Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, as well as Portugal, Spain, and Belgium had managed to acquire thirty different African colonies which covered 16 million square kilometres. The Western powers had ruthlessly divided a population of 110 million Africans into over forty different new, political units, and had done so utilising crude borders drawn as straight lines which cut through villages, ethnic groups, and African kingdoms sowing the seeds

¹⁷ Fisch, Jörg. "Africa as terra nullius: the Berlin Conference and international law." In *Bismarck, Europe and Africa: The Berlin Africa Conference*, vol. 1885, pp. 347-375. 1884.

¹⁸ Alfred, Taiaiake, and Jeff Corntassel. "Being Indigenous: Resurgences against contemporary colonialism." *Government and Opposition* 40, no. 4 (2005): 597-614.

¹⁹ Most specifically the development of the antimalarial agent quinine.

²⁰ Conrad, Joseph, and Ross C. Murfin. *Heart of darkness*. Macmillan, 2010.

for future conflict, and perhaps providing the necessary conditions for China's modern-day engagement in Africa.

AN HISTORY OF AID IN AFRICA

Aid has meant that the African reality for the past sixty years was mostly one of underdevelopment: the development projects which were underpinned with Western aid and undertaken after independence resoundingly failed to deliver beneficial results²¹. Whilst aid has been distributed to Africa in trillions²², the statistics have deteriorated in tandem. Looking at a wider period of time, it is worryingly the case that the high income per capita rate of growth at 2.2 per cent which was experienced in 1960s Africa had plunged to 0 per cent by the end of the 1970s, averaged -1.76 per cent between 1981 and 1985, and remained in negative territory until at least 1995²³. Today, as Dambisa Moyo²⁴ declares, aid is now seen as the primary cause of Africa's sad underdevelopment. Whilst others, like Jeffrey Sachs, argue that Africa would have been worse off without aid, it still remains that Africa is in an 'underdevelopment trap'²⁵ (Sachs).

However, it shall be argued that it is incorrect and unhelpful that aid is at the very heart of any debate about African development. Development is not about simply being offered a helping hand to escape a poverty trap, as there are countless examples of countries which have received large amounts of aid and remained poor²⁶, countries which have received no aid and also remained poor²⁷, and equally significant examples of countries that have not received aid and done very well²⁸. Hence, it is clear that aid is not the most important determinant of which path a country will take. As Gatune summarised, 'A beggar retires a beggar, but a borrower retires rich.'²⁹ Rather, development is more about utilising and effectively mobilising resources properly, acquiring capacity with which to utilise resources, and allocating such resources appropriately. Thus, in order for Africa to develop its economy successfully it has been necessary for it to do so in ways which defy common convention. Africa has had to utilise wide-ranging, far-reaching economic thinking beyond the bounds of aid in order to ensure the viability of its development plans: it has done this largely with the help of China's economic engagement in Africa.

AN HISTORY OF CHINA IN AFRICA

China's history in the African continent is a long one. China has for a long time had a particular interest in Africa, most especially since the late 1950s and early 1960s when African nations were rapidly gaining independence and China seriously courted such countries for diplomatic

²¹ Bräutigam, Deborah, and Stephen Knack. "Foreign Aid, Institutions, and Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Economic development and cultural change* 52, no. 2 (2004): 255-285.

²² Richard Dowden of the Royal African Society sets the figure at over US\$1 trillion of aid over the past sixty years, which is roughly just under US\$5,000 for every African citizen living today, if distributed evenly at 2005 prices.

²³ World Bank Group, ed. *World development indicators 2000*. World Bank Publications, 2000.

²⁴ Moyo, Dambisa. *Dead aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. Macmillan, 2009.

²⁵ Sachs, Jeffrey. *The end of poverty: economic possibilities for our time*. Penguin, 2006.

²⁶ For example, Afghanistan.

²⁷ For example, Somalia.

²⁸ For example, Germany and South Korea.

²⁹ Gatune, Julius. "Africa's development beyond aid: getting out of the box." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632, no. 1 (2010): 103-120.

recognition³⁰. Hence, having finally emerged from colonial rule, fourteen sub-Saharan African countries were able to, in a short amount of time³¹, foster formal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), with many other countries remaining neutral or rather aligned with Taipei³². The extent and breadth of such relationships is clear through the way in which by the mid-1970s the PRC was providing aid to thirty African countries, which — perhaps in the form of quid pro quo, almost lex talionis like arrangements — returned the PRC's assistance by supporting the PRC's campaign for China to gain a seat at the United Nations Security Council, something which it gained in 1971³³. However, it was only after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 that China's modern-day engagement in Africa as we know it began to take form, and in 1981 the first program for Chinese commercial ventures in Africa was launched³⁴. Thus, following this point the potential future for China in Africa was clear through the way in which the total level of Chinese investment in Africa increased drastically from the rather low figure of US\$660,000 in 1981 to the high multiple of US\$24 million in 1985. This rapid growth was facilitated not least by China's entry into the World Bank in 1980 and China's joining of the African Development Bank (ADB) in 1985 which meant that China was suitably equipped to place bids on projects which were funded by these institutions. Whilst China's economic engagement with Africa increased at a fast pace, in part due to the belief that African trade liberalisation would lead to significant opportunities for Chinese firms, Western countries remained much more anxious and cautious regarding the longer-term economic prospects of Africa³⁵ — something which enabled China to take-up a prominent role on the continent.

³⁰ Jinyuan, Gao. "China and Africa: the development of relations over many centuries." *African Affairs* (1984): 241-250.

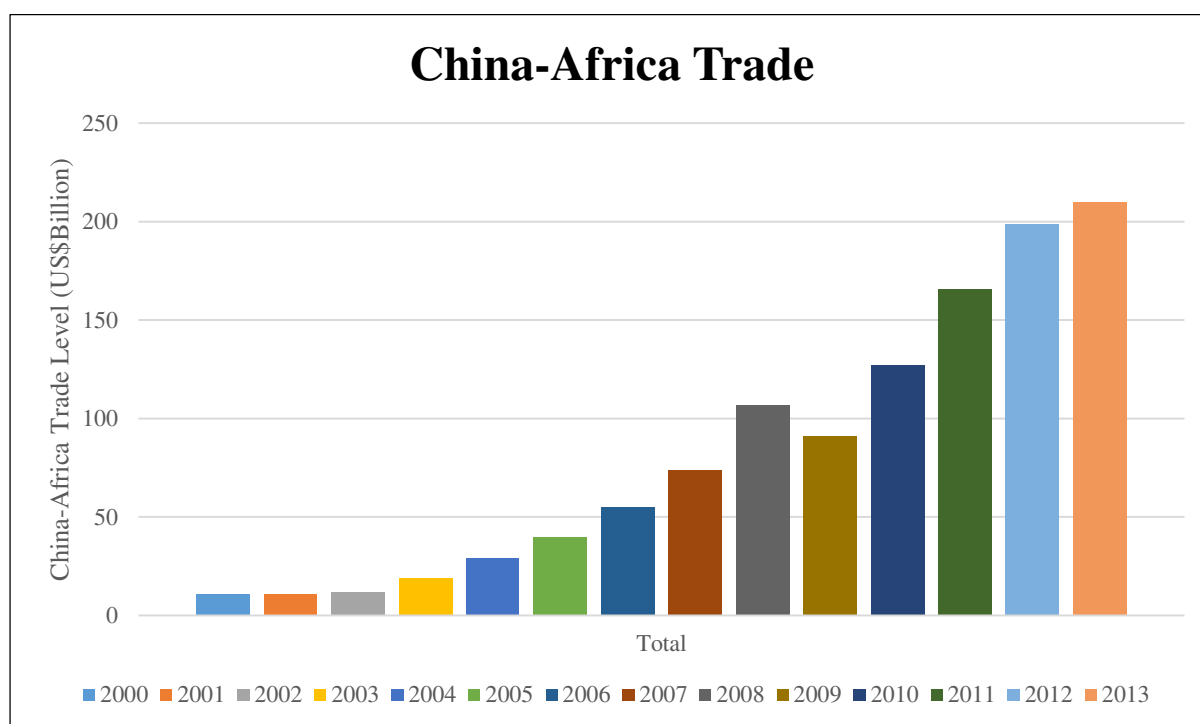
³¹ See Appendix I.

³² Taylor, Ian. "Africa's place in the diplomatic competition between Beijing and Taipei." *Issues & Studies* 34, no. 3 (1998): 126-143.

³³ Hong-wei, Zhang. "China-Africa Friendship after the Restoration of China's Legitimate Seat in the United Nation." *Journal of Daqing Normal University* 1 (2009): 016.

³⁴ Guthrie, Doug. *Dragon in a three-piece suit: The emergence of capitalism in China*. Princeton University Press, 2001.

³⁵ Publicfinanceinternational.org. 2015. 'Afd: Economic Integration Efforts In West Africa 'Too Timid'. Public Finance International. Last accessed June 28, 2015.



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Figure I China-Africa Trade Levels

At the same time as China's economic courtship of Africa, China also engaged in increased efforts to intensify its political courtship of Africa. This was made most clear when in 1982 the Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang went on a visit of eleven African countries³⁷ and first elucidated the four principles which were to lead all Sino-African economic relations with developing nations for the coming decade. These principles were: (1) equality and mutual benefit; (2) emphasis upon practical results not plans and theory; (3) range in form; and (4) common progress. An example of China's continual development of its relations with Africa at this time period is the fact that in 1991 the Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen started a tradition of visiting the African continent at the start of each year, something which is still maintained to this day. Qichen had, by 1995, visited thirty-six different African countries and it was him who carefully laid the diplomatic foundations for the Sino-African partnership which we see so clearly today. Furthermore, whilst it is true that Chinese political moves in Africa sought first and foremost to ensure African allegiance to the PRC vis-à-vis Taiwan, it was also the case that Chinese political actions served as a reflection of the feeling of Chinese kinship³⁸ with Africa which was very much present in all dealings. China believed that it had once occupied a very similar position to the one which Africa now endures³⁹: China believed that just as it had been compelled to become somewhat more self-reliant following the severing of the Sino-Soviet relationship in the early 1960s, so too must Africa do the same in order to

³⁶ Data sourced from the China Statistical Yearbooks: Yearbook, China Statistical. "National Bureau of statistics of China." *China Statistical Yearbook* (2000-2013).

³⁷ Africa Report. 2015. 'From The Archives: Africa-China Policy In The 1980S « The Africa-America Institute'. *The Africa-America Institute*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

³⁸ Yimin, Yi. 2011. 'China Probes Its Africa Model (1) - 中国与世界，环境危机大家谈'. *China Dialogue - 文章*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

³⁹ Professor Ganfu Yang,. 2012. 'Africa: Cultural Similarities Between China And Continent'. *All Africa*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

ensure that it was able to develop as much as it could in the economic, political, and social spheres. Such sentiment is clear in the words of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai who in a 1964 trip to Africa declared that ‘it is not our intention to make Africa dependent on us... they need to rely mainly on their own efforts.’⁴⁰

CONTEMPORARY CHINA IN AFRICA: INVESTMENT AND AID

In order to foster closer economic relationships with Africa, Chinese investors such as the Chinese government and its sovereign funds are eager to invest in certain infrastructural projects in Africa, which will not only promote goodwill, but will have the additional benefit of reaching and securing the natural resources which China so desires⁴¹.

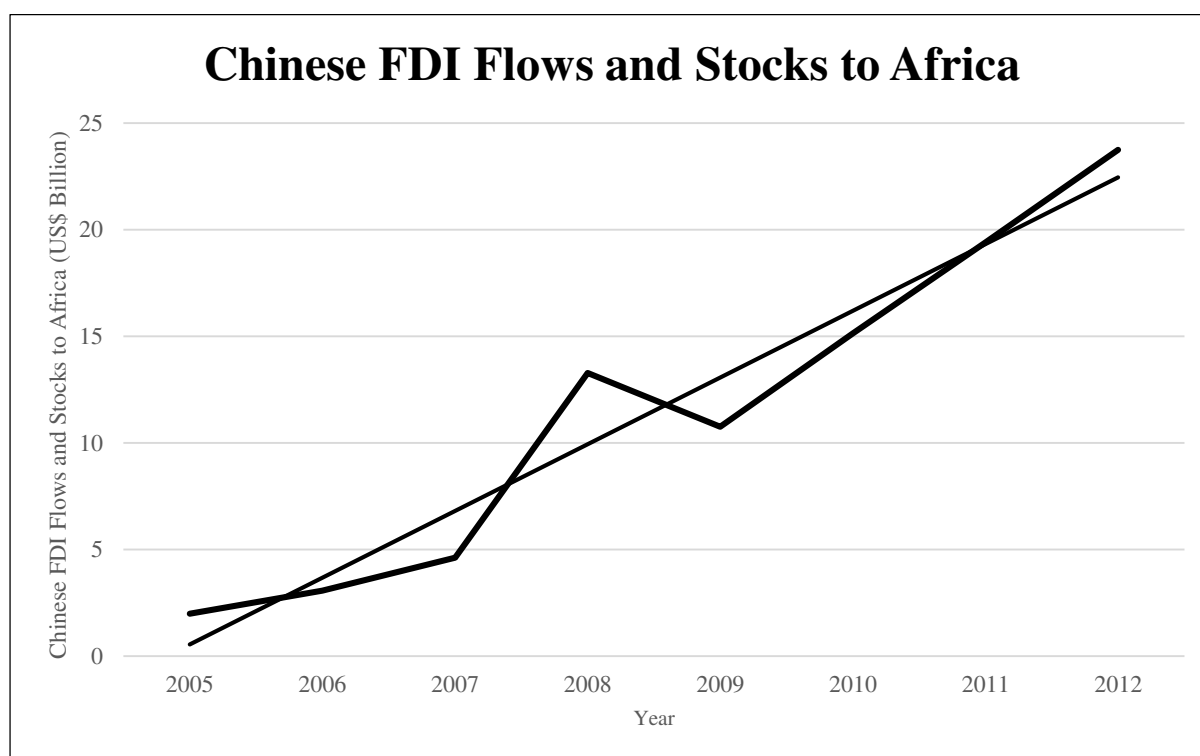
By way of example, one major method with which China invests with an emphasis on infrastructure is through funding large scale, longer-term construction projects, for example in May 2014 the Chinese government affirmed a former agreement to help fund the construction of a pioneering railway line which would serve to link Mombasa, the Kenyan port city, to Uganda, Burundi, South Sudan, and Rwanda⁴². The first part of the railway line to be constructed will be a 609-kilometre railway to connect Mombasa with Nairobi, the Kenyan capital. Whilst the Chinese China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) was selected to be the principal contractor in the project, Uganda has also encouraged and invited Chinese companies to compete for a large part of the other contracts, worth US\$8 billion, in order to expand Uganda’s railway network and so to improve trade routes with Uganda’s neighbouring countries in order to help ensure sustainable longer-term economic growth. The way in which the Export-Import Bank of China (China Eximbank) has committed to fund 90 per cent of the estimated US\$3.9 billion costs⁴³ shows its deep rooted desire to fund infrastructural projects of a vast and expansive nature.

⁴⁰ Moyo, Dambisa. *Dead aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. Macmillan, 2009.

⁴¹ Okeowo, Alexis. 2013. ‘China In Africa: The New Imperialists?’. *The New Yorker*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁴² 中文国际 (The China Daily),. 2015. ‘王毅：中国愿为非洲实现高速铁路网梦想作出努力 - 中文国际 - 中国日报网’ (Wang Yi: China is willing to Africa to achieve the dream of high-speed rail network efforts). Last accessed on June 28, 2015.

⁴³ The Railway Gazette,. 2014. ‘Mombasa - Nairobi Standard Gauge Line Funding Agreed’. Last accessed on June 28, 2015.



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Figure II China's FDI Flows and Stocks to Sub-Saharan African Countries.

However, whilst it is true that in recent years there has been an increase in transparency efforts by the Chinese, it remains the case that official Chinese government announcements pertaining to matters of foreign aid are still scarce. For example, the Chinese Government does not report either its aid or other flows to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) — a practice which is encouraged by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It is this difficulty in calculating Chinese aid figures which has meant that whilst in 2008 China most likely disbursed US\$1.2 billion of ODA in Africa⁴⁵, the level of Chinese ODA is often estimated by researchers to be more in the region of US\$7.5 billion or much higher. The most significant reason for miscalculations of Chinese aid figures comes about due to larger-scale attempts by researchers to estimate Chinese aid through media reports and other published figures as proxies for Chinese aid in Africa.

The primary reason for miscalculations in the level of Chinese aid arises out of estimations of Chinese aid made utilising media reports. For example, researchers at the United States Congressional Research Service (CRC)⁴⁶ often attempt to estimate China's aid in Africa through the collection of media reports (Lum et al. 2009). Incorrectly, researchers make the assumption that China's aid is disorganised, made in an 'ad hoc fashion without a centralised system', or funding schedule. All of these assumptions are incorrect and China's aid is, in fact, planned in a highly centralised manner disbursed according to annual plans and budgets,

⁴⁴ Data sourced from The Ministry Of Commerce People's Republic Of China, and China International Electronic Commerce Center. "Ministry Of Commerce People's Republic Of China." Ministry Of Commerce People's Republic Of China. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁴⁵ Compared with the World Bank's US\$4.1 billion of ODA, the United States' US\$7.2 billion, and France's US\$3.4 billion.

⁴⁶ The research arm of the United States Congress.

according to an annual budget by the Department of Aid to Foreign Countries in the Ministry of Commerce. Furthermore, researchers often develop their own definitions of ‘aid’ when discussing China, many of which are too broad and highly questionable. Errors like these have meant that the CRC produced a figure for Chinese ‘aid’ in Africa in 2007 at the level of US\$17.96 billion.

There are several clear problems with such an approach. Since it is the case that many Chinese companies investing in Africa — including its oil companies and banks — are state owned⁴⁷, together all of their collective activities are often lumped together as ‘aid’, simply because of their association with the Chinese Government and the fact that they are taking place in the developing world. This defies not only convention, but also logic: OECD countries have never before considered export credits⁴⁸, commercial loans and investment by their own state-owned companies as ODA. If the same definition of ODA were used in China as for the rest of the world, China would have disbursed only US\$850 million in official development assistance in Africa in 2007.

Hence, the approach often used today tends to dangerously lead to a consensus of misleading analysis of the purposes of Chinese aid. For example, once Chinese state-sponsored investment is determined to be ‘foreign aid’, it is often concluded by researchers that China’s giving of foreign aid is done in order to meet a natural-resource exploiting agenda. This is a worrying misconception: whilst it may be true that Chinese investment in Africa is primarily driven by natural resources, Chinese development aid is instead allocated to every single African country which shares diplomatic ties with Beijing. Therefore, it can be certain that ‘China’s aid follows the needs of diplomacy, not natural resources’⁴⁹.

NATURE AND FORM OF CHINA’S AID AND LENDING IN AFRICA

The international financial architecture is a complicated one made up of a variety of different types of flows. When considering the economic impact of China in Africa the two most significant kinds of flows are ‘official development assistance’ and ‘other official flows’. According to the DAC official development assistance (ODA) is: concessional funding given to developing countries (those with a per capita income below a regularly adjusted threshold) and to multilateral institutions primarily for the purposes of promoting welfare and economic development in the recipient country⁵⁰. Meanwhile, in order to qualify as aid funding must be ‘concessional in character’ (i.e. involve some genuine form of subsidy from the government), and loans must serve as similar to grants in that they must have a grant element of at least 25 per cent using a 10 per cent discount rate⁵¹. Furthermore, whilst it is the case that only concessional loans and grants actually qualify as ODA, government also offer other forms of official flows, which include: (1) funds for firms from the donor country in order to subsidise or guarantee any form of their firms’ private investment in recipient countries; (2) military aid;

⁴⁷ The People’s Republic of China., 2015. ‘SASAC’. *State-Owned Assets Supervision And Administration Commission Of The State Council*.

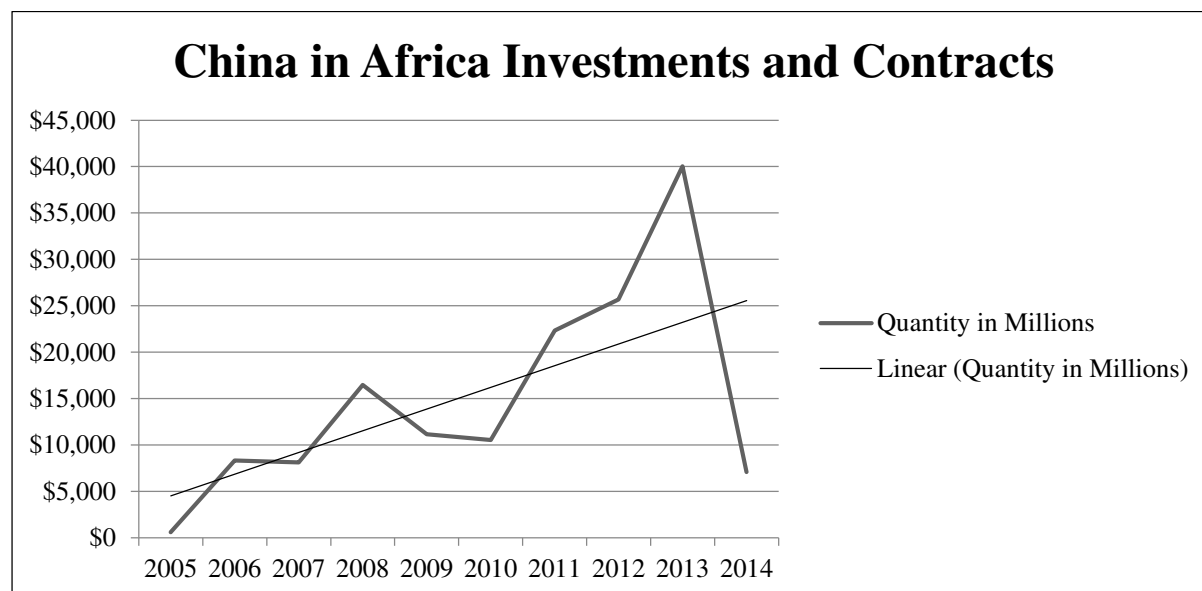
⁴⁸ Moravcsik, Andrew M. “Disciplining trade finance: the OECD export credit arrangement.” *International Organization* 43, no. 01 (1989): 173-205.

⁴⁹ Bräutigam, Deborah. “Chinese Development Aid in Africa: What, where, why, and how much?.” *Where, Why, and How Much* (2011).

⁵⁰ OECD, 2008.

⁵¹ Collier, Paul. “Is aid oil? An analysis of whether Africa can absorb more aid.” *World development* 34, no. 9 (2006): 1482-1497.

and (3) export credits⁵². Moreover, this other official flows (OOF) category does include loans which are not concessional in character, as well as ‘official bilateral transactions, whatever their grant element, that are primarily export facilitating in purpose, including by definition export credits’⁵³. Hence it is distinctly difficult to accurately measure the level of Chinese investments and contracts in the African continent.



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Figure III China's Investments and Contracts in Sub-Saharan African Countries.

However, it can be ascertained that with regard to China in Africa, China offers the equivalent of ODA through three main instruments: (1) grants; (2) zero-interest loans; and (3) concessional (fixed-rate, low-interest) loans. Such financial instruments act to fund: scholarships from the Chinese government for about 5,500 African students each year⁵⁵; the operations of Chinese humanitarian and medical teams⁵⁶; the construction of stadiums⁵⁷, government buildings⁵⁸, telecommunications networks⁵⁹, and other significant infrastructure projects; technical assistance in order to help in agricultural sectors⁶⁰; training programs and

⁵² OECD 2008a, 2010.

⁵³ OECD, 2008.

⁵⁴ Data sourced from The American Enterprise Institute and The Heritage Foundation as a part of their ‘China Global Investment Tracker’: American Enterprise Institute, and The Heritage Foundation. “China Global Investment Tracker.” The China Global Investment Tracker. Last accessed June 26, 2015.

⁵⁵ Wei, Li. 2011. ‘China’s Exchanges and Scholarships with Africa: History, Success and Problems’. *Network For International Policies And Cooperation In Education And Training: The Geopolitics Of Overseas Scholarships & Awards. Old And New Providers, East & West, North & South*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁵⁶ Chen, Te-Ping. 2015. ‘China Aids Nepal In Humanitarian, Diplomatic Push’. *The Wall Street Journal*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁵⁷ Kazeem, Yomi. 2013. ‘China’s ‘Stadium Diplomacy’ In Africa And Its Top Beneficiaries - Ventures Africa’. *Ventures Africa*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁵⁸ Corkin, Lucy, and Christopher Burke. “China’s interest and activity in Africa’s construction and infrastructure sectors.” *Report prepared for DFID China. Stellenbosch, South Africa: Centre for Chinese Studies* (2006).

⁵⁹ BBC News., 2013. ‘Ethiopia’s Ethio Telecom Signs Deal With China’s ZTE’. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁶⁰ Tran, Mark. 2013. ‘Brazil And China Scramble For Agricultural Influence In Africa’. *The Guardian*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

youth social volunteers⁶¹; as well as material aid often in the form of the export of Chinese goods. Whilst most of the responsibility for Chinese grants and zero-interest loans in Africa lies with China's Ministry of Commerce, China's Eximbank⁶² and the China Development Bank (CDB) provide most of Chinese finance overseas. China's Eximbank and the China Development Bank are both policy banks established in 1994 which serve to act as an important part of Beijing's ever-growing portfolio of instruments utilised in order to support China's own development goals.

Looking now to Africa itself, it is necessary to consider where exactly it is that China's aid money is going. Considering the number of years for which an African country has had diplomatic ties with Beijing, it is very clear that Chinese aid agreements tend to follow diplomatic ties: even if aid is only symbolic⁶³, every single country in Sub-Saharan Africa which has diplomatic ties with Beijing receives foreign aid from China⁶⁴. It is also interesting to note that Chinese ODA does not appear to be given in larger quantities to resource-rich countries such as Nigeria, or the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Similarly, grants and zero-interest loans are distributed fairly evenly around the continent⁶⁵, whilst it is the case that concessional loans⁶⁶ are allocated with regard to a country's ability to pay, either since the loan will finance an income-generating project, or because it is a middle-income country⁶⁷. In order to consider the question of China in Africa across a shorter term temporal and special scale this paper will consider the varying levels of China's economic engagement in Africa in the form of investments and contracts⁶⁸ since 2000.

⁶¹ Xinhua News Service., 2015. 'Third Africa-China Young Leaders Forum Opens In Tanzania'. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁶² Zafar, A. (2007). The growing relationship between China and Sub-Saharan Africa: Macroeconomic, trade, investment, and aid links. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 22(1), 103-130.

⁶³ As, for example, in South Africa where China has built a pair of primary schools.

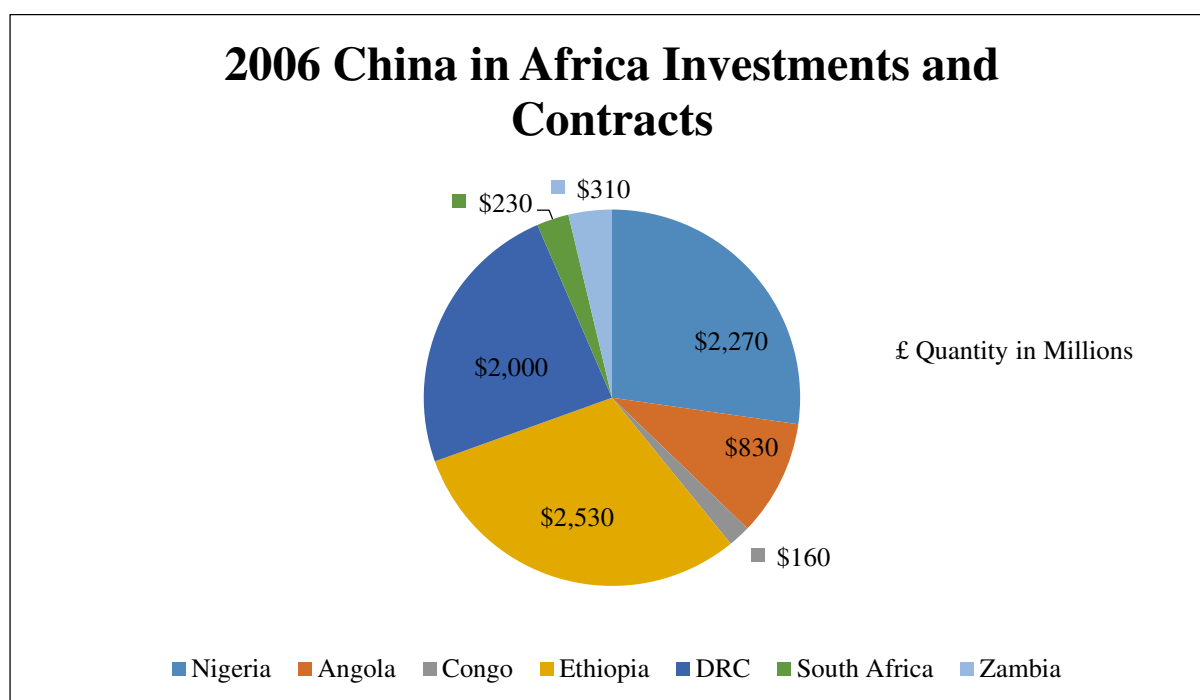
⁶⁴ Taylor, I. (1998). Africa's place in the diplomatic competition between Beijing and Taipei. *Issues & Studies*, 34(3), 126-143.

⁶⁵ Davies, Martyn, Hannah Edinger, Nastasya Tay, and Sanusha Naidu. "How China delivers development assistance to Africa." *Stellenbosch: Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Stellenbosch* (2008).

⁶⁶ Bräutigam, Deborah. "Aid 'With Chinese Characteristics': Chinese Foreign Aid and Development Finance Meet the OECD-DAC Aid Regime." *Journal of international development* 23, no. 5 (2011): 752-764.

⁶⁷ Such as, for example, Mauritius, Namibia, or Botswana.

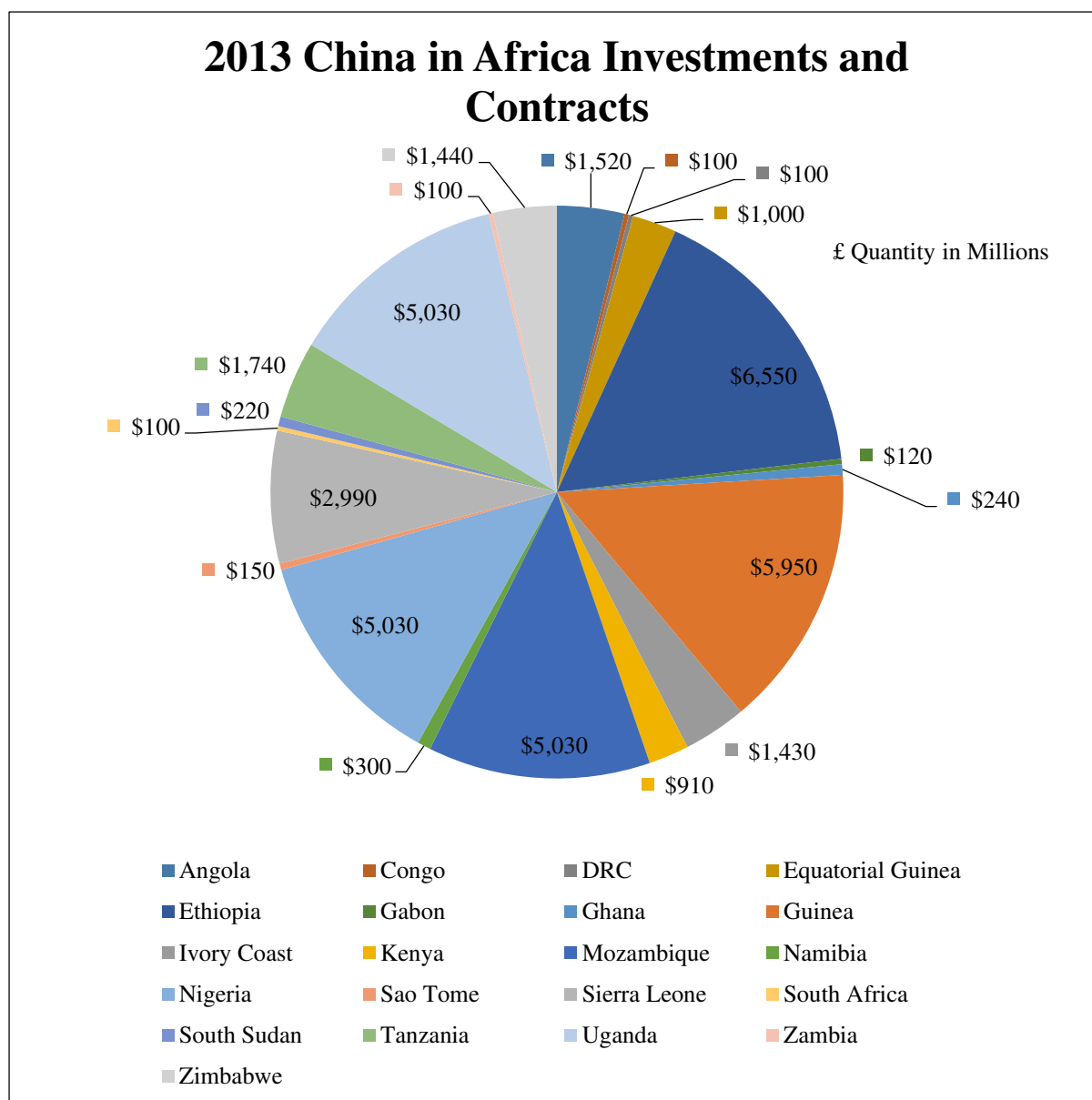
⁶⁸ Zafar, Ali. "The growing relationship between China and Sub-Saharan Africa: Macroeconomic, trade, investment, and aid links." *The World Bank Research Observer* 22, no. 1 (2007): 103-130.



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Figure IV China's Investments and Contracts in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2006.

⁶⁹ Data sourced from The American Enterprise Institute and The Heritage Foundation as a part of their 'China Global Investment Tracker': American Enterprise Institute, and The Heritage Foundation. "China Global Investment Tracker." The China Global Investment Tracker. Last accessed June 26, 2015.



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Figure V China's Investments and Contracts in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2013.

It is the case that Chinese lending is accepted and mostly welcome in Africa: China's loans finance infrastructural and other projects which African countries desire. Yet it is troubling that China appears to still be lending money to African countries which have large debts outstanding⁷¹. Such Chinese lending is troubling not because of the lending itself, given that China traditionally lends to resource-rich African countries, but rather because in such

⁷⁰ Data sourced from The American Enterprise Institute and The Heritage Foundation as a part of their 'China Global Investment Tracker': American Enterprise Institute, and The Heritage Foundation. "China Global Investment Tracker." The China Global Investment Tracker. Last accessed June 26, 2015.

⁷¹ Beattie, Alan, and Eoin Callan. 2006. 'China Loans Create 'New Wave Of Africa Debt''. *The Financial Times*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

lending China both risks the sustainability of Western debt agreements⁷² with Africa, and undermines the increasing trend towards transparency in African loan contraction processes.

China's loans to African countries take the form of contracts which are almost never open to public scrutiny⁷³ which leads to dangerous situations whereby the power rests in the hands of a very small number of rather powerful African leaders. This lack of transparency means that it is very difficult to assess how much debt is being contracted in Africa by China and on which terms such debt is being contracted. Furthermore, inadequate levels of transparency⁷⁴ mean that there is only more risk that such loaned funds will be used not for their intended purpose, and may become illegitimate debt in the future.

Through China's presence as a large lender in Africa it serves as an alternative to the current development paradigm of traditional lenders: China's policy of non-interference and non-intervention⁷⁵ attempts to suggest that China's loans to Africa come with no-strings-attached⁷⁶ aside from the seemingly-simple requirement to reject the legitimacy of Taiwan and to support the principle of one-China, in stark contrast to how traditional Western donors seek to apply high levels of conditionality upon loans to Africa with a desire to alter African countries' fiscal policy. Furthermore, after recent debt relief initiatives it is the case significant traditional creditors like the World Bank and the IMF have increasingly more limited resources to draw upon, and thus their leverage and influence within the African continent is steadily reducing as African countries have been benefitting from successful debt relief programs instigated by such institutions⁷⁷. Moreover, increasingly the presence of new lenders such as China as an alternative to the Western-credit model, has meant that African countries have far more leverage when dealing with creditors than they formerly had: as a result of China's economic engagement in Africa the policy space has increased, and so African countries now have an alternative to the traditional policy-condition demanding creditors⁷⁸.

Whilst it is the case that China's policy of non-interference appears in a prima facie way to positively impact African countries since it increases the breadth of the policy space⁷⁹, it also has previously-unconsidered negative effects. Most pertinently China appears to be less concerned with human rights standards⁸⁰ and environmental safeguards⁸¹ than traditional Western creditors. It is worrying to see that there does appear to exist a positive correlation

⁷² Williamson, Claudia R. "Exploring the failure of foreign aid: The role of incentives and information." *The review of Austrian economics* 23, no. 1 (2010): 17-33.

⁷³ Keenan, P. (2008). Curse or cure? China, Africa, and the effects of unconditioned wealth. *Berkley Journal of International Law (BJIL)*.

⁷⁴ Guilbert, Keiran. 2015. 'China Last Again In Global Aid Transparency Index'. *Reuters UK*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁷⁵ Large, Daniel. "China & the Contradictions of 'Non-interference' in Sudan." *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 115 (2008): 93-106.

⁷⁶ Pike, Elizabeth. 2011. 'No Strings Attached'. *The Harvard Crimson*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁷⁷ Sun, Yun. 2014. 'China's Aid To Africa: Monster Or Messiah?'. *The Brookings Institution*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁷⁸ The Economist. March 2nd, 2013. 'Carrots All Round'.

⁷⁹ Huse, Martine Dahle, and Stephen L. Muyakwa. *China in Africa: Lending, Policy Space, and Governance*. Norwegian Council for Africa, 2008.

⁸⁰ Koné, Lassana. 2010. 'The Impact Of China's Presence In The Horn Of Africa: Human Rights, Oil And Weapons'. *Consultancy Africa Intelligence Ltd*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁸¹ Zhang, Weijiong, Ilan Vertinsky, Terry Ursacki, and Peter Nemetz. "Can China be a clean tiger?: Growth strategies and environmental realities." *Pacific Affairs*(1999): 23-37.

between African countries with low levels of governance⁸², and the countries in which China invests in high amounts.

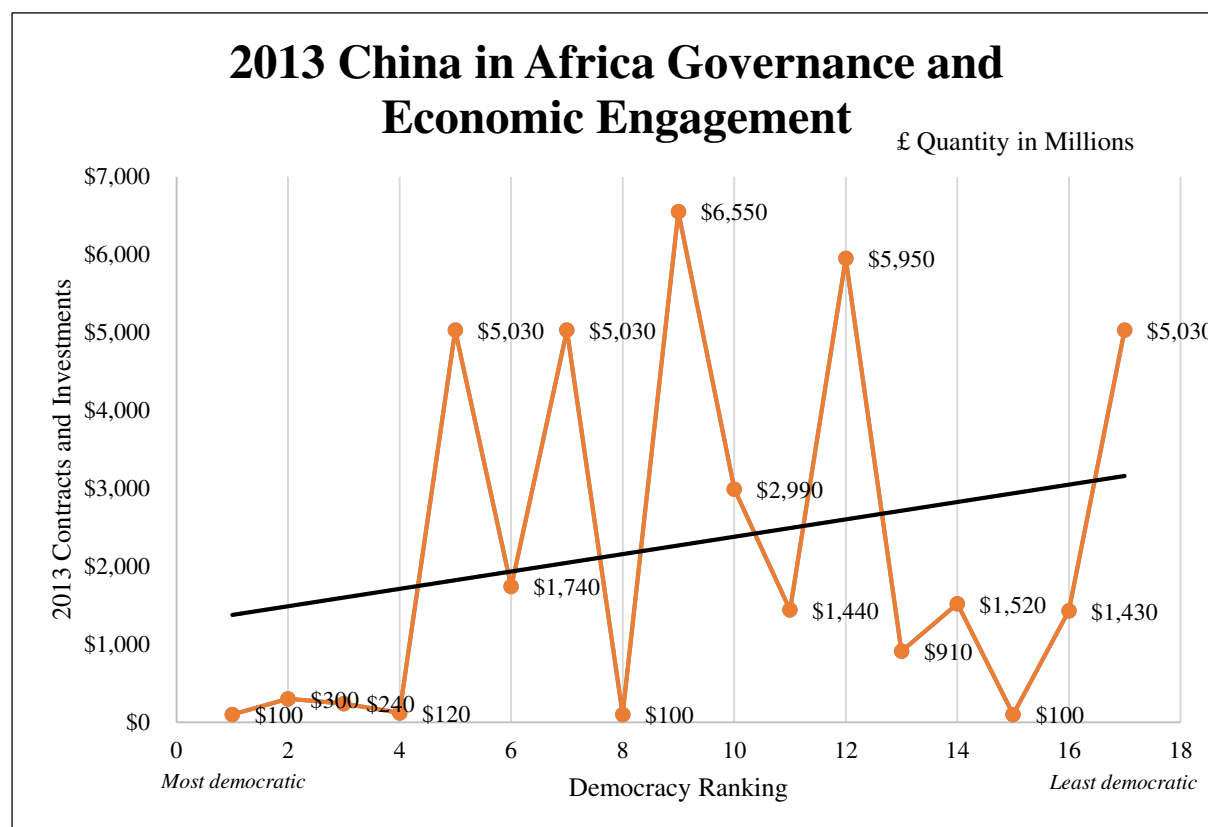


Figure VI 2013 China's Investments and Contracts in Sub-Saharan Africa Compared With Democracy Levels

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By way of an example, and as explored in the chart above, China's presence in African states which oppress citizen populations is controversial, and China is oft-criticised for the bystander role⁸⁴ which it so frequently takes in contexts where the international community — and China's 'partners' on the global stage — has condemned or sanctioned oppressive regimes, especially in situations whereby China has in its hands a meaningful opportunity to use its leverage in such African states to influence such oppressive regimes to improve their conduct and thus the lives of millions of African citizens.

CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD

In the final analysis, China's substantial economic engagement in Africa is good for Africa's development, even despite the argument that Chinese aid simply supports state elites and has little broad socioeconomic benefit. As this paper has shown, whilst Chinese aid, investment

⁸² Hope, K. R. "The UNECA and good governance in Africa." In *Havard International Development Conference*, pp. 4-5. 2003.

⁸³ Contracts and Investment Data compiled by The American Enterprise Institute and The Heritage Foundation as a part of their 'China Global Investment Tracker': American Enterprise Institute, and The Heritage Foundation. "China Global Investment Tracker." The China Global Investment Tracker. Last accessed June 26, 2015. Democracy and Governance Levels Data compiled by The World Audit Association: "World Audit Democracy." Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁸⁴ Chen, Dingding, and Katrin Kinzelbach. "Democracy promotion and China: blocker or bystander?." *Democratization*. (2015): 1-19.

and unconditional fiscal support in Africa does allow, in some instances, somewhat less than democratic leaderships to halt the spread of both political and economic reform, it must be understood that similar Western aid, even despite the explicit economic and political demands that it makes, have had only limited success in causing any significant reform in Africa⁸⁵. Rather than trying to lay the blame for a lack of meaningful reform on the West, this paper instead argues that it is too simplistic to consider China in Africa with total suspicion, most especially given the way in which such a view ignores the vast and increasingly realised potential for mutually beneficial symbiotic partnership between China and Africa. China seeks to satisfy its own interests in the continent, whilst Africa meets some of its demands utilising China's offered economic assistance. Hence the 'China in Africa' dynamic is one much more of parity than exploitation.

Further, it must be noted that China in Africa is still a modest and mid-sized donor which understandably seeks to use a wide variety of economic instruments to bolster its national economic interests abroad and to conduct economic diplomacy⁸⁶. However, whilst the size of ODA in financial terms provided by China to Africa in recent years has grown sharply and will continue to increase, it is still not large in the context of longer term Western economic engagement in the continent. China's push to become an economically-important global player on the world stage — as typified by its 'go global' political plans — has been coordinated through many policy instruments in a vein more similar to that of Japan's outward economic development than that of other OECD countries. Hence, Chinese financial institutions have developed a range of instruments which they believe can be used to positively link Africa's natural resources⁸⁷ to its economic development. Furthermore, since China views such natural resources as Africa's natural wealth, they have not offered resource-secured loans at concessional rates. Rather, for China in Africa every single country, no matter how resource-poor, can provide untapped capacity with which future debt can be serviced so long as borrowing is used for productive projects. However it does still remain to be seen whether fears about the sustainability⁸⁸ of such debt⁸⁹ are unfounded or based in realistic assessment.

In order to prevent irresponsible Chinese loan contraction in Africa it is necessary for responsible lending practices to be put in place. At the current rate it seems likely that China will at best have an only very slightly positive impact upon African debt sustainability, and at worse will contribute to the causation of a debt crisis in some African countries where governance is somewhat weak. Since a lack of transparency and accountability to African citizens does not appear to inhibit Chinese lending — so long as China is able to use natural resources as collateral — it is necessary to develop a responsible financing framework for the implementation of loans, such as those by China in Africa, in order to ensure the freedom of future generations of African citizens from the vicious cycle of debt and political oppression by violent regimes. Of course, this must not detract from the African continent and its

⁸⁵ Ayodele, Thompson, Franklin Cudjoe, Temba A. Nolutshungu, and Charles K. Sunwabe. "African perspectives on aid: Western foreign assistance will not pull Africa out of poverty." *Economic Development Bulletin* (2005): 1-4.

⁸⁶ Xiaoyang, Tang. 2015. 'Economic Diplomacy Between China And Africa: Transformation And Restructuring'. *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*. Last accessed June 28, 2015.

⁸⁷ Both agricultural and mineral resources.

⁸⁸ Lihua, Yang. "China and Africa: Building Sustainable Strategic Partnership [J]." *West Asia and Africa* 9 (2008): 001.

⁸⁹ Abbott, George C. *Debt relief and sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa*. E. Elgar, 1993.

leadership's own undisputed fiscal responsibility for its growth, debt, and sustainability of their economies, alongside its imperative duty to safeguard its rich natural resources and ensure its continual development through the pathway to good governance and strong institutions.

Thus, by exploring the history of China's economic engagement in Africa, and the changing nature of its aid, it is clear that China in the African continent illuminates important and somewhat awkward questions as to the role of contemporary aid and interference. By examining both China's historical and contemporary financial involvement in Africa, this paper has shown that China's broad-brushed approach and keen engagement in the economic form of Africa is an idiosyncratic aspect of the "scramble for Africa" that has plagued the continent for centuries. Finally, this paper has proposed that for the sake of Africa's citizens, both in the short and the longer term, China's new political leadership must ensure that its economic engagement in the plateau continent remains not myopic and opportunist, but rather serves as a strategic force multiplier, taking a wide ranging approach in order to maintain the viability of some of the world's most vulnerable economies and guaranteeing the continuation of a symbiotic partnership of common interest.

APPENDIX I: A DIAGRAMMATIC DEPICTION OF CHINA'S AID IN AFRICA

The following diagrammatic figures serve to effectively illustrate, in a more readily comprehensible way, the existence and level of Chinese aid in Africa.

White squares depict the number of years for which any given African country has had at least some level of diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Grey squares depict the number of years for which any given African country has had at least some level of diplomatic ties with Beijing.

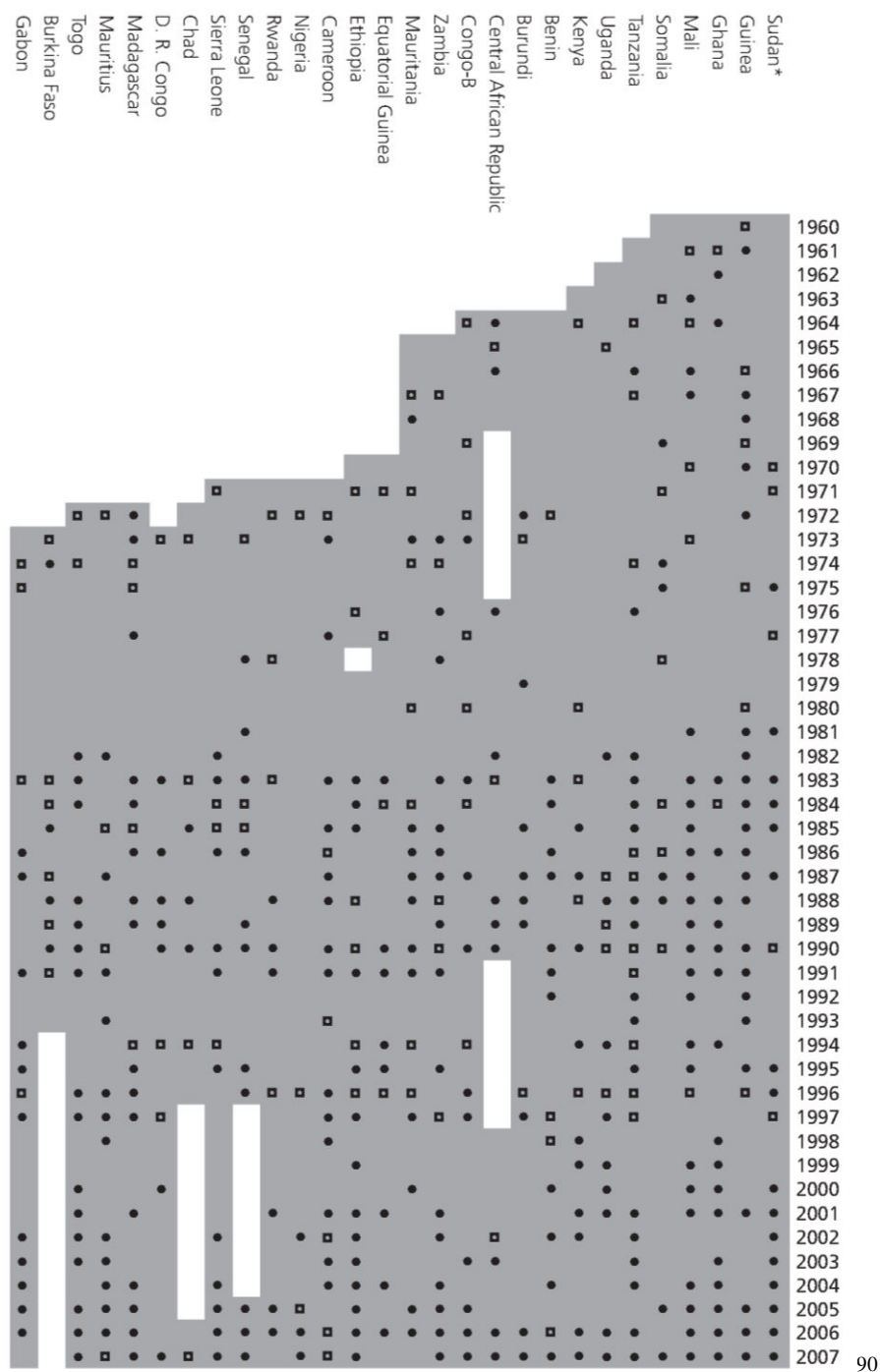
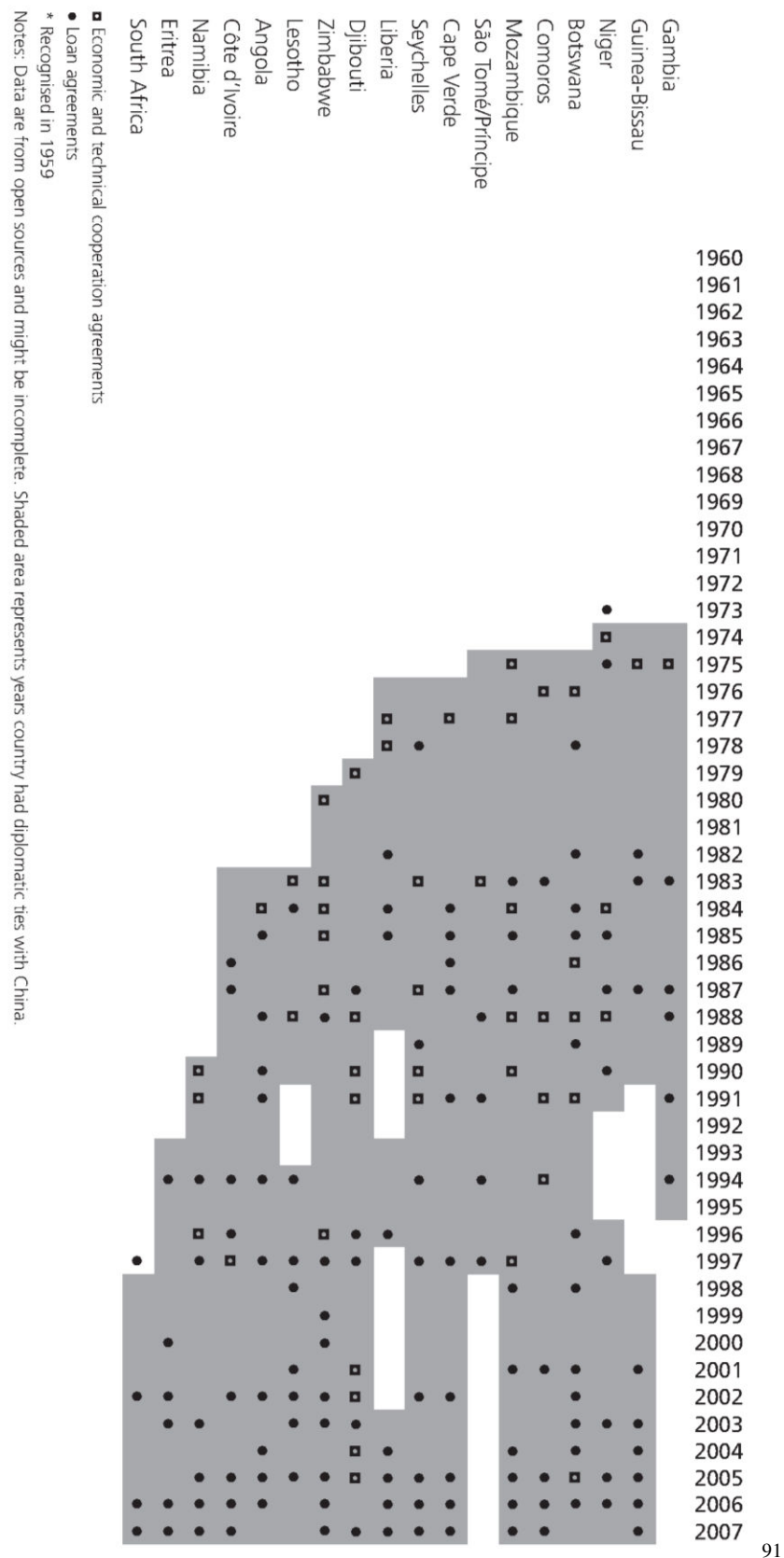


Figure VI Years of New Aid Commitments, China to Africa, 1960-2007

⁹⁰ Bräutigam, Deborah. "Chinese Development Aid in Africa: What, where, why, and how much?." *Where, Why, and How Much* (2011).



⁹¹ Ibid.

APPENDIX II: DEMANDS FOR A REALISTIC EVALUATION OF CHINA IN AFRICA

It is evident that much of the present-day literature relating to Sino-African relations is alarmist and sensational in nature. There is a clear undertone of fear about Chinese engagement in Africa which impairs our ability to fully comprehend China in Africa today. Whilst it is the case that in some ways China's increasing engagement in Africa is a cause for concern, much of this anxiety is both misguided and misinformed. In order to help Africans and their development partners make the most of China's current economic engagement in Africa we must move away from the 'exploitation paradigm' and move towards the 'symbiosis partnership'.

If we are to properly understand China in Africa we must ensure that we in the West hold a realistic appraisal of both the current situation and the history of Sino-African relations. Such an appraisal must dispel the myths and rumours that populate today's literature. Myths⁹² and rumours considered harmful include:

- (1) China's engagement in Africa is a recent phenomenon, which has its roots in a shameless search for resources.
- (2) China targets and exploits the pariah regimes which the West chooses not to.
- (3) Increased Chinese engagement in Africa is at the expense of Western attempts to strengthen democracy and good governance in Africa.
- (4) The size and extent of Chinese aid is at a level the continent has never previously experienced.
- (5) The sole purpose of aid from China is to exploit natural resources.
- (6) China has sent large numbers of Chinese to colonise Africa.
- (7) Chinese economic activity in Africa refuses to utilise Africans and serves only to disadvantage native populations.

⁹² Bräutigam, Deborah, and Haisen Zhang. "Green dreams: Myth and reality in China's agricultural investment in Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 9 (2013): 1676-1696.

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