
Examining China's Foreign Aid and How to Make It Work Better for Africa

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Abstract: *With China's increasing role in Africa, the issue of aid has been high on the China-Africa agenda and the subject of considerable debate. This paper intends to analyze China's foreign aid policy towards Africa, by examining China different approaches to aid and the internal logic behind these differences so as to facilitate mutual understanding. Due to different stages, different development models and different aid cooperation experiences in Africa, China has developed different aid principles, priorities and modalities with different logics. Regarding aid principles, China advocates more 'cooperation' than 'aid' itself, so the country's main principles guiding the way in which it manages aid are no political condition attached to aid provisions, two-way cooperation and a win-win formula. Regarding aid priority and modalities, China puts more emphasis on developing economic infrastructure, with concessional loans as the main instrument. This paper focuses on how to make Chinese foreign aid work better for Africa and identifies policy measures that should be taken by both China and African countries to achieve this objective*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, foreign assistance from non-Western governments has increased sharply—both in absolute terms and as a share of global development finance (Klein and Harford 2005; Manning 2006; IDA 2008; Woods 2008; Fengler and Kharas 2010; Severino and Ray 2010; Dreher et al. 2011; Walz and Ramachandran 2011; Fuchs and Vadlamannati 2013). At the same time, aid from Western governments has declined for both of the past two years (OECD 2013). This emerging “Aid 2.0” (The Economist 2011a) poses a challenge to the existing aid regime that is organized around the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).⁵ Increasing donor competition grants developing countries the opportunity to “shop around” for the types of development finance that best suit their interests (Brainard and Chollet 2007). The rapid increase in development finance from governments that do not report to the DAC also raises a set of vexing questions for scholars and policymakers. How much funding do these non-DAC donors provide, to whom and on what terms?

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⁵ With the addition of Iceland in March 2013, the DAC now consists of the European Union and 24-member states of the OECD.

What impact do non-DAC sources of finance have on economic development, democratization, debt sustainability, and environmental outcomes in developing countries? China, Russia, Venezuela, and India are thought to provide billions of dollars in assistance every year (Walz and Ramachandran 2011), but most of these “new” suppliers of development finance have chosen not to participate in existing reporting systems, such as the OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS) or the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).⁶

At the 2011 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea, negotiations quickly split along DAC and non-DAC lines. Member states of the DAC argued that new players, such as China, Brazil, and India, should adopt measurable, time-bound aid transparency and effectiveness commitments. Non-DAC suppliers of development finance bristled at this suggestion, arguing that their “South-South cooperation” activities are qualitatively different from Western aid and should not be governed by traditional aid principles (Fraeters 2011; Tran 2012). China, now a leading provider of global development finance, adopted a particularly strong position at Busan. Their negotiators argued that the “principle of transparency should apply to north-south cooperation, but ... it should not be seen as a standard for south-south cooperation” (Tran 2011). Ultimately, Busan resulted in a rather tenuous agreement: The majority of DAC members reaffirmed the importance of complying with IATI standards as well as the aid effectiveness standards established at Paris (2005) and Accra (2008); many non-members of the DAC agreed to a set of voluntary standards, but doubled down on their position that South-South cooperation should not be subject to the same set of expectations as Western aid (Barder 2011).

China is of particular interest to researchers and practitioners because of the perceived scale and opaqueness of its activities in Africa. China’s presence in Africa is, beyond dispute, large in both trade and what can be called official finance to Africa. China’s development cooperation goes back to the 1955 Bandung Conference and earlier. The Bandung principles of mutual benefit, mutual learning and non-interference, were subsequently reflected in the eight principles of Chinese aid formulated in 1964 by former premier Zhou Enlai. This tradition remains an important part of China’s present-day pragmatism in development cooperation. Officially, China provides eight types of foreign aid: complete projects, goods and materials, technical cooperation, human resource development cooperation, medical assistance, emergency humanitarian aid, volunteer programs, and debt relief.⁷ China’s aid to Africa covers a wide array of fields, such as agriculture, education, transportation, energy, communications, and health. According to Chinese scholars, since 1956, China has provided almost 900 aid projects to African countries⁸, including assistance supporting textile factories, hydropower stations, stadiums, hospitals, and schools. Chinese

⁶ There are widely varying levels of commitment to transparency among non-DAC suppliers of development finance. For example, Brazil, India, South Africa, and many of the new Eastern and Central European donors have demonstrated a higher level of interest in data disclosure and/or compliance with international reporting standards (Aufrecht et al. 2012; Sinha and Hubbard 2012). Russia has started recently to provide bilateral aid data to the CRS.

⁷ China’s Foreign Aid,” Xinhua News Agency, April 21, 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-04/21/c_13839683_6.htm

⁸ Yun Sun (2014). China’s Aid to Africa: Monster or Messiah? Brookings. Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinas-aid-to-africa-monster-or-messiah/>

economic engagement in Africa, which came as a surprise to most economists and development analysts and is undoubtedly one of the factors that contributed to the high and robust growth experienced by the continent in the past decade. China is certainly not new to Africa. It has a history of partnerships with African countries dating back to the late 1950s although at that time the focus was largely on political rather than economic cooperation. Since 2000, the focus of the relationship has been increasingly on economic cooperation as evidenced by the growing trade, aid, and foreign direct investment (FDI) flows between China and the continent. Over the past decade, there has been an enormous increase in the number of studies on China's burgeoning relationship with Africa. Yet, not much is known about the precise magnitude of Chinese development finance in Africa apart from the fact that it has grown rapidly over the years. In addition, there are no comprehensive studies on the impact of these flows and on how to enhance their development effectiveness. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to shed some light on China's growing partnership with Africa with particular emphasis China's foreign aid policies.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE AID COOPERATION IN AFRICA AND THE CHINESE ODA MODEL

Although the practice of Chinese ODA in Africa has rapidly increased during the 21st century, the relationship between the regions is far older. The year 2006 marked the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of diplomatic ties between China and African countries, which started in 1956 with the establishment of Sino Egyptian relations. However, links between China and Africa go much further back in history.⁹ The shifts in China's African policy are closely interlinked with domestic development strategies as well as international events. According to the information received from Chinese scholars, China's African policy has in modern history gone through roughly three phases.¹⁰ The first phase, starting with the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, ran from the 50s to the 70s. This was a time when China's policy was primarily politically and ideologically driven. China's policy was mainly concentrated on supporting African people in their struggle for national independence and to unite African countries in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. Chinese support, moral, military and economic, was given to African independence movements. Aid was an important tool.¹¹ This strategy is reflected in the "Five Principles on China's relations with African and Arab countries", put forward by the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai during a tour to African countries in the early 60s. The first principle reads "China supports the Arab and African peoples in their struggle to oppose imperialism and old and new colonialism and to win and safeguard national independence."¹² Similarly, the eight principles for providing foreign aid, also put forward during the

⁹ China already in ancient times formed links with the Egyptian city of Alexandria about 130BC. Trade links were later on developed with other parts of Africa via the Silk Road, and during the Chinese golden ages of the Tang and Song dynasties (600–1300) China's trade with Africa was flourishing. During the 14th and 15th centuries China made several large-scale voyages to Africa. This brief exposé is based on Yang, 2004.

¹⁰ The information is based on interviews with Chinese scholars unless indicated otherwise. These changes are also described in papers by Li, 2006, Yang, 2004 and He, 2006. (b)

¹¹ Li, 2006, p.8.

¹² The five principles guiding China's relations with the Arab and African countries were: a. China supports the Arab and African peoples in their struggle to oppose imperialism and old and new colonialism and to win and

Premier's tour, among other things stressed self-reliance of the recipient countries. This tour is described by the Chinese government as a milestone in the development of friendly relations between China and other Asian and African countries.¹³

It was during this first phase that China constructed the Tanzania-Zambia railway, a flagship in Chinese cooperation, which according to one Chinese scholar, was primarily driven by political motivations from the Chinese side. China in turn sought and gained support from African countries in the international arena, namely support for China's seat in the Security Council of the UN. This support is something still often referred to. President Hu Jintao, in his opening speech at the 2006 FOCAC Summit, stated that "We in China will not forget Africa's full support for restoring the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations."¹⁴ The second phase started with a move away from ideology to a focus on economic cooperation. In the late 70s, after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and with China's opening up policy which followed, there was a shift "from idealism to realism/pragmatism in China's economic aid to Africa [...]".¹⁵ Domestic development was considered a top priority after a period of economic decline during the Cultural Revolution. This meant a decrease in Chinese aid to and trade with African countries. Instead increased focus was put on developing ties with developed countries including improving relations with the western world. The Premier at the time, Zhao Ziyang, during a state visit to Africa in the early 80s, issued four new principles on China-Africa cooperation which focused on economic-technological cooperation.¹⁶ Thus the ideological/political focus was pushed aside. From the 90s and onwards, could be described as a third phase. After Tiananmen Square in 1989 ¹⁷ China again intensified its cooperation with African countries during a period of frosty relationships with the west. Chinese aid increased dramatically.¹⁸ Since the 90s China's African policy has had both a political and economic focus, and other forms of cooperation, including cultural, have been added to this. The present strategy is thus described as more inclusive and holistic in its approach, which is manifested in the FOCAC. With the setting up of the FOCAC process in 2000 commenced a period which stands out in terms of intensity and the all-encompassing strategies pursued by China. FOCAC, as expressed

safeguard national independence. b. It supports the pursuance of a policy of peace, neutrality and non-alignment by the Governments of Arab and African countries. c. It supports the desire of the Arab and African peoples to achieve unity and solidarity in the manner of their own choice. d. It supports the Arab and African countries in their efforts to settle their disputes through peaceful consultations. e. It holds that the sovereignty of the Arab and African countries should be respected by all other countries and that encroachment and interference from any quarter should be opposed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000/11/17.(a)

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ President Hu Jintao, 4 November 2006

¹⁵ Yang, 2004, p.5.

¹⁶ Li, 2006, pp.10-11

¹⁷ For further information see Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiananmen_Square_protests_of_1989

¹⁸ Taylor, 2006, p.2.

by one scholar, marks a completely new type of partnership between China and Africa. The establishment of this “new strategic partnership” was proclaimed at the 2006 FOCAC Summit.”¹⁹

Another way of describing the evolution of China’s African policy is outlined by the Chinese scholar Li Anshan in three main shifts: from emphasis on ideology to neutrality, from unitary forms to multiple channels and from single aid to win-win strategy.²⁰ These three shifts took place at different moments in the above described chronology. The first change of China’s African policy lies in attitude towards ideology. China’s insistence on linkage between foreign policy and ideology faced a dilemma in the 60s as it led to discontinued relationships with several African countries, partly due to the conflict between the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This was resolved by the adoption of a new strategy by the CPC and a “liberation of party relations from the bondage of ideology”²¹ after which the party began to receive delegations of African parties in the late 70s. This has been described as a breakthrough which greatly improved the development of China-Africa relations. Since then the CPC and African parties have developed their contacts further. Contacts are no longer ideologically based nor confined to ruling parties and stretch beyond party politics. Today party delegation visits constitute an important part of the new partnership. There is a special section in China’s African Policy on developing exchanges in various forms with friendly political parties and organizations of African countries with the purpose of increasing understanding and cooperation.²² The second shift from unitary forms of relations with an emphasis on political contacts, to exchanges through multiple channels and on different levels coincided with the second phase as described above. The third shift was a move from mainly focusing on gratis aid and interest free loans, to multiple forms of cooperation based on the rhetoric of a win-win strategy. These last two shifts mean that today China’s policies and strategies include a wide range of different forms of cooperation, including political high level exchanges, cooperation in international affairs, trade, investments, agricultural and health cooperation, aid, education, science, culture, sports etc.²³ In the words of Chinese scholar He Wenping: “This multidimensional approach to strengthening relations is markedly different from that which Africa has managed with its traditional development partners.”²⁴ Besides covering many more areas than before, more actors have become involved. According to scholars interviewed, this also means that China’s Africa cooperation is today much more complex.

One observation is that Chinese scholars put great emphasis on the historical ties between China and Africa. The past is very much present in discussions on aid to Africa today. For instance, the Chinese support to African liberation movements and the support China got from African countries in establishing its position within the UN is frequently mentioned. Another observation is that Chinese scholars put emphasis on the continuity of relations with

¹⁹ Declaration of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (Draft) 2006

²⁰ The following section is based on Li, 2006

²¹ Li, 2006, p.6.

²² China’s African Policy, January 2006

²³ These are just a few of the areas in China’s African Policy, January 2006.

²⁴ He, 2006. (b) p.6.

African countries. The Chinese policy on aid and cooperation with African countries is said not to have changed so much in essence, but more on a practical level. Although continuity is a key word, there has been a move towards more specific commitments and pledges in recent years including development assistance. In 2005 President Hu Jintao presented a “five-point pledge” which consisted of specific commitments on, among other things, debt relief and the provision of new concessional finance and assistance.²⁵ This pledge marked a new era in China’s aid to foreign countries, according to the government.²⁶ This was followed by the eight concrete measures to support African countries, presented by the President at the inauguration of the 2006 FOCAC Summit.

3. CHINESE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO AFRICA

The international community often enforces constraints on governments to whom they give funds. One clear example is how Western donors began to enforce democratic reforms during and after the Cold War period; this ‘condition’ was largely regarded as effective in cultivating institutional reform (Dunning 2004; Goldsmith 2001). Despite the focus on how bilateral aid ‘forced’ or ‘encouraged’ democratic reforms at the end of the Cold War, there is little research that assesses the empirical results of aid conditions on positive governance changes within African states. Crawford (1997) notes that the general consensus after the Cold War is that aid conditions and restrictions were largely ineffective in contributing to meaningful political reforms in recipient countries, due to the weakness of imposed conditional measures rather than by the strength of the recipient governments. In response to the aid quagmire, evidence of ‘good governance’ has become a precondition – rather than a goal – for particular Western aid packages, especially those emanating from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United States (Nanda 2006). While there are few agreed upon indicators of ‘good governance’, the evidence of poor governance is well documented: De Maria (2008) reports that corruption costs African economies more than US 148 billion dollars a year.

Yet, the symbolic or economic effect of donor conditions or preconditions for accessing aid are stated reasons why Chinese aid is positively regarded across Africa (Economy and Monaghan 2006). In contrast to traditional donors, China practices a clear ‘non-interference’ policy with regard to its aid program – not requiring any specific governance conditions in order to receive aid. China’s recent history with Africa suggests that the aid relationship stems from a ‘South-South’ movement (Adisu et al. 2010:3); China’s early support surrounding independence displayed its “opposition to colonialism and imperialism” (Davies, Edinger, Tay, and Naidu 2008; Qiang 2007; Samy, 2010:78; Taylor 1998). More recently, China entered a ‘pragmatic’ period wherein China focused on domestic market-orientated reforms and its aid to Africa increased in line with ‘buying’ the support of international sympathizers (Samy 2010). During this period, support from the Chinese government allowed Chinese construction, mining, and oil extraction companies to move into African countries (Adisu et al. 2010; Broad man 2007; Mohan and Kale 2007). Since the turn of the century, with the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China’s aid behavior expanded beyond project-based aid, to include debt cancellation, technical co-operation, humanitarian aid, and training of personnel (Samy 2010). Yet, China’s domestic development strategy also plays an

²⁵ President Hu Jintao, New York, September 14, 2005

²⁶ China Commerce Yearbook, 2006, p.438.

important role in shaping policy towards Africa (Adisu et al. 2010; Zweig and Jianhai 2005). Further, while Western donors tend to develop country assistance strategies, China's aid programs are based on high-level discussions, which has the effect of feeding 'prestige' products and/or patronage flows, since it is not tied to specific outcomes to the degree other donors are (Brautigam 2011).

Chinese aid is therefore intentionally distinct from other donors. While the 'Washington consensus' may be seen as "a neo-liberal paradigm that takes into consideration democracy, good governance, and poverty reduction" (Adisu et al. 2010:4; Fine and Jomo 2005; Sautman and Hairong 2007), the 'Beijing consensus' "values the political and international relations concept of multilateralism, consensus and peaceful co-existence" (Adisu et al. 2010:4; Wenping 2007). Chinese emphasis on 'South-South' relations includes a 'respect for sovereignty', which is practiced as 'non-interference': "China is not imposing its political views, ideals nor principles onto recipient countries" (Davies et al. 2008:57). Examples of such a policy in action include the Chinese government's silence on the role of the Sudanese government in Darfur, especially when indicating, "it was not interested in issues beyond its own economic interests" (Samy 2010:85). Commonalities do exist between the 'Beijing' and 'Washington' consensuses. Aid is delivered in similar ways – including project support, technical assistance, food aid, debt relief, humanitarian assistance – and Chinese principles emphasize ownership, alignment with country priorities, and results – similar to the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (Brautigam 2011:9).

All donors give aid for a variety of reasons, not least important of which are political and strategic incentives (see Alesina and Dollar 2000; Berthelemy and Tichit 2004). Understanding donor intent in aid allocation is important, especially when ultimately interested in notions of aid efficacy. In comparison to other international donors, Chinese flows are smaller, and economic and commercial considerations are priorities (Dreher and Fuchs 2011). China's intention concerns energy security, new market and investment opportunities, symbolic diplomacy and development, and forging strategic partnerships – as well as seeking support of its 'one China' policy (Adisu et al. 2010; Alden 2005). China's need for natural resources to sustain economic growth remains imperative, and African countries (such as Angola, Congo, Nigeria, and Sudan) can offer long-term energy solutions for China (Samy 2010).²⁷ While this aid can be beneficial to African countries through providing them with access to revenue, the danger of reinforcing resource dependent economies remains high (Samy 2010). As the Chinese seek to promote economic growth and their foreign policy interests, the threat of resource dependence is counter to their 'no strings attached' model (Adisu et al. 2010; Zafar 2007). As is commonly reported but countered by where Chinese support goes, China's objective is not solely access to resources (e.g., oil, bauxite), but to develop new markets through trade and investment (Adisu et al. 2010; Samy 2010).

African leaders and communities have a mixed reception to China as a main donor (Samy 2010:75). African leaders see Chinese aid in a largely positive light, citing "a new approach to development and increased potential for meaningful South-South cooperation" (Samy 2010:75) and "China as the ideal model for their countries and

²⁷ 4 China does much to protect its access to oil and natural resources as well. For example, China has been seen transferring weapons to South Sudan in recent months, in part to protect South Sudan's oil infrastructure in which China heavily invests (Dörrie 2015).

economies” (Adisu et al. 2010:7). This may be because the ‘Chinese’ model allows leaders to maintain a strong grip on political power (Brooks and Shin 2006). However, African civil society has warned of a growing neo-colonial relationship (De Lorenzo 2007; Samy 2010:86) and remains cautious and worried about “the possible negative repercussions on governance, the environment, human rights and overall economic development” (Samy 2010:75). For African states, Chinese aid is an attractive source of funding because it allows for continued growth on a sustainable basis, relative to ‘traditional’ donor aid, which can be volatile and burdened with numerous conditions; Chinese aid surmounts the problems of aid volatility and unpredictability (Samy 2010). In general, the main benefit of Chinese aid is the ‘no strings attached’ model allowing support of initiatives not solved by Western investment, and the resulting lack of emphasis on meetings, reports, etc. which burden the overstretched capacities of many African states (Adisu et al. 2010:4; Brautigam 2011; Sautman and Hairong 2007). Chinese aid efforts have brought significant and needed improvements. It has assisted in creating relatively high economic growth in Africa, canceling debt, and building infrastructure (e.g., roads, bridges, dams); the Chinese have also built health and educational capacity through student exchanges in universities and training centers (Adisu et al. 2010).

There are arguably, however, a number of development drawbacks to Chinese aid. Some have claimed that the Chinese aid model has negatively impacted local African trade, commerce and labour. Increased competition has also been harmful to African enterprises and exports, both in internal markets for domestically oriented manufacturers as well as in external markets (Adisu et al. 2010; Alden 2005). Additionally, Chinese environmental and social standards have been cited as potentially problematic for Africa (Moss and Rose 2006; Samy 2010). ‘Traditional’ donors have arguably been more sensitive to social and cultural differences as well as power relations in Africa; China often “depend[s] on local governments to sort these things out,” which means they often are not resolved (Brautigam 2009; 2011:10). More fundamental is its possible effects on political violence; multiple authors suggest that Chinese aid policies have propped up dictatorships and tyranny, citing Sudan, Chad, and Zimbabwe as examples (Askouri 2007; Samy 2010), especially as Chinese aid is easier to direct towards areas of a leader’s choosing, regardless of need (Dreher, Fuchs, Hodler, Parks, Raschky, and Tierney 2014). The traditional donor alliances in imposing economic and political conditions on recipients are actively undermined by Chinese aid unconditionality (Brautigam 2011). Some contend that this lack of conditionality has “emboldened the governments to limit their progress towards political and economic reform” (Adisu et al. 2010:5). Yet, given the win-win relationship between the Chinese and (especially authoritarian) African leaders, the Sino-African relationship is likely to endure.

3.1. Development Aid in Transformation

Development aid as a practice developed into its institutionalized form as we know it today in the beginning of the 20th century. Several western nations started providing regular aid to their colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, often with a focus on infrastructure in order to further trade and accumulate wealth in western nations. As the former colonies gained independence the practice of foreign aid continued, primarily with a focus on economic development. In the post-war era the USA became the largest aid donor in the world followed by other western nations, and throughout the cold war period aid became a tool for political alliances. Throughout the 1960s and 70s western nations started refining their aid programs and the phenomenon became more widespread. The practice of donating a certain quota of national income as development aid also originated in this era and is today a staple for

OECD nations. Western nations without a history of colonization, also started providing development aid for what is claimed to be more humanitarian reasons. Ever since, western nations have been providing large amounts of development aid to developing nations all over the world. Traditionally, development aid has consisted of a transaction between a donor from a western nation and a recipient from the global south. Development aid has always been used as a tool for underlying motives and not just been capital transferred in good will, it is a practice that stems from colonization and throughout history has been used as a tool to gain power, political allegiances or other perks for the aid donors as well as recipients (Phillips 2013, Milhorance & Soule-Kohndou 2017).

While development aid between nations of the global south has occurred throughout the 20th century, it did not become a widespread practice until the last couple of decades. The rapid economic development of several nations in the global south in the 1990's, spearheaded by China, started a larger trend of South-South cooperation and development practices as a joint effort between developing nations. South-south cooperation expanded rapidly in scope during the beginning of the 21st century, with China leading the helm. SSC has developed into a widespread practice, becoming a heated topic in academia and politics in later years as the nations and economies of the global south grow more powerful. The growth and increased importance of SSC is based on several different factors, among these the ability of rapid economic recovery and resilience of some of the large economies of the global south. Cooperation between nations are varied in its shape including trade, aid, technology transfer and movements toward increased regional integration (Nayyar 2013, Milhorance & Soule-Kohndou 2017).

3.1.1 Chinese Aid and the Non-interference Policy

Since the establishment of FOCAC China-Africa aid relations has undergone a considerable transformation. The relationship is now much more focused on long-term cooperation, with an emphasis on economic development, trade relations and cultural cooperation. A larger focus has been given to South-South Cooperation, and China has implemented measures in order to support both social and economic development in African cooperation partners. In later years, primarily after the fifth FOCAC meeting in 2012, China has stated that more focus will be given to social and cultural exchanges, as opposed to the prioritization on mainly economic development and trade that has been central in China-Africa cooperation since the beginning of the 21st century (Changsong & Jing 2016). Chinese aid differs from "traditional" western-based aid in several aspects. China's experience and development as a non-western state has led to a different progression and approach to development cooperation practices than what has been practiced by western donors since the "invention" of development aid (Changsong & Jing 2016). The current China-Africa ODA model is based in historical China-Africa aid relations, and hence differs from western aid because of differences in history, culture and ideology (Changsong & Jing 2016, Parks & Strange 2014). Overall, Chinese aid strays from the traditional donor-recipient power dynamic, as both parties are more regarded as equals in cooperation since both parties has something to gain, as opposed to traditional western aid which is frequently framed more as charity. The power dynamics between the western state (donor) and developing nation (recipient) are firmly established as inherently unequal (Changsong & Jing 2016).

Chinese aid is more focused on productive sectors, instead of social sectors and poverty reduction as a primary goal which has been the case in the west. China also has the benefit of being a non-western nation with a very successful history of development in recent years. The experience from the development process provides China with

knowledge and hands-on experience which western nations lack, making the gap between China and African nations smaller than that of African nations/traditional donors. Chinese aid is also framed as mutual benefit with no strings attached as a result of the non-interference policy, which is a tangible difference from western aid which usually comes with various demands from the donor nation (Cheng et al 2012). Cheng et al. (2012) frames starting point of the rapid increase in relations between China and African nations as late 2004, simultaneous to the expansion of Chinese ODA and Chinese aid globally has expanded by an average of 21.8% annually since 2005 (Zhang 2016, Cheng et al. 2012). Chinese aid and investments overseas have been promoted as non-interference, which inherently means that China has absolute respect for state sovereignty. The non-interference policy is not new, it has been in place since 1955 and China has stayed close to these principles in their approach to development aid. As China becomes more powerful in the international sphere, more attention has been given to the non-interference policy as an alternative means of conducting international politics (Brown 2013).

The non-interference policy states that China does not meddle in domestic matters of sovereign nations and abstains from political conditionality. The strategy stems from China's "five principles of Peaceful Coexistence", namely: Mutual respect for other nations sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence. Noninterference includes not interfering in regime changes or conducting military interventions. China's modern policy in Africa is based in the five principles of peaceful coexistence as a historical and political Chinese legacy. This policy is a starkly different approach from western nations international policies, especially regarding development aid (Okolo 2015). Another factor shaping the Chinese international relations globally and African nations in particular is the Chinese "going-out policy" which was initiated in 1999. The policy has acted as both a driving force of and part of China's overall foreign policy and strategy. Driven by domestic politics, the going out policy was created in order to increase Chinese investment overseas, attaching a lot of importance to outward foreign investment. China's focus on the importance on outward investment is connected to how Chinese politics views investment opportunities abroad, the connection they make and the relationship and focus on mutual benefits of SSC and Chinese ODA overall (Shen & Mantzopoulos 2013).

3.1.2. The Ongoing Debate Surrounding Chinese Aid

Ever since the increased cooperation between China and Africa in the 1990's there has been debate surrounding the nature of the intention of Chinese aid, especially from traditional western donors. Traditional aid has more focus on human development, often with the long-term goal of poverty reduction. This has become the norm of western development aid, and this method of aid practice is seldom contested by the public or policy makers. As Chinese aid has been rapidly increasing since 2004, the Beijing method of development aid has suddenly become a model taking up a lot of place in the international system, and the deviation from the norm has made it a topic of critique and debate. Foreign aid to Africa is a big part of Chinese aid, and most of the aid is concentrated to east Africa, with a primary focus in infrastructure, public works, technical assistance and scholarships to study in China (Cheng et al 2012). The main argument raised by traditional donors is that the primary incentive of China's interest in African nations is to secure energy and resources, and human development is nothing but an afterthought (Changsong & Jing 2016, Parks & Strange 2014). In the last decade Chinese aid has become much more visible in the international sphere due to its enlarged magnitude. As such, the discrepancy between the Chinese and OECD/DAC traditional

western donors have become more apparent. Different political actors are frequently discussing if Chinese aid undermines the current consensus of western aid (Cheng et al. 2012). China is now the largest exporter in the world and the second largest economy, making it a very powerful nation, and the combination of the enormous economic power of China can be interpreted as intimidating by western actors (Cheng et al. 2012). A popular but rather untested claim in western media and politics is that Chinese aid is actively hindering western aid efforts. The nature of the non-interference policy of Chinese aid has also been contested, as some claim that by not taking a stance and providing aid to countries despite the state of the nation's politics, China is still getting involved in national politics by providing governments with funding (Dreher et al 2017).

The debate regarding the issue today has become focused on the rise of China and South-South Cooperation –the so called “rise of the global south”. It is often framed as “the fall of the west vs the rise of the rest”, with one side being more negative towards the increase of South-South Cooperation (SSC) and China-Africa relations, claiming that the non-interventional side of Chinese aid undermines western aid efforts. The other side to the debate is arguing that perhaps it is time to rethink traditional western aid, and that South-South Cooperation is great in this new era of developing nations becoming more important and an alternative to the western-centric international system that has been prevalent since colonial times (Muhr 2016, Parks & Strange 2014). Perhaps the increased cooperation between states in the global south can lead to a decreased dependence on western nations – which could be a positive thing (Gray & Gills 2016, Bond 2016). Some argue that the negative reaction to Chinese aid from western scholars and policymakers is simply based in the fear of losing power and influence on the global stage. There is also the implication that increased Chinese influence globally leads to a decline of human development, free speech and human rights as the Chinese model is primarily based in economic development and production, with western aid being historically more based in human development and poverty reduction (Nayyar 2016, Gray & Gills 2016). Some scholars argue that the hostility towards Chinese aid stems from a colonial mindset of the western world constructing their identities as saviors, seeing the rest of the world as beneath them and viewing Africa as something to be “saved”, while in fact the entire developing world is currently creating a multitude of relationships without input from western states (Dreher & Fuchs 2011, Bond 2016).

4. MAKING CHINESE AID EFFECTIVE FOR AFRICA

A key point to bear in mind in finding ways to make Chinese development aid work better for Africa is that the responsibility for Africa's development rests primarily with African countries and that China can only be expected to play a complementary rather than a lead role. In this context, there is the need for African governments to be forward-looking and proactive, rather than reactive in their relationship with China to ensure that it results in equitable development in the long term. They should be active in setting the agenda and pace of the partnership, and more generally, show more leadership in the partnership process. But to do this effectively, they have to be guided by a well-defined strategy and also integrate the partnership into their national and regional development plans to foster equitable development. China clearly has a strategy guiding its partnership with Africa but it is not clear that many African countries have one.²⁸ It is true that most African countries have a list of what they would

²⁸While China does have a strategy on Africa, Sun (2014) argues that some domestic stakeholders in China are concerned that the current strategy focuses too much on commercial interests and less on other national interests (political, security and ideological).

like China to provide financing for. But having a wish list is not synonymous with having a coherent strategy, which entails having a vision, mapping out clear plans on how to realize the vision, and within this framework, identifying what role China can play to make the vision a reality. Having a coherent strategy also requires putting in place a credible mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of action plans associated with the strategy and, more importantly, making adjustments to plans when events dictate that current plans are not having the desired impact.

Against this backdrop, a key question for Africa is how to make Chinese development finance to have a catalytic effect not only on growth but also on employment and poverty reduction. In my view, this requires concerted efforts by both China and African countries to make Chinese development finance foster transformative development on the continent. History has shown that structural transformation and diversification are necessary for sustained growth and poverty reduction and so it would be desirable for China and African governments to gear Chinese development finance towards promoting transformative growth on the continent.²⁹ There are various ways that China can contribute to achieving this goal. First is to have a coherent approach to supporting industrialization in Africa. At the moment, some of its activities promote manufacturing development in Africa while others present challenges for manufacturing. For example, on the one hand, it has promoted manufacturing development through, among others, investments in domestic infrastructure, support for SMEs and setting up special economic zones in Africa.³⁰ On the other hand, it has growing trade deficits with many African countries which lead to significant capital outflows with negative consequences for industrial development, employment creation and poverty alleviation in Africa. In addition, several studies indicate that Chinese exports of labour-intensive manufactured goods to Africa have intensified competition facing local firms and made manufacturing development more challenging (Sandrey and Edinger 2011). There is the need for China to address this challenge, perhaps through facilitating joint ventures with local entrepreneurs as well as strengthening linkages between Chinese and African enterprises to promote technology and skills transfer and increase the competitiveness of local manufacturing firms. China should also make the special economic zones set up in Africa play a catalytic role in the continent by encouraging firms in the zones to source more inputs locally than in the past and by increasing local participation in their management.

Another way that China can promote transformative development in Africa is through directing more of its financing towards promoting peace and security and building regional (cross-border) infrastructure. Peace and security is a

²⁹For a discussion of how China can contribute to promoting transformation in Africa through providing ideas, opportunities, and development finance, see Lin and Wang (2014).

³⁰China is developing six special economic zones in Africa: the Zambia-China economic and trade cooperation zone in Chambishi; the Ethiopian Eastern Industrial Zone (near Dukem); the Mauritius

Jinfei economic and trade cooperation zone in Riche Terre; the Nigeria-Ogun-Guangdong free trade zone in Igbessa; the China-Nigeria economic and trade cooperation zone in Lekki; and the Egypt Suez economic and trade cooperation zone. For a description of these zones examination of how they can contribute to structural transformation see Brautigam and Tang (2014).

necessary condition for the development of a vibrant and dynamic manufacturing base required to create more jobs to absorb the rapidly growing labour force in Africa. Insecurity creates uncertainty, increases risks and transactions costs, and discourages both local and foreign investment. Therefore, unlocking Africa's manufacturing potential requires addressing this challenge head-on and China can play a crucial role in this area through development financing. One might wonder why China should be concerned about insecurity in Africa. However, given its massive and growing investments in Africa, it is in its long-term interest to promote peace and security in the continent. Providing more support for cross-border infrastructure is also necessary to foster intra-African trade and promote transformative development given recent evidence indicating that the composition of intra-African trade tends to be skewed towards manufactures, in contrast with Africa's extra-regional trade which consists mostly of commodities. It is important to stress that China already provides some support to Africa on infrastructure and peace and security issues. The point being made here is that its support needs to be scaled up to have a dramatic and transformative effect on the continent. There are indications that China has indeed recognized the need to scale up its support to Africa on infrastructure and peace and security issues.

In January 2015, ahead of the African Union (AU) summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, China, and the African Union signed a memorandum of understanding containing promises by China to develop cross-border infrastructure to link capitals across the continent. In addition, it is also beginning to play a more active role in supporting peace and security efforts in Africa as evidenced, for instance, by its enhanced involvement in UN and AU peacekeeping missions in Africa (Hanauer and Morris 2014). These efforts are welcome but should be scaled up and implemented in a systematic manner to enhance their impact. Part of China's interest in peace and security issues emanates from recognition of the links between security and development in Africa as well as the enormous resources necessary to address the continent's security challenges. But it is also recognition by China that it is necessary to protect its massive and growing investments on the continent (Tower 2013). China can also foster transformative and inclusive development in Africa by making it easier for Africans to invest in China. One of the issues emanating from an examination of recent FDI data, and which is a concern for African entrepreneurs, is that investment seems to be flowing from China to Africa but there is no significant flow from Africa to China due in part to barriers (language, regulatory, etc.) that make it difficult for African entrepreneurs to do business in China. There is the need for better access to the Chinese market for African investors so that they can benefit and also learn from the experience of investing in a large and frontier market. Such learning will play a positive role in upgrading and diversification in Africa.

Undoubtedly, China is doing interesting and positive things in Africa. But the dearth of information on its relationship with the continent often fuels speculation and suspicion about the nature of the partnership which detracts attention away from the positive contributions it is making to Africa's development. It is against this backdrop that I believe it is in China's long-term interest to provide more information and data on its development finance activities in Africa than has been the case in the past. This will take away the current mystery surrounding the partnerships, allow a proper assessment of the impact of the partnerships and, more importantly, permit Africans to hold their governments accountable for the outcomes of the partnerships. Fortunately, there are signs that China is beginning to recognize the need to provide more information on its partnerships with Africa. For example, in April 2011, the State Council released the first white paper on China's foreign aid which contained an

overview of its assistance over the period 1950–2009. This was followed by the second white paper which was published in July 2014 and focused on China's foreign aid for the period 2010–2012. The Ministry of Commerce also provides aggregate time series on China's outward FDI. In addition to providing some data on aid and FDI, China is also trying to provide a more positive image of its partnership with Africa through opening media houses in Africa and strengthening people to people exchanges. These efforts are welcome but there is the need for sectoral and country-specific details to provide a more complete picture of the nature of the partnerships.

African governments also have a role to play in providing information to the public on the nature of Chinese development finance in Africa. For instance, the AU could require all member states to submit to it on an annual basis a report of their development finance activities with China together with the status of implementation of the commitments. This will enable the AU to effectively monitor implementation of commitments and also facilitate an assessment of the impact of the partnerships. Currently, the main source of information on implementation of the commitments is the annual statement published by China during FOCAC meetings. There is the need for African countries to also provide their own assessment of the implementation of these commitments to make the review much more balanced than in the past. Lastly, African countries should pay more attention, than in the past, to the environmental impact of Chinese investments in Africa. In particular, there is the need for a Pan-African Investment Code to lay the parameters and guidelines for investment in Africa and send a clear signal to foreign investors that the continent will hold them accountable for any negative environmental impacts associated with their investments. China on its part can also contribute to promotion of environmental sustainability in Africa by strengthening existing mechanisms for monitoring the impact of its investments in Africa and assisting African governments to build capacity to assess and monitor the environmental impacts of foreign investments on the continent.

5. CONCLUSION

Africa's economic partnership with China has grown rapidly over the past two decades. Trade is clearly the most significant dimension of this partnership, but there is also significant aid, debt, and FDI flows from China to Africa as well. While the new partnership has had a positive impact on growth on the continent, more needs to be done by both China and African governments to enhance the impact of Chinese development finance in Africa. Against this backdrop, this chapter identified ways in which Chinese development finance could be used to foster transformative growth for sustained poverty reduction in Africa. It argued that for this to happen, China has to adopt a more coherent approach to supporting manufacturing development on the continent than in the past and also direct more of its financing towards building regional infrastructure and promoting peace and security. The chapter also stressed that the responsibility for Africa's development rests primarily with African governments and that China can only play a supporting role. In this context, it underscored the need for African countries to be forward-looking and proactive, rather than reactive, in their partnership with China to ensure that their development needs and challenges are effectively addressed.

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