The Emergence of China as a Major International Actor: Exploring the Economic and Security Dynamics of China's Interets in Africa

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Abstract

The paper explored the economic and security interests of China in Africa. China and indeed other technologically and economically advanced countries have a strategic interest in Africa. The enormous natural resources (gold, crude oil, uranium, diamond etc.) and vast markets in African countries have made the continent a new bride for other countries. With regards to China relations in the African continent, the relation has been unequal as it is tilted in the interest of China and not to drive economic development and industrialization in the continent. The Marxian Political Economy Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. The secondary source of data was deployed for the study; it involves the collection of data from textbooks, journals, magazines and conference papers amongst others. The work observed that China's relations with African countries are predicated on the need to promote China's economic interest in Africa; trade and investment and also to maximize the enormous natural resources opportunities in the region to consolidate her position in the global system. The work recommends that there is a need for African leaders to overhaul the pattern and structure of African interactions with China and in fact, other economic powers in the world. This can be achieved by being strategic in their dealings (African leaders) with their Chinese counterparts.

Keywords: China, Africa, Trade, Market, Interest, Relations

Introduction

The first great surge of foreign interest in Africa dubbed the "scramble", was when 19th-century European colonists carved up the continent and seized Africans' land. The second was during the Cold War when East and West vied for the allegiance of newly independent African states; the Soviet Union backed Marxist tyrants while America propped up despots who claimed to believe in capitalism. A third surge, now underway, is more benign. Outsiders have noticed that the African continent is increasingly becoming important, not least, because of its growing share of the global population (by 2025 the UN predicts that there will be more Africans than Chinese people). Governments and businesses from all around the world are rushing to strengthen diplomatic, strategic and commercial ties with Africa, and this, in itself, creates vast opportunities for the Continent; if Africa handles the new scramble wisely, the main winners will be Africans themselves.

The point being made is that the quantum of foreign engagement in Africa, at present, is unprecedented. Starting with diplomacy, from 2010 to 2016, more than 320 embassies were opened in Africa, probably the biggest embassy-building boom anywhere, ever. Turkey alone opened 26. Last year India announced it would open 18. Military ties are deepening, too. America and France are lending muscle and technology to the struggle against jihadism in the Sahel. China is now the biggest arms seller to sub-Saharan Africa and has defence-technology ties with 45 countries. Russia has signed 19 military deals with African states since 2014. Oil-rich Arab states are building bases on the Horn of Africa and hiring African mercenaries (The Times, 2019; Conduit and Akbarzadeh, 2019).

During the last four decades, China has considerably moved from being an isolated country, separated from the international community, to becoming one of the world's powers, and being on its way to becoming the biggest economy in the world. Being at the epicenter of a global power shift from the West to the East, and from the North to the South, there has been a lot of attention given to its external affairs, including its foreign policy goals and behaviour (Weissmann, 2015). The presence of China has drastically changed the equation of Africa's political economy and outsized the traditional European economic stronghold in Africa. In 2015, China invested about 35 billion Dollars in Africa and so has surpassed Europe or the US as Africa's main trading partner. The China-Africa Summit of 2018 further demonstrated the growing importance of China in Africa. During the

Summit President Xi Jinping offered to invest another 60 billion dollars in Africa during the next three years. Meanwhile, the influence of the old colonial powers continues to wane. The indications are that China is about to push the ex-colonial powers out of the African market but how Europe intends to save itself from the impending loss of its African marketplace is reserved for history (Schonecke and Onyejiuwa, 2018).

China has been committed to creating an 'all-weather relationship with Africa, particularly since the new century, by persistently expanding its economic, political and, more recently, security involvement in Africa. China's intensified peacekeeping efforts in Africa reveal not only China's desire to maintain regional peace and stability for its economic cooperation and trade with Africa but also China's strategic intention of creating its sphere of influence in the forms of the Sino-African 'Community of Common Destiny'. By so doing, China wishes to cement its relations with Africa that it identifies, together with those with other developing nations, as the basis of China's international relations and provide itself with safe access to African markets, resources and investment destinations to sustain its economic growth that bases its long cherished dream of restoring its past glory of 'Fuqiang' (wealth and power) and rise in the global power hierarchy. (Yu, 2018).

The objectives of this paper are; to analyze China's economic, geostrategic and security in Africa; examine China's Geopolitical Interest in Africa; and examine the threat China's penetration poses to African countries.

Apart from this introduction, this paper is divided into four parts. Part one focuses on methodology and theoretical framework, part two focuses on literature review, part three focuses on data analysis and part four focuses on conclusion and recommendations.

PART I

Methodology

This study adopted a secondary method of data collection; it involves the collection of data from textbooks, seminar papers, journal and conference papers etc. Content analysis was utilized in analyzing the data.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for the study was the Marxist Political Economy Theory propounded by Karl Marx in 1867. The Theory scientifically studies society in its totality and takes into consideration the interconnection of social relations, class conflict and the organic relationship between the sub-structure (economy) and the superstructure (politics).

Political economy is concerned with the social laws of production and distribution (Lange, 1974). The Marxist political economy theory is a holistic, historical orientation, which is used for the analysis of social formations and their contradicting relationships. It mainly focuses on the economic laws which govern the production and distribution of material benefits among individuals and groups at different stages of development of society (Iwarimie, 1991). Put differently, the theory is seen as the window to understand the laws that govern the economic life of the society. It explains the relationship between what man produces and how he benefits from the surplus he produces. The theory shows how the various parts of the superstructure are used as instruments of the ruling class domination and as a mechanism of oppression of the subject class.

According to Ake (1981), a major advantage of this approach is that it emphasizes the relatedness of social phenomena. These links exist between the economic structure and social structure. More so, the theory helps to penetrate deep into the processes and policies, lay bare their essence and then explain concrete forms of their manifestation.

On the other hand, the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle (Marx, 1977). Thus, the class analysis framework of the theory best explains the endemic class struggle between the exploiters and the exploited. According to Marxist thought, consciousness means man's ability to ideally reproduce in his mind the surrounding reality existing beyond and independent of him, the production of which is engendered by contradictions (domination, exploitation and marginalization in society. It posits that the dominated, exploited and marginalized groups, which paradoxically generated or bear the burden of creating resources, seek to change the status quo when they become conscious (Libman and Borisox, 1985:125; Marx and Engels, 1977; Luckac, 1968).

It is imperative to note that the consciousness of exploitation is enhanced by the movement of a class from a class-in-itself (an unconscious class category), to a class-for-itself (which is a conscious class category). The above explanation also captures the transition from Ethnic group-in-itself to Ethnic group-for-itself in Nigeria (Ibaba, 2005).

Relating and applying the Marxian political economy theory in understanding China's interest in Africa, it becomes imperative to state that the enormous economic potential domicile in Africa has made Africa continent a centre of attraction to Western industrialized countries. The need to harness these resources and maximize the opportunities created by these markets is responsible for the penetration of China and other Western countries in Africa.

PART II
Literature Review
Economic Relations

Economic relations refer to friendly economic relationships between states and in the context of this study between China and African countries. Although economic relations could be either negative or positive, a Positive bilateral economic relationship is the most common alliance type. Nations have many reasons for seeking positive economic relationships with other nations. For one, two nations may be physical neighbours, and thus a harmonious coexistence is both convenient and beneficial for each party. Cultural similarities can further solidify and strengthen a bilateral economic bond (Bukarambe, 2015). A friendly nation, wherever its location, can make a strong bilateral trade partner and thus enhance economy and commerce. According to Chibundu (2017), countries with diplomatic ties can be enduring military allies as well, offering assistance, land use, and essential resources in times of military crisis. He went further to posit that "two nations can generally implement various steps to foster a positive, economic relationship. Each nation may install a diplomatic ambassador, or representative, in the other nation. Ambassadors or representatives act as conduits between the two nations, promoting political and economic harmony (Chibundu 2017).

Trade Policy

Chidozie, (2004) opined that trade policy is a collection of rules and regulations which pertain to trade. Every nation has some form of trade policy in place. Public officials formulate Policies which they think would be most appropriate for their country. The purpose of trade policy is to help a nation's international trade run more smoothly, by setting clear standards and goals which can be understood by potential trading partners. In many regimes, groups of nations work together. Things like import and export taxes, tariffs, inspection regulations and quotas can all form part of a nation's trade policy. According to Chidozie, (2004:p.78), "some nations attempt to protect their local industries with trade policies by placing heavy burdens on importers thereby allowing domestic producers of goods and services to get ahead in the market with lower prices or more availability". Others eschew trade barriers by promoting free trade in which domestic producers are not given special treatment and international producers are free to bring in their products (Chidozie, 2004).

China's Growing Presence in Africa: Etymological Context and Drivers of Engagement

In its long history, Africa has served the global ambitions of many foreigners. Foreigners have reached out to Africa as missionaries, financiers, and infrastructure builders. They have promised to place the continent on the globalization map and help its people grow out of poverty. But they ended up grabbing Africa's riches, colonizing one nation after another, and letting their people steep in poverty. That may end up being the case again, with China's recent infrastructure investment projects in the continent. Mourdoukoutas (2019) noted that on the surface, these projects seem to serve the quest of African nations to build a sound infrastructure. But on closer examination, they serve China's ambitions to write the rules of the next stage of globalization.

China's relationship with the countries of North Africa, especially Algeria and Egypt, began during the anti-colonial struggle, stemming from ideological support for national liberation movements. Notably, China was the first non-Arab country to recognize Algeria and provide political and military support for its revolutionary struggle. However, the basis of China's interest in North Africa shifted away from revolutionary romanticism, and toward economic and strategic

concerns, at the end of the twentieth century (Ghafar and Jacobs, 2019; Shinn and Eisenman, 2012)

The views on China in Africa range from China as an African 'development partner', pursuing win-win benefits and providing Africa with a non-Western model of development; to China as a foreign 'economic competitor' in Africa, competing with other foreign powers over the rich.

African resources; to China as a 'new colonizer', trying to not only exploit African resources but also control their markets as much as possible for Chinese products (Edoho 2011). Simply speaking, while some argue that China's growing presence will have or is harming our world in general, and Africa in particular, others believe that the positive impacts outweigh the possible negative ones (Chen, 2017). The pattern of China's investments in Africa positions it to profit from continuing economic engagements in Africa. Many Chinese firms investing in Africa are state-owned. This gives them a notable competitive edge when for example, bidding on procurement contracts in African countries since the companies can obtain substantial subsidies from the Chinese government. Maverick (2018); Chen (2017); Edoho (2011) noted that the stakes in Africa are high due to the continent's rich abundance of raw materials. Africa is estimated to contain 90% of the entire world's supply of platinum and cobalt, half of the world's gold supply, two-thirds of the world's manganese and 35% of the world's uranium. It also accounts for nearly 75% of the world's coltan, an important mineral used in electronic devices, including cell phones (Maverick, 2018; Chen, 2017; Edoho, 2011). United States on investment and rail. Some of the primary motivations that lie behind China's push toward increased investments in African nations include the desire to secure a solid base of raw materials to fuel China's own rapidly growing economy; the desire to increase China's global political influence and the major growth opportunity presented by emerging market economies in Africa (Kovrig, 2018).

Mining and oil remain a primary focus of China's investments; however, the country's investments extend throughout virtually every market sector, including everything from infrastructure to food processing amongst others encompassing key areas such as utilities, telecommunications, port construction transportation etc. One other reason is simply supply and demand: the swelling capacity of its

military and industrial base, and African governments' interest in its relatively affordable arms, flexible financing terms a comparatively unrestricted approach, including non-interference in matters such as governance and human rights (Page, 2018; Kovrig, 2018).

PART III

China's Economic, Geostrategic and Security Interest in Africa

The fact that China is making huge investments in Africa and has become the biggest trading partner has available records, however. less known or, rather, less talked about are the other strategies with which China is using to gain more influence over the African media, and the military and even control strategic infrastructures in Africa. The new Chinese Silk Road is meant to link not only China and Europe but also some 20 African countries. China is supposedly building an impressive infrastructure to connect those countries. For example, the 4 billion dollar railway link between Mombasa and Nairobi, which is planned to link eventually five other countries in the region is a point in case. China even attempted to establish her police points called *'South African-Chinese Community and Police Co-operation Centres*. It has rejected the appellation of Police Stations for these centres (Schonecke and Onvejiuwa, 2018, Chen, 2017). China's own expanding economic interests are a further driver. Africa's largest trading partner since 2009, China increasingly counts on the continent for natural resources and markets to maintain its own growth and social stability, its Belt and Road Initiative has metamorphosed into a global set of bilateral agreements to foster Chinese trade, investment and financing, first expanded into East Africa with infrastructure projects in Kenya and Ethiopia. The initiative is now open to the whole continent, and the Chinese are prospecting for opportunities in West Africa, as the new FOCAC plan indicates, that effort is stimulating Chinese concerns about piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and terrorism in the Sahel, as well as discussion of building local capacity to counter them. Beijing intends that the security-related programs in the new action plan support the Belt and Road (Maverick, 2018; Kovrig, 2018; Zhou, 2019).

China's military presence in Africa (though still not very large) is increasing. There are three forms of the Chinese military presence in Africa today: first, selling weapons to some African countries such as Sudan and Zimbabwe: second,

participating in the UN Peacekeeping Missions in the region; and third, maintaining a naval force against the Somalian pirates near the Horn of Africa (Lanteigne 2016: 195: Sutter 2016: 310; Enuka 20TI:9).

China claims a unique role in contributing to conflict resolution in Africa: "China supports African countries 'efforts in independently resolving their continent's issues in their way.

Based on the principles of respecting the wills of African countries, not interfering in African countries' internal affairs. And observing the basic norms governing international relations, China will play a constructive role in maintaining and promoting peace and security in Africa. It will explore means and ways with Chinese characteristics to constructively participate in resolving hot-button issues in Africa, and exert a unique impact on and make greater contributions to African peace and security. The Special Representative of the Chinese Government on African Affairs will continue to play a contributing part (Houtari Et al, 2017).

However, China's expanding security footprint in Africa primarily takes the form of peacekeeping. It is the largest troop contributor among the Permanent Five (P5) members of the UN Security Council, and the second largest financial contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget. Peacekeeping remains the most ideal and internationally acceptable way for Beijing to protect its overseas interests, particularly in the conflict-prone regions of the African continent without deflecting much - at least discursively - from its sacrosanct non-interference policy. As one of the P5 members of the Security Council, Beijing is also able to shape (or veto) the mandate of any peacekeeping (Ziou, 2G19; Kovrig, 2018; Dollar, 2018).
The PLA certainly plays an increasingly active role in China's peacekeeping operations, particularly in the African continent. While PLA's troop contribution used to be solely confined to police, medical, logistics and engineering contingents, we also see Beijing's growing easiness in dispatching combat troops, like the dispatching of its first battalion of combat troops to the peacekeeping mission in Mali in 2013. Most recently, Beijing also deployed its first peacekeeping helicopter detachment to the mission in Darfur. This diversification of troop contribution helps the PLA to accumulate operational experience given that its last real-world war-time operations took place in Vietnam in 1979. The increasing

dispatch of the PLA to peacekeeping also plays into Beijing's (relatively unsuccessful) intention to assuage concerns over the rapid growth of its military capabilities (Zhou, 2019).

China's expanding military presence in Africa which is attracting the most attention is the establishment of China's first military overseas outpost in Djibouti, an Eastern African country located at a strategically important point near several regional flashpoints (Chen, 2017; Lanteigne 2016: 195). The geostrategic position of China's base in Djibouti cannot be over-emphasized: it is located in a maritime transit area that is crucial for China's trade with Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The base holds even greater strategic importance against the backdrop of President Xi's launching of the Maritime Silk Road, of which East Africa is part. It is also a concrete manifestation of China's ambition to become a maritime great power and to strengthen the global mobility of its navy.

The fact that China has participated in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008 and that other Western countries also have military bases in Djibouti, coupled with Beijing's insistence on calling it a "logistical support facility" indicates Beijing's prudence in choosing this location for the fear of triggering unwanted concern. However, the Chinese strategic community in general sees the establishment of this base as a natural and logical development of China's rise and one should not be surprised to see a second military facility shortly (Zhou, 2109; Kovrig, 2018). The base certainly has a logistical added value for the PLA's operations in the region including maritime anti-piracy operations, peacekeeping missions (e.g., in South Sudan and Darfur), as well as any other military operations other than wars. It also enables the PLA to project force to protect Chinese citizens and potentially Chinese economic investments in the region. Lacking an overseas "logistical support facility" was often cited by Beijing as one of the main obstacles constraining its engagement in multilateral operations to support peace and security beyond its immediate neighboring region (Zhou, 2019).

This trend of growing flexibility is likely to receive a further boost after the announcement of China-Africa Peace and Security Initiative by China's president during the 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). In February this year, a ministerial–level dialogue was attended by representatives from 23 African

states, the African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council. China's Assistant Foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong – was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to discuss the implementation of this initiative. It seems that Beijing is increasingly taking a pan-Africa approach to peace and security on the continent by strengthening its cooperation with the AU. The AU's more progressive stance on intervention (marked by its emphasis on non-indifference and human security), as well as its high expectations of the Chinese contribution to its peace and security agenda, may nudge Beijing to be more pragmatic about its non-interference policy to enable cooperation in areas where Beijing's active role has been desired both by African countries themselves and by the international community, but were previously considered by Beijing as too intrusive, such as conflict mediation and peace-building activities like Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reinsertion (DDR) and Security Sector Reform - SSR (Zhou, 2019).

Less noticeable to outsiders but broader in impact is China's direct defence and security cooperation with African counterparts. This takes place through a growing number of joint exercises, naval patrols and exchanges. In the first half of 2018 alone, the PLA Navy's 27th and 28th anti-piracy escort task forces reportedly visited ports in Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana and Nigeria, while PLA units conducted drills in the same countries, and its medical teams did work in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zambia. Mere months after Burkina Faso's May decision to switch diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing, the PLA is already working to develop military ties that will likely emphasize counter-terrorism cooperation. As the FOCAC commitments note, China is complementing these cooperation mechanisms with more military assistance for the AU. In the first major disbursement from China's $100 million commitment, it concluded an agreement in February to provide $25 million in military equipment for the AU's logistics base in Cameroon. Beijing has also made small contributions to the AU's mission in Somalia and to sub-regional organizations. Still, most military assistance flows directly to countries such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe, where China also has significant commercial interests. A recent example is the $30 million training centre that China completed in February for Tanzania's military at Mapinga (Zhou, 2019, Kovrig, 2018; Chen, 2017).

The political and defence relationships fostered by these programmes grease the wheels for weapons sales. Data compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows that China has become the top supplier of arms to sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 27 per cent of the region's imports over the four-year period from 2013-2017, an increase of 55 per cent over 2008-2012. Some 22 countries in the region have procured major arms from Chinese suppliers in recent years, key among them Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia. In June, China's State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence reported that Beijing now has defence industry, science and technology ties with 45 African countries. Given China's particularly influential role in the sales of small arms, light weapons and ammunition, it should do more to improve transparency, monitoring of end users and cooperation with UN investigators to prevent those weapons from ending up in the wrong hands (Kovrig, 2018).

China's Geopolitical Interest in Africa

According to Ted-Bauman, Senior Research Analyst at Banyan Hill Publishing, it's clear that China's primary goal with foreign investment is geopolitical, not economic. The most consequential investments are undertaken by state-owned companies, not by Chinese private capital. They tend to focus on infrastructure like highways ports and dams and on public networks like the electrical grid. That's something many African countries desperately need in their bid to develop their economies (Panel, 2008). The trouble is that these investments help to bind countries to China politically, and through debt obligations," explains Bauman. It creates a form of leverage that China can use to force these countries to support Chinese ambitions globally. In some cases, such as the Angolan oil sector or Congolese rare earth mining, Chinese investment helps to lock in supply relationships with essential commodities. Chinese President Xi aims to realize the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation by projecting power overseas through the Belt and Road initiative, which covers both Southeast Asia and Africa, adds Lu. This political economy effort is paired with China's growing military might in the South China Sea and the African continent, posing a growing challenge to the U.S. security umbrella worldwide (Mourdoukoutas, 2019; Hodzi, 2017). China is using its rising economic power to build political soft power. And with the United

States essentially rudderless when it comes to international relationships, the chances that China will succeed are very good indeed.

The African continent is a logical place for China to look to extend its geopolitical influence. China is already the preeminent power in Asia. India is a historically traditional rival of China. Is not a realistic choice for China to look for an increase in political influence, but the largely undeveloped countries of Africa represent a prime opportunity for China to significantly expand its global presence and influence in the world. The nature of China's political motivations is partially revealed by its extensive investments in African infrastructure. If China can rise to a position where it exerts major control over essential economic elements such as the utility sector and telecommunications in African countries, while also developing military influence, then it also holds considerable political alliance in those nations (Maverich 2018).

Beijing also strives to maintain strong political relationships with the continent, mainly to secure continued support for its "One China" policy isolate Taipei in different international fora, and therefore boost the legitimacy of the Party back in China. Lastly, Beijing's ideological interest in Africa is often under the radar. It perceives African states as a natural ally in its quest for the 'democratization of international relations' and a new global order that can accommodate its rise and legitimate interests. This politico-ideological support from African countries is particularly important to Beijing, against the current backdrop of rising US-China tensions and rivalry (Zhou, 2019).

One of the major political objectives that China has been pursuing in Africa is to gain African support for its 'One-China Principle' *vis-à-vis* Taiwan (Wang and Zou 2014: 1116). Due to its successful economic reform initiated in the late 1970s, China has since the 1990s begun to enjoy notable progress on its 'Yuan diplomacy' to encourage Taiwan's African allies to shift their political recognition and endorse China's 'One-China Principle' (Lanteigne 2016: 194). As a result, China's political presence in Africa significantly expanded when South Africa terminated its official relations with Taiwan and established formal diplomatic ties with China in 1998. Today, all except three countries in Africa (that is, Burkina Faso, Democratic

Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and Swaziland) politically recognize China instead of Taiwan (Chen, 2017).

Classical Case Study: Nigeria

Set against the backdrop of Nigeria's challenging security environment are China's strategic concerns. What are China's top interests in Nigeria and how consistent is the bilateral relationship with China's broader African foreign policy? Broadly speaking, these interests fall into four categories: trade, energy, security, and the United Nations (Sun, 2014; Page, 2019).

Trade and Market Access: As Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, Nigeria offers large Chinese companies – as well as small - to medium-sized entrepreneurs – a wide range of lucrative commercial and trade opportunities. Beijing has strong incentives to ensure that Nigeria's rapidly expanding middle class continues to buy Chinese-manufactured goods.

Access to Energy Resources: Beijing is keen to maintain some degree of access to Nigeria's significant oil and gas reserves over the long term as a strategic hedge against overdependence on Middle East energy imports.

Security of Chinese Nationals and Investments: Keen to avoid embarrassing attacks on its citizens or costly commercial setbacks. China has compelling reasons to want Nigeria to remain stable and secure. It has, however limited tools to achieve this, given its policy of noninterference in other countries' internal affairs (Chen, 2016; Page, 2019).

Non-opposition to China at the UN: Nigeria is a valuable political friend to China in regional and international forums. Nigeria typically votes in tandem with other African countries – and this bloc vote correlates strongly with China's votes in international bodies. A steadfast supporter of Beijing's One China policy, Nigeria has served on the UN Security Council more times than any other African nation. China's relationship with Nigeria, however, does not neatly fit into these paradigms. China's strategic interest reflects Nigeria's status as an emerging global power: the largest economy in Africa, a major oil and gas producer, and on track to become the world's third most populous country by 2050. Meanwhile, this has yielded more contradictions. For instance, China's economic activities are

usually benign but occasionally can be destabilizing. When these activities do aggravate domestic conflict, it is often because they exacerbate homegrown conflict drivers such as corruption, criminality, and misgovernance. Although bilateral trade and investment have mostly a beneficial effect, bribery and illegal extraction have a negative impact on Nigeria's stability and security, and Chinese arms sales to Nigeria result in mixed outcomes. Despite selling weapons that have been deemed substandard with evidential operational failure in the North East, Beijing also sells weapons to Nigeria with no strings attached, unfazed by security force abuses, counterproductive counterinsurgency tactics, or conflicts of interest (Kovrig, 2018).

Beyond China - Africa Cosmetic Relations: Signaling the Threats to African Development

While it seems that Africa will profit from an improved Chinese infrastructure, Chinese loans contribute to a debt crisis for many African countries and create a growing dependence on China. Some of the projects are economically not viable and when a country is unable to repay its debts, China tends to pay itself by taking over its mineral resources, the public energy supply, or seaports and airports. Zambia is on the verge of losing its national airport to Chinese creditors. Some countries like Sierra Leone have seen the danger of accepting such credits and have cancelled contracts to build a new National Airport (Chen, 2017).

The goal of an increasing military involvement of China in Africa is to secure its land and sea trade routes. In Djibouti, China has begun with the construction of a huge military base just next to the American base. It is meant to become a hub of the new Silk Road project. China is also becoming the most important arms supplier and provides military equipment to some 22 African countries. The formation programs for police and army officers strengthen China’s influence in the security sector. In recent years, China has also provided financial and military support to UN Peacekeeping missions in DR Congo, Mali, Sudan and Southern Sudan. The latest attractive export to Africa could be China’s very efficient electronic surveillance systems which are able to identify people's faces. Dictatorial regimes in Africa will willingly embrace it (Page, 2018; Schonecke and Onyejiuwa, 2018).

Meanwhile, a worrisome angle is the quality of the infrastructures that the Chinese build for the African Governments. In Nigeria, the much-applauded Abuja-Kaduna railway commissioned in 2016 has already got stories of breakdown of trains. The Chinese infrastructural development in Africa is designed to keep her in control of these infrastructures. What can be other explanations there? In all these, Africa's lack of bargaining power has left her very vulnerable both to Europe and China. While relatively keeping her standard, Europe uses her traditional ties to force her wishes down the throat of Africa. However, China uses an unorthodox *"as you want it strategy"* which has left African nations with substandard infrastructures and debt burden.

Furthermore, in the past, China used to fly in temporarily Chinese workers to realize major projects, like the TANZAM railroad line from Lusaka to Dar-es-Salaam. Nowadays. Such workers tend to stay in the country and start enterprises or work as craftsmen and even as street hawkers. With their cheap Chinese imports, they enter into direct competition with small local traders, which can create tensions. But in the meantime, African business people have learnt to operate worldwide and import their own goods directly from China. There are no reliable statistics about the number of Chinese living in Africa but estimates vary from one to two million. On the other end, some 200,000 Africans are living in China; 80,000 of them are students (Schonecke and Onyejiuwa, 2018).

Chinese interest seems to be solely about economic gains. Europe exhibited such an interest in times past even though religion was used to blunt its sharp edges. Now we know better! China appears not to have any country economically powerful enough to check its onslaught. This monopoly leaves the historically weakened African countries in a very precarious situation. Hence, journalists and civil society in some countries are beginning to question more brazenly the long-term aims of China on the continent. They criticize the exploitation and racial discrimination of African workers in Chinese-owned companies. Even though the raised voices are yet to get coordinated and form a synergy, the concerns are real, and the fears have historical antecedents in the European exploitation of the African continent. Perhaps, the new thing is the benevolent 'win-win' approach which China temptingly presents to the African leaders. The emerging indices show that the African countries must be weary of the baits that China throws.

It is to ensure a coordinated and effective interrogation of the unfolding China-Africa partnership that AEFJN pushes for an Africa-driven advocacy to engage in the discernment of China's economic interests in Africa – is it a boom or a veiled bane (Schonecke and Onyejiuwa, 2018).

In addition to China's arms sales, those who have negative views on China in Africa argue that, in order to secure its interests in African resources, China has become a 'Patron of African Misgovernment', brewing corruption and supporting authoritarianism in Africa with its no strings - attached aid to Africa. This is very different from Western aid which is conditioned on the recipient's efforts to build democracy, protect human rights, and pursue 'good governance' in general (Sautman and Yan 2008: 9; Schoeman 2009: 403: Hirono and Suzuki 2014: 444). For example, the US Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) published a report in 2006 on the US influence in Africa, where it warned of China's effort to increase its influence to counter the Western pressures on African countries to improve human rights and governance (Sautman and Yan 2007:75-76). Also, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have complained that China's unrestricted lending and aid to Africa are undermining "years of painstaking efforts to arrange conditional debt relief" and are fostering corruption on a large scale (Campbell, 2008).

Finally, there are increasing arguments about the negative impacts of the growing Chinese economic presence in Africa on African people's livelihoods. According to these arguments, while the China- Africa trade and Chinese investment in Africa seem to economically benefit Africa at first glance these initiatives are actually resulting in economic 'underdevelopment' on the continent. For example, Chinese companies in Africa prefer to hire Chinese workers from China instead of local workers from African countries (Zhan, 2014). Therefore, many Chinese construction projects previously mentioned actually involve a large number of Chinese workers employed by Chinese companies in Africa. Furthermore, in most cases, those projects are paid for by the Chinese government to the same Chinese companies' headquarters in China. As a result, African countries and their workers in particular get very little extra benefit from China's economic presence in Africa in the form of employment, working skills, technology transfer, and spending for local goods and services (Sutter 2016: 308). Also, there are arguments that it is not

only African workers but also African businesspeople who would be hurt by China's growing economic presence in Africa. This is because more and more African businesses and factory owners are worried about the 'dumping' of cheap Chinese products such as shoes, clothes, furniture, electronics etc. to the African markets (French 2007).

PART IV

Findings/Conclusion

Moving from the reality that for the last four decades, China has considerably moved from being an isolated country to being one of the world's power and being on its way to becoming the biggest economy in the world; the paper explored the economic, geostrategic and security, as well as the geopolitical dynamics of China's interest in Africa. The paper, by exploring the existing literature and the relevant information about China in Africa, has demonstrated amongst other things, that there is a contradiction in China's growing presence in Africa between the Chinese state (that is, the Chinese government) and the Chinese non-state actors (that is, Chinese companies, business owners, workers, and people in general). While the former continues to show goodwill to African countries with its official policy toward Africa, which emphasizes China's effort to develop an equal and win-win partnership with Africa instead of following the colonial path that other major powers used to take; the latter, despite being an agent for the former to realize that partnership is gradually regarded by Africans as a threat to the African population and their societies as a whole due to its for-nothing-but-profit behaviour and attitude towards Africa (Chen, 2017).

China's behaviour is essentially the same as that of the United States in the second half of the 20th century," explains Bauman. It is using its rising economic power to build political "soft power." And with the United States essentially rudderless when it comes to international relationships, the chances that China will succeed are very good indeed (Mourdoukoutas, 2019). China's relations with African countries is predicated on the need to promote China's economic interest in Africa; trade and investment and also to maximize the enormous natural resource opportunities in the region to consolidate her position in the global system.

China and Africa have been partnering in the area of investments for approximately the last seven years. In September 2018, delegates from both countries met at the seventh annual Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. The collaboration and cooperation make Africa one of China's greatest allies in the current global market environment. The level of China's investment in the continent of Africa has been increasing at a steady rate. At the 2018 China-Africa Cooperation Forum, China announced it would be providing $60 billion in financial support to Africa. Its huge investments in Africa are an indication that China is about to push the ex-colonial powers out of the African market.

China has, particularly in the last decades persistently expanded its economic, political and, more recently, security involvement in Africa. Its intensified peacekeeping efforts in Africa reveal not only China's desire to maintain regional peace and stability for its economic cooperation and trade with Africa but also its strategic intention of creating its own sphere of influence in the forms of Sino–African 'Community of Common Destiny'. In so doing, China provides itself with safe access to African markets, resources and investment destinations, in order to sustain its economic growth that bases its long cherished dream of restoring its past glory of 'Fuqiang' (wealth and power), and rise in the global power hierarchy (Yu, 2018). China - Africa Cosmetic Relations exposes Africa to. It would be tautological to restate them here. It concludes that, while the China – Africa trade and Chinese investment in Africa seem to economically benefit Africa at first glance, these initiatives are actually resulting in economic underdevelopment in the continent.

Recommendations

1. There is a need for African leaders to overhaul the pattern and structure of African interactions with China and in fact, other economic powers in the world. This can be achieved by being strategic in their dealings (African leaders) with their Chinese counterparts.
2. There is a need for African leaders to always prioritize their national interest in their interactions with other countries owing to their historical experience of colonialism so as not to fall to the exploitative tendencies of the technologically advanced countries.

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