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MEGA-THEMES IN AFRICA-CHINA RELATIONS

Understanding the the pros and cons of China's presence in the African continent

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Lina welcomes comments and suggestions on her reports and especially urges academics and practitioners in the Africa-China sphere to share their thoughts with her. You can reach her at lina.ayenew@aya.yale.edu

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MEGA-THEMES IN AFRICA-CHINA RELATIONS

Each African country has its own unique experiences with China. Yet, there are several overarching trends that are observed across the board. These mega-themes have been classified into two broad categories: China's strengths and China's weaknesses in Africa. The final section includes a general view of what Africans think about the Chinese in their continent.

A: China's Strengths

1. **Long-term friendship and commitment**—China has been keenly courting Africa since the 1960s and Africa in turn helped China enter the United Nations. Their relationship has flourished ever since.
2. **Non-interference: A policy gem in Africa**—While some argue that China is harboring African dictators, others say that the Middle Kingdom is giving Africans what they have always wanted: a chance to self-govern and determine their own destiny.
3. **Large infusions of cash, in exchange for oil and nuts**—Africa is the biggest recipient of Chinese aid and China's companies are benefitting from this relationship.
4. **Chinese aid to Africa and its advantages over Western aid**—China has redefined aid, and its version of aid is getting traction.
5. **China vs. the United States in Africa**—Media reports assert that the United States is only catching up to China's strides in terms of trade, investment and influence.

B: China's Weaknesses

1. **Bad quality goods flooding Africa**—China's shoddy merchandise and certain bad quality infrastructures are disappointing many in Africa, but there is hope for increases in quality.
2. **Lack of transparency**—The shroud of secrecy surrounding China's engagement in Africa is a hurdle for journalists, academics and international organizations.
3. **Corruption**—Some African governments are surprisingly resisting corrupt Chinese businessmen and enterprises.
4. **Environmental impact and ivory trade**—The high demand for ivory in China is escalating the poaching of African elephants.
5. **Employment Woes**—Africans are hopeful that China's manufacturing jobs will eventually be transferred to their continent. But they are also disappointed that Chinese companies sometimes bring their own workers instead of employing locals.

C: What do Africans think about China in their continent?

Research shows that Africans have a generally positive view of China. Violent clashes between local populations and Chinese nationals, however, prove that not all in Africa are pleased about China's presence.

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1. LONG TERM FRIENDSHIP AND COMMITMENT

There are several scholarly debates about exactly when the Chinese began interactions with Africa. Many historians set 138-126 BC as the historical starting point of Sino-African relations.¹ Others believe interactions took place several centuries earlier. They say, for example, that the earliest interaction between China and Egypt can be traced back to 770-476 BC and 475-221 BC.² Historian Sheng Fuwei believes that an envoy from the port Adulis (in the Aksumite Kingdom, present day Ethiopia) had arrived in Luo Yang, Hebei, in 100 AD. He asserts, "Because of the Adulis envoy's visit to China, the Aksumite Kingdom...became the first African country to establish a diplomatic tie with China."³

The most well known and talked about Chinese national to make his way to Africa was Zheng He. A Muslim explorer from the Hui ethnic group, Zheng He was a famed explorer in the Ming Dynasty. He commanded close to 30,000 ships, which were the largest wooden ships ever built and dwarfed those of Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama.⁴ Between 1417 and 1419, Zheng He made his first trip to Africa, and even brought back exotic gifts such as ostriches and zebras. His last voyage was to the African Swahili coast between 1431 and 1433.⁵ There are several communities on Africa's eastern coast which claim to be descendants of Zheng He's sailors who were shipwrecked and later married locals. One such descendent is Mwamaka Sharifu, a young Kenyan who claimed her Chinese ancestry and eventually received a scholarship to study in China in 2005.

Africans have also sailed through the oceans and arrived on Chinese coasts. Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan traveler who set to visit various locations in Africa and Asia, arrived in China around the year 1345. He was in Fujian province and connected with Muslim communities there. In his travel journal, he noted what amazed him including, "silk being used for clothing even by poor monks and beggars" and "porcelain being the finest of all makes of pottery."⁶

"It was black African friends who carried us back in [to the UN]."

- Mao Zi Dong

Despite the early meeting of Africa and China, there was no prevalent history of subjugation of one by the other. For this reason and certainly many others, their diplomatic and economic relationship was able to accelerate in the mid-20th Century. In late 1963 and early 1964, the late Premier Zhou Enlai visited 10 African countries, setting the stage for decades of cooperation.

Among the key incentives behind China's courtship of Africa was the "One China Policy." Since Taiwan broke away from the Mainland in 1949, Mainland China has been undertaking in coordinated efforts to establish itself as the only China in the international political arena. With many African countries winning independence from European colonial powers after the mid-20th Century, Mainland China saw this as an opportunity to gain supporters for its "One China" campaign. For about 22 years, Mainland China

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could not join the United Nations as Taiwan sat in its place. Diplomatic recognition from African countries played a central role in the 1971 UN vote that gave China's seat to Beijing.⁷ Even Chairman Mao stated, "It was black African friends who carried us back [into the UN]."⁸ Some African countries have been oscillating between Beijing and Taipei, seeking to capitalize on the best partnership. Currently, only 3 African countries recognize Taiwan: Swaziland, Sao Tome and Principe and Burkina Faso. The latest African nation to abandon Taiwan was The Gambia, which severed relations with the island on November 14, 2013.

The media hype in recent years chronicling China's presence in Africa gives a false impression that this is a recent phenomenon. The fact is that China has long been carrying out projects in Africa. One of the first projects that China carried out in the continent was in Guinea, in the early 1960s. China built a factory that allowed Guinea to manufacture cigarettes out of its own tobacco.⁹

Another well-known Chinese project in Africa is the TanZam (Tazara) railway, connecting Zambia's copper-rich areas to the Indian Ocean, via Tanzania. Although China was in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, the railway was completed ahead of schedule in 1975. It would become the longest railway in Africa, with around 16,000 Chinese technicians participating in the project.¹⁰ The railway had both political and economical significance as it would free Zambia from dependence on the Apartheid regime in South Africa.¹¹

In 2000, another milestone was achieved in Africa-China relations. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), a multilateral platform for exchange and cooperation between China and African countries, was created. The platform covers politics, trade, economy, society and culture. Among its achievements is the tariff-free coverage of over 4,700 items from Africa (including 95% of commodities).¹²

China's engagement with Africa has certainly been intensifying in the last few years. Its trade with the continent has surpassed the USD 200 billion mark, making it Africa's biggest trading partner. This does not mean that Africa will play the most critical role in China's future, however. In fact, China's top ten trading partners do not include a single African country.¹³

2. NON-INTERFERENCE: A POLICY GEM IN AFRICA

Western media and human rights groups have long been criticizing the Chinese government for harboring African dictatorships. When Omar Al-Bashir, the Sudanese president who is wanted by the International Criminal Court, set out to visit Beijing in 2011, Amnesty International firmly objected. "If China welcomes Omar Al-Bashir," said Catherine Baber, Deputy Asia Pacific Director at Amnesty International, "it will become a safe haven for alleged perpetrators of genocide."¹⁴ Other notorious relationships that China has on the African continent include one with 90-year-old Zimbabwean dictator, Robert Mugabe.

The reason behind China's long-standing friendships with most countries in Africa, including the continent's pariah states, is Beijing's "non-interference" policy. This policy, along with the principles of self-determination, mutual respect for sovereignty and non-

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aggression, was articulated by Premier Zhou Enlai in 1955 at the Bandung Conference. The Conference addressed issues that were of utmost importance to Asian and African countries of the time, which had just emerged from colonial rule or were amid anti-colonial movements.

“If China welcomes Omar Al-Bashir... it will become a safe haven for alleged perpetrators of genocide.

- Catherine Baber [2011]
Deputy Asia Pacific Director, Amnesty International

Many African leaders appreciate this policy as the “strings-attached” stance that characterizes Western support had been frustrating them for decades. In February 2014, when the Ugandan president signed a new Anti-Homosexuality Act into law, he was outraged at how much the West “interfered” in Uganda’s internal affairs. Uganda stood its ground even when World Bank followed other donors and froze millions of dollars in loans.¹⁵

Thankfully for African leaders sensitive about their internal affairs, China is still standing by its “non-interference” rhetoric. In May 2014, Premier Li Ke Qiang promised, “All of China’s support for Africa will come with no political strings attached...We will not interfere with Africa’s internal affairs or ask something impossible of Africa.”

With China’s increasing influence in both Africa and other developing countries, many analysts are saying that the non-interference policy is not sustainable. In a recent BBC article, Kerry Brown, a professor of Chinese politics at the University of Sydney, asserted, “China’s economic and diplomatic influence is considerable and cannot be easily ignored. It is almost certain in the years ahead that it will be forced to take up a position on issues it would have once dismissed as beyond its sphere of interest...”¹⁶

“All of China’s support for Africa will come with no political strings attached...We will not interfere with Africa’s internal affairs or ask something impossible of Africa.”

- Premier Li Ke Qiang [2014]

The Chinese government seems to be increasingly aware of this, and its interpretation of “non-interference” seems to be ever-evolving. For instance, China has been increasingly deploying peacekeepers to war-torn regions as a part of the United Nations. The Economist notes that China is usually reluctant to send combat forces, although it contributes the largest number of peacekeepers among the UN’s Security Council.¹⁷ Most of its peacekeepers are engineers, medical workers and transport staff.¹⁸ In a departure from its former practices, the Chinese government sent (for the first time) combat peacekeeping forces to Mali in January 2014. The West African nation is battling rebel-led Jihadists in the north of the country.

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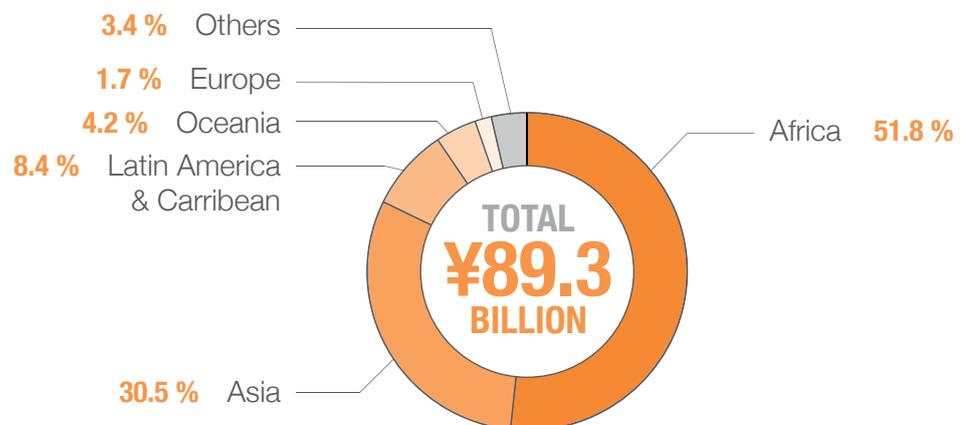
China's change in its “non-interference” stance was also observed in South Sudan, the world's newest nation. South Sudan was plunged back into violence in December 2013, when President Salva Kiir's government troops and fighters loyal to former Vice-President Riek Machar waged a civil war. Reuters commented that China is playing an unusually active role in resolving the conflict.¹⁹ China's foreign ministry was quoted saying, “We strongly condemn [the attacks] and urge all sides in South Sudan, including opposition and the authorities, to keep pushing political dialogue to resolve the relevant issues and achieve reconciliation...”²⁰ It should be noted that China is the biggest investor in South Sudan's oil industry.

China has increasing interests on the African continent—both in human and material resources. It is not hard to imagine that it will be revisiting and revising its “non-interference” policy in order to protect its well-being in both the economic and political landscapes.

3. LARGE INFUSIONS OF CASH, IN EXCHANGE FOR OIL AND NUTS

China's financial resources in Africa are deployed in a web of foreign direct investment (FDI) and aid in many forms including concessional loans. The Chinese Ministry of Commerce has said in 2013 that from 2009 to 2012, China's direct investment in Africa increased from USD 1.44 billion to USD 2.52 billion with an annual growth rate of 20.5%.²¹ Over the same period, China's cumulative direct investment in Africa increased from USD 9.33 billion to USD 21.23 billion. The Ministry has also said that there are over 2,000 Chinese enterprises investing and developing in more than 50 African countries and regions.²²

Geographical Distribution of China's Foreign Assistance Funds 2010-2012



Source: China's Information Office of the State Council

Africa occupies the lion's share of China's foreign aid budget. According to the white paper released by China's Information Office of the State Council in July 2014, Africa made up 51.8% of China's foreign assistance funds between 2010 and 2012.

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According to AidData, arguably the most extensive database of Chinese projects on the African continent, there are approximately 106 agriculture projects, 83 in energy, 192 in health, 115 in transport, 161 in education, 215 in government or society, 44 in mining and 757 in other sectors.²³

Of the several key institutions that facilitate these projects, the China Export Import Bank, one of China's "policy banks," is one of the most important. The China Exim Bank was created in 1994 under the State Council and is the main source of funding for projects in Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, China Exim Bank was the source of 92% of Chinese investment in infrastructure projects from 2001 to 2007.²⁴ The bank devotes more than a third of its activities to Africa²⁵ and provides concessional loans (with low interest) for projects across many sectors.

For both resource-rich and resource-poor African countries, China has long been using a "barter system" to facilitate trade. In recent years, it has also been using the same system for development projects and the repayment of loans. As China-Africa expert Deborah Brautigam clearly articulates:

“China has long used barter arrangements in trade with Africa as long ago as the 1960s, swapping Chinese goods for Africa’s raw materials. But connecting countertrade to development projects were new...This enabled aid recipients to avoid using scarce foreign exchange.

- Deborah Brautigam
China Africa Expert

“China has long used barter arrangements in trade with Africa as long ago as the 1960s, swapping Chinese goods for Africa’s raw materials. But connecting countertrade to development projects were new...China’s aid projects could use the products they produced to repay loans for working capital, spare parts or even the original aid loan. This enabled aid recipients to avoid using scarce foreign exchange...Tanzania bought spare parts for Chinese projects by exporting cashew nuts. Sierra Leone exported coffee and cocoa to make some of its loan payments...Angola would use oil, Congo would use minerals, Senegal, peanut oil; and Ghana cocoa, to repay their loans.”²⁶

The Chinese concessional loans, provided mainly by the China Exim bank, also support China's "going global" policy. For the projects that are financed by these preferential loans, Chinese State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) are usually granted the contracts. These companies would then benefit by entering a new, unsaturated market and develop their international experience. They would also use Chinese equipment and machinery for the projects, providing benefits to yet another set of Chinese companies.

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4. CHINESE AID TO AFRICA AND ITS ADVANTAGES OVER WESTERN AID

Quantifying and comparing Chinese aid and Western aid is a daunting task mainly because they define aid very differently. This attempt at creating a universal measurement to compare apples and oranges shows that China's Official Development Assistance (ODA) is smaller than that of the West's. This type of aid was defined by OECD countries and does not include instruments such as export credits and natural-resource-backed lines of credit. Whereas China's definition of aid includes these instruments, and mainly utilizes them in its engagement with Africa.

China's definition of aid is not the only thing that differs from the West's. Its attitude towards economic assistance is also different. China's aid in Africa, for the most part, does not seem to be from a superior point-of-view. As China-Africa expert Prof. He Wenping explains, "[China] regards itself as a developing country as well as a country that has suffered from colonialism and imperialism similar to African countries. China does not call itself a 'donor'. Rather, China regards its aid to other developing countries, including Africa, as a kind of mutual assistance among friends that falls into the category of South-South cooperation."²⁷ South-South cooperation refers to the sharing of resources, economic capacity and technology among developing countries.

This approach towards aid is not a recent phenomenon. In 1964, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai laid out China's principles for foreign economic and technical aid as the following:²⁸

1. Principle of equality and mutual benefit in the provision of aid
2. Not attaching preconditions to the provision of aid
3. Lighten the burden of recipient countries
4. Aim to help aid recipients achieve self-reliance
5. China to develop aid projects that require less investment and yield quick results
6. China to provide high quality equipment and materials for manufacturing
7. China guaranteeing that locals in recipient countries fully master technical skills
8. Chinese experts not being allowed to make special demands or privileges.

Western approach to aid does not tend to look at aid "on the principles of equality and mutual benefit." Although it cannot be denied that the West also approaches aid as a political and diplomatic tool, its aid policies are not shaped as mutually beneficial investments. In the extreme end, it tends to look at the African aid recipients with a mixture of frustration and pity. Robert Calderisi, a seasoned development professional and author of 'The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid Isn't Working', wrote a piece on CNN stating, "[African] Governments have been eager receivers, rather than clear-headed managers of Western generosity."²⁹ Although many Western organizations have made an impact through aid in Africa, they tend to operate under the notions of "charity" and "generosity," leaving little room for mutually beneficial aid policies.

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China's approach to aid in Africa, however, does not mask the benefits that the Middle Kingdom gets from its programs. As Deborah Brautigam wrote, "The USAID is housed in the State Department, reflecting foreign aid's utility as an important diplomatic tool. Conversely, China's two main aid windows are housed respectively in the Ministry of Commerce and the China Export Import Bank, both tasked primarily with *building China's domestic economy*."³⁰ The soft loans and the massive infrastructures that China is providing African nations are hence usually laced with benefits for China in terms of natural resources or other exports. This promotes a semblance of equality and largely minimizes inferior-superior positions.

“[China] regards itself as a developing country as well as a country that has suffered from colonialism and imperialism similar to African countries. China does not call itself a ‘donor’. Rather, China regards its aid to other developing countries, including Africa, as a kind of mutual assistance among friends that falls into the category of South-South cooperation.”

- He Wenping
China Africa Expert

This is not to say that the US does not seek to get benefits from its aid programs. As Brautigam aptly conveyed, USAID routinely justifies its budget requests to congress by showing the high percentage of aid that comes back as benefits for America.³¹

The type of aid that China provides Africa also considerably differs from the aid that the West gives. European and American instruments provide aid by mainly injecting money into NGOs or budgets of governments and capacity building. Their programs tend to be centered around the social sector. The Chinese, however, favor hardware projects such as physical infrastructure.³² The infrastructure in turn promotes business and economic growth. As mentioned earlier, the Chinese infrastructure programs in Africa usually favor Chinese companies in winning contracts, mutually benefitting both regions.

But China's aid is not limited to only infrastructure building. China's definition of "aid" includes contracting projects, technical cooperation, debt write-off, human resources training, the dispatch of medical teams and youth volunteers, emergency humanitarian aid and multilateral aid.³³

China's approach to aid seems to be gaining favor among top academics in China-Africa relations. Sometimes, they favor China's approach to aid to the West's. Stephen Chan, a British national who serves as a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London even asserted, "What the Chinese were

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looking to put in [the Democratic Republic of Congo] was several hundred kilometers of road, of railway, schools, medical clinics, and wait for this, universities. When you look at the profile of Western countries in terms of how we approach aid, it's curious how we leave out certain aspects...we leave out universities. Africans only need to have primary and basic education, do they not?"³⁴ This sarcastic comment conveys what scholars are noticing in terms of China's approach to aid and how the West envisions the needs of Africa.

“We have a lot to learn from China on economic development... I mean... why reinvent the wheel?”

- Nigerian Diplomat in Beijing

Armed with their own experiences with poverty and crippling government policies, the Chinese are able to easily understand the African struggle. China's success in the economic arena and its ascent to being the second largest economy in the world is an inspiration to Africans. As a Nigerian diplomat in Beijing said, “We have a lot to learn from China on economic development...I mean...why reinvent the wheel?”³⁵

5. CHINA VS. THE UNITED STATES IN AFRICA CATCHING UP TO CHINA'S STRIDE

In March 2013, President Xi Jin Ping's first trip as a head of state consisted of Russia and three African nations, sending a powerful message. Three months afterwards, Obama made a three-country visit to Africa as well. The media scoffed at Obama for merely playing catch up to China in partnering with Africa, the next biggest growth region of the world. CNN charged, “Obama's goal in Africa: counter China”³⁶ and the Financial Times accused, “Obama's trip to Africa is too little—and very late.”³⁷

The US seems determined to catch up to China, however. In August 2014, it hosted the US-Africa Leader's Summit, inviting the majority of African heads-of-state. This meeting was the first of its kind for the United States. China, on the other hand, first organized such a mass-gathering of African leaders in 2000 which culminated in the creation of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The US is also lagging behind China in terms of trade. China's trade with Africa is about USD 200 billion, more than twice that of the trade between the US and Africa.³⁸

This is not, of course, to say that the US is not taking major steps to boost African economies. The cornerstone of the US-Africa economic relationship is the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which started in May 2000. Its aim is to enhance market access to the US for qualifying Sub-Saharan African countries, especially in the export of manufactured goods. In order to qualify, countries must be working to improve rule of law, human rights and respect for core labor standards, demands that China does not have. AGOA is set to expire in 2015. During a panel discussion at the US-Africa Leaders Summit, African leaders including the South African President Jacob Zuma urged the renewal of AGOA.

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The US has been quick to call alarm at China's focus on Africa's natural resources for its trade dealings. President Obama, speaking at the University of Johannesburg-Soweto warned, "You [Africans] produce the raw materials, sold cheap, and then all the way up the chain somebody else is making the money and creating the jobs."⁴⁰ Although the US is trying to promote the export of African manufactured goods and frowns at China's focus on natural resources, it has a long way to go. US trade with Africa is also dominated by oil and gas. In 2011, for example, natural resources comprised roughly four-fifths of both China's and the US's total imports from Africa.⁴¹

Notable advancements in US-Africa relations happened in 2013. Obama launched the Trade Africa initiative, aimed at further boosting trade between five East African nations by 40%. The American president also announced the Power Africa initiative, with the goal to double the number of people with access to electricity in Sub-Saharan Africa. During the US-Africa Leaders Summit, the US further increased its funds for the Power Africa initiative which now boasts a total of USD 26 billion in commitments. In mid-2013, the US also offered USD 7-9 billion in loan guarantees for American companies engaged in the power sector development in Africa. However, progress has been a bit slow. USNews.com lamented that much of the USD 7 billion offer has not been tapped by US companies, even though the lack of US financing for US businesses seeking investment and trade with Africa is one of the biggest reasons why America is lagging behind other nations."⁴²

“You [Africans] produce the raw materials, sold cheap, and then all the way up the chain somebody else is making the money and creating the jobs.”

- President Barack Obama

The priorities that China and the US have in Africa are also different. In May 2014, both John Kerry and Premier Li Ke Qiang made high-profile visits to Africa. High on Kerry's agenda was security issues in the region, addressing counter-terrorism and promoting democratic elections. In contrast, Premier Li Ke Qiang pledged USD 12 billion in development loans and 60 agreements to invest in local energy and infrastructure.⁴³ This illustrates the difference in the roles between the US and China in the continent.

The political and economical roles of China and the US are indispensable. As such, African countries should leverage the Sino-Western competition for influence to their advantage. And they seem to be trying to. A British diplomat working in Beijing once said that the UK embassy invited African diplomats to learn more about China's engagement in their respective countries. He got the impression that some of the African diplomats seemed to downplay China's influence perhaps for fear of falling out of favor in the psyche of their British counterparts.⁴⁴ An Ethiopian diplomat also alluded that he reassures Western diplomatic envoys that Ethiopia is still interested in what they have to offer.⁴⁵ One thing is for sure: no superpower will ignore Africa in the coming decades. The continent is going to be an undeniably important market in the world's economy.

B

CHINA'S WEAKNESSES IN AFRICA

1. BAD QUALITY GOODS FLOODING AFRICA

China's engagement in Africa also presents many problems. One of the biggest complaints Africans have is the low quality Chinese products flooding their markets. For instance, a Nigerian diplomat in China expressed that his country is flooded with low-quality merchandises during a conference at the Academy for International Business Officials.⁴⁶ His Chinese counterparts responded saying that the Chinese manufacturers provide goods of marginal quality because African merchants demand them. It is therefore, they asserted, up to African countries to demand better quality. The Nigerian diplomat later said that Chinese companies should not lower their own standards just because it is demanded of them.⁴⁷ He asserted that Chinese companies should send products that have a Free Sales Certificate, a document guaranteeing that imported goods are freely sold in the exporting country's open markets and are approved for export.

But that is exactly the issue. China's own standard for quality is not very high. Anyone who has made a trip to Beijing's Silk Market would realize that there is a range of quality for retail items of the same forged brand, as long as there is a demand for them. It is therefore unsurprising that the "cater to varying demands for quality" approach is present in Africa, where local quality control systems are weak.

Angolans were enraged to find that the USD 8 million hospital closed down only three years after opening its doors. Patients were removed and put into a tented camp. China is rebuilding the hospital but the shoddy construction has gained a lot of bad publicity, leaving a bad taste in the mouths of Angolans.

Goods of bad quality have more serious repercussions than a fake designer bag disintegrating after a couple of weeks of use. In June 2013, The Guardian reported that substandard medications produced in China are risking the health of Africans.⁴⁸ It quoted a Ugandan pharmacist complaining that Asian brands are far inferior to those from Europe, delaying the recovery of the patients. The Washington Post had a more alarming tone. It reported that fake drugs are inundating East African markets, an even more sinister problem than substandard medications.⁴⁹ The Post claimed, "African officials and residents suspect China as a prime source for the fake drugs, but hard evidence is difficult to find amid a web of deeply entrenched interests among governments, aid groups and pharmaceutical companies."⁵⁰ The article also quoted Hua Chunying, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman who declared that the allegations are groundless and reminded that China has done much to combat healthcare problems in the African continent.

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Quality problems are not limited to consumer goods. Some of the infrastructures built by Chinese companies are also suffering from substandard construction. One notorious case is the Luanda General Hospital. Angolans were enraged to find that the USD 8 million hospital closed down only three years after opening its doors. Patients were removed and put into a tented camp.⁵¹ China is rebuilding the hospital but the shoddy construction has gained a lot of bad publicity, leaving a bad taste in the mouths of Angolans.

Prof. Li An Shan, one of the most prominent China-Africa experts and a professor at Peking University is optimistic about future improvements in quality. He believes that Chinese goods, despite their much-documented negativity, enable low-income citizens in the African continent to have access to goods they would not have otherwise. He anticipates that the quality of goods will increase in the future as the disposable income of Africans increases.⁵²

China's government has also attempted to urge its companies to take heed to the complaints against the bad quality of their products in Africa. During his first visit to several African countries in May 2014, Premier Li Ke Qiang urged Chinese companies to strictly abide by local laws and regulations, hold themselves accountable for the quality of their projects and goods and shoulder due responsibility to local communities and the environment.⁵³

2. LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

Many researchers and journalists routinely complain that the Chinese are not transparent with their dealings in Africa. It is especially cumbersome because neither China nor African countries have a good record of transparency or a history of making detailed information publicly available. Chinese entities are especially notorious, considering their increasing influence on global markets. In 2013 the global anti-corruption watchdog, Transparency International, admonished Chinese companies of their opaque practices, ranking the country the lowest among the BRICS economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa).

This does not mean that China provides absolutely no data on its engagements on the African continent. China's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is made publicly available through the Ministry of Commerce (although some lament that it does reflect reality).⁵⁴ Perhaps the most revealing documents released by the Chinese government on its engagement in Africa were the white papers on China-Africa cooperation published in 2010 and 2013.⁵⁵ The white paper released in 2013 discussed the various efforts undertaken by the Chinese in the African continent including medical missions and wind power projects. Yet, the examples provided did not detail the scale of the projects, do not allow comparison with other donors or give an idea of their impact.⁵⁶

China's foreign aid to other countries (including African nations) has long remained a state secret but this is showing signs of change. In July 2014, China's Information Office of the State Council issued a white paper discussing and quantifying China's foreign aid. It mentioned that between 2010 and 2012, China provided USD 14.41 billion in foreign

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assistance of three types: grant (aid gratis), interest-free loans and concessional loans.⁵⁷ But once again, details remain vague.

The lack of sufficient information has prompted some to circumvent the Chinese and African governments. One of the most significant efforts to create a complete picture of Chinese engagement in Africa was launched in April 2013. A database was created by the Washington-based Center for Global Development and AidData, detailing the estimated cost of projects, locations, and major stakeholders.

It is unclear whether the Chinese authorities will provide more information as time goes on. A basic desktop research will reveal that many of the entities which are calling for increased transparency are based in the West. When researchers who were working on the above-mentioned database approached China's Ministry of Commerce, which oversees the country's aid program, the reply they received was a blunt, "Everyone who needs to know about our generosity already knows."⁵⁸

But China's attitude towards transparency has shown a glimpse of change. In May 2014, the country launched the 2 billion USD African Development Fund in coordination with the African Development Bank (ADB). This was a milestone as it was the first time China had injected money into Africa through an international institution instead of an African government. Many praised the fund as it signaled China's move towards transparency. The president of the ADB, Donald Kaberuka, has assured that the allocation of the new fund would adhere to the strict rules, including transparent procurement methods that ADB has in place for financing projects in Africa.⁵⁹ We have yet to see if this is the beginning of China's openness, an attempt by Beijing to quell complaints about lack of transparency or a merely a one-time change in China's aid policy.

With their own shaky transparency records, African governments do not seem particularly interested in China's lack of openness in their continent. This, unfortunately, does not encourage the Chinese to make new strides in making information easily accessible.

3. CORRUPTION

Corruption is a big problem in both China and African countries. Many had feared that the meeting of two relatively corrupt powers would end up too mired in dishonesty and fraud to end up doing anything fruitful. However, critics of African governments were surprised to learn that some African governments have taken a tough stand against Chinese companies and businessmen who were found not obeying local laws. For instance, in 2013, The Economist reported that South Sudan's first deportee was a Chinese national named Liu Yingcai, the local head of Petrodar, a Chinese-Malaysian oil company, in connection with an alleged \$815 million "theft."⁶⁰

Other countries that have taken measures against Chinese corruption include Algeria and Gabon, which banned two Chinese companies from participating in a public tender and opted out of a resource deal respectively. In 2013, the Zambian government, which has enjoyed a long friendship with China, terminated a 210 million USD contract with ZTE, a Chinese telecommunications firm. The deal was for closed circuit television

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cameras and the contract was awarded without an open tender procedure, resulting in suspicions of corruption. Ethiopia also accused another Chinese telecommunications giant, Huawei, for attempting to evade taxes. According to local sources, Huawei illegally imported \$13 million worth of telecom equipment.⁶¹ The issue seems to have been resolved, however, as the Ethiopian President Mulatu Teshome visited the Huawei headquarters in July 2014. He reaffirmed continued collaboration with the company.

The Economist reported that South Sudan's first deportee was a Chinese national named Liu Yingcai, the local head of Petrodar, a Chinese-Malaysian oil company, in connection with an alleged \$815 million "theft."

It is certain that there are many more cases of corruption in the thousands of deals that China has in Africa. In the 2013 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) conducted by Transparency International, African nations occupied 12 spots in the bottom 25.⁶² Africa surely has a lot of work to do to combat corruption in its own diverse political systems as it protects itself from manipulation by Chinese firms.

China, on the other hand, has been aggressively combating corruption within its borders. According to Bloomberg Businessweek, Xi Jin Ping's anticorruption campaign has lasted longer, gone deeper and struck higher than many analysts and academics had expected.⁶³ Powerful Chinese political instruments such as the army (what Xi calls "tigers") and low-level government entities (what Xi calls "ants") are all subject to corruption probes. According to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, in 2013, more than 180,000 party officials were punished for corruption and abuse of power.⁶⁴

What does this mean for Africa-China relations? Will Beijing's crackdown on corruption trickle down to its state-backed projects in Africa? The answer, hopefully, will be clear in due time.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND IVROY TRADE

The notorious smog covering China's cities and industrial towns has long been a symbol of the country's price for fast-paced development. And with China bringing development in Africa, many have criticised the Middle Kingdom's environmental footprint on the African continent. The majority of China's activities in Africa (extractive industries, construction of roads, dams and power stations and the building of manufacturing outlets) pose a threat to the environment. In an article published in 2006, the Financial Times reported that the then president of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz, "sharply criticized China and its banks for ignoring...environmental standards...[in Africa]."⁶⁵ More recently, in February 2014, renowned British primatologist, Jane Goodall accused China of exploiting Africa's resources and that this could be a disaster for the environment.⁶⁶

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China's environmental impact has also drawn criticism from African entities. The Southern Africa Resource Watch (SARW), an advocacy group based in Johannesburg, has accused Chinese companies heavily engaged in Zimbabwe's chrome mining sector of violating environmental laws. Their report estimated that the toxic chemicals that flow into water sources have endangered around 6,000 families.⁶⁷ Some African governments have also started pushing back on China. In March 2014, the Chadian government fined the China National Petroleum Corporation International Chad (a unit of CNPC) 1.2 billion USD for environmental violations.⁶⁸ Chadian authorities have demanded that the Chinese subsidiary make efforts to repair the current and future damages caused through the pollution of the Bongor Basin.⁶⁹

China has also been taking steps to limit its ecological impact in Africa. For instance, the International Finance Corporation (IFC, which is an arm of the World Bank), and the China Exim Bank signed a memorandum of understanding in 2007 to cooperate and support environmentally and socially sustainable Chinese investment in emerging markets, including China itself.⁷⁰ Renowned China-Africa expert Deborah Brautigam reported that Chinese banks and ministries were surprisingly eager to get training on the Equator Principles, which the IFC helped translate into Chinese.⁷¹ The Equator Principles (EPS) are a risk management framework for assessing and managing environmental and social risk in projects.⁷²

“Currently, there are around 150 legal ivory shops in China, given permission by the government to sell ivory to individuals. ”

- BBC Report
“Uncovering China's Illegal Ivory Trade”

Perhaps China's most documented environmental impact on African soil is the trade of ivory. In China, ivory is utilized for intricate sculptures and bought by the wealthy as an investment. There are also reports that the ivory is used for medicinal purposes. China is the biggest market for ivory, followed by the United States, and much of the illegal ivory is smuggled out of Africa with local poachers slaughtering the elephants and passing the ivory along to middlemen.

Currently, there are around 150 legal ivory shops in China, given permission by the government to sell ivory to individuals.⁷³ Legal importation of ivory has been taking place, like in the case of the Chinese government being allowed to import one consignment of more than 60 tons of ivory from Africa about six years ago. BBC reports that fragments cut from this legal stockpile are identified by a photograph and sold legally in the country.

The BBC reporters found, however, that some of the ivory sculptures in the market do not correspond to the identification photographs. They concluded that illegal trade is hence satisfying the growing demand for this scarce resource. This has a dangerous consequence for African elephants. John Scanlon, secretary general of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), has stressed that a staggering

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number of elephants are illegally killed in Africa each year. In 2011, the number was 25,000; in 2012, it was 22,000.⁷⁴

Even more unsettlingly, China's internet boom is also contributing to the sale of illegal ivory. According to Gao Yufang, a Chinese researcher and graduate of Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, illegal ivory traders use the Baidu Post Bar (China's version of Google) and sell the commodity by referring to it as "white plastic."⁷⁵

Fortunately, steps are taking place to quell the Chinese demand for ivory. Some assert that many Chinese citizens do not realize that an elephant has to die in order to extract its ivory⁷⁶, which makes raising awareness a crucial task. Among these efforts to educate the public are the advertisements by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Beijing depicting a slaughtered elephant and calling for the end of ivory trade. Some of the ads feature prominent Chinese celebrities such as former NBA player, Yao Ming.

"...illegal ivory traders use the Baidu Post Bar (China's version of Google) and sell the commodity by referring to it as "white plastic."

- Gao Yufang, National Geographic Report

The Chinese government is also taking steps to curb illegal ivory trade. In January 2014, it made a milestone symbolic gesture. In a ceremony attended by observers including wildlife advocacy groups, more than 6 metric tons of illegal elephant ivory was destroyed.⁷⁷ This happened weeks after eight Chinese citizens were sentenced to 3 to 15 years of prison for smuggling ivory. And when Premier Li Ke Qiang made his visit to several African countries in May 2014, he vowed to "spare no effort in combating poaching and ivory smuggling."⁷⁸

Africa is expected to lose a fifth of its elephant population in the next decade if poaching is not stopped.⁷⁹ If China's commitment to combat illegal ivory trade falls through, the consequences could be permanent and disastrous.

5. EMPLOYEMENT WOES

One of Africa's biggest problems is youth unemployment. Africa has more people aged under 20 than anywhere in the world. In addition, the continent's population is set to double to 2 billion by 2050.⁸⁰ It is no wonder that there are high hopes for Chinese corporations to help alleviate this problem when they set foot in Africa.

Accurate data on how many Africans have obtained jobs in Chinese companies is scarce. Yet, there are high hopes for the future. With China's increasing labor costs, many Africans expect low-level manufacturing jobs to be moved to their continent. In 2012, Mr. Moustapha Ndiaye, the World Bank Uganda Country Manager claimed, "Our

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forecast is that China will likely shed some 85 million manufacturing jobs in the coming years because of fast rising wages for unskilled workers, which could be an economic bonanza for Africa.”⁸¹ Nigerian Finance Minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala asserted, “We need to prepare ourselves to provide a welcoming home for some of the industries where the Chinese will no longer be competitive.”⁸²

But the Chinese have also received harsh criticisms from local Africans on their employment practices. They complain that Chinese companies bring Chinese workers for even the most menial construction jobs. In Angola, a Chinese company shipped tens of thousands of Chinese laborers to build apartment blocks rather than employing locals.⁸³

“Our forecast is that China will likely shed some 85 million manufacturing jobs in the coming years because of fast rising wages for unskilled workers, which could be an economic bonanza for Africa.”

- Moustapha Ndiaye
Uganda Country Manager, World Bank

Many say that Chinese companies prefer Chinese workers because they are more efficient and unlikely to complain. Accounts of researchers across the African continent suggest, however, that Chinese companies seldom exclusively hire Chinese workers. In fact, in African cities such as Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, locals do most of the work with the Chinese acting as supervisors.

Some question what happens to the Chinese workers after the projects are completed. China sent 214,534 workers to Africa in 2013, about one-fourth of all workers the country sent abroad.⁸⁴ This influx has resulted in another phenomenon: Chinese laborers staying in Africa and opening small (and sometimes petty) businesses. Local Africans detest this as their small businesses are endangered by Chinese competition. In 2011, the BBC reported that Tanzania kicked out Chinese businessmen who “were allowed into the country as investors but not as ‘vendors or shoe-shiners.’”⁸⁵ In June 2013, Ghana arrested 124 Chinese nationals for illegal gold-mining and working illegally. They all faced deportation.

The above-mentioned criticisms have inspired Chinese companies to think twice before shipping Chinese laborers. The Wall Street Journal reported that Sinosteel Corp. employed all but a handful of the nearly 3,000 employees locally, seeking to prevent culture clashes at the workplace.⁸⁶ Other Chinese companies are realizing how cost-effective it is to employ locals. The cost of low-skilled laborers in Africa is a fraction of that in China. New to their place of work, Chinese workers also need support that locals do not require. The Journal quoted Mr. Li, the Africa general manager of Hisense, who commented that Chinese workers need to be fed and housed, creating a whole Chinese support structure that would not be commercially viable.⁸⁷

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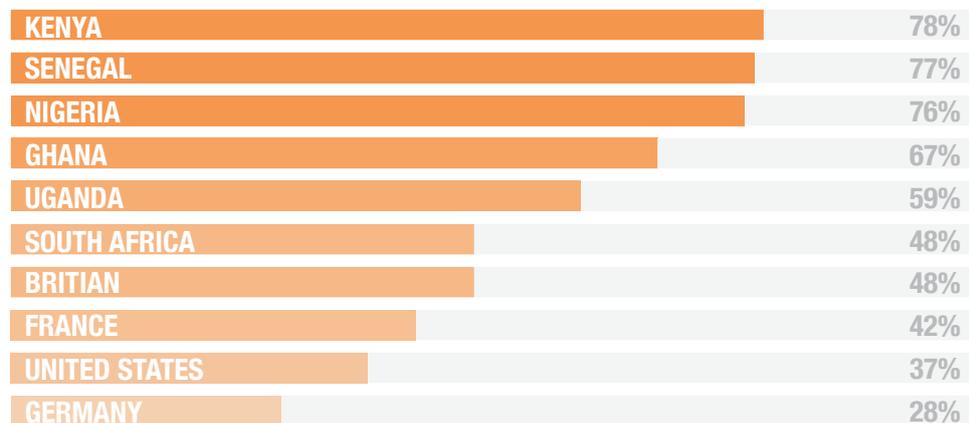
WHAT AFRICANS THINK ABOUT THE CHINESE IN THEIR CONTINENT

With China receiving a lot of negative press in Western media, the voice of local Africans is usually drowned out. The Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project has nonetheless shed some light. In July 2013, it published a detailed report discussing China's favorability among 38 nations around the world and showed that Beijing's strongest supporters are in Asia and Africa.⁸⁸ Below is a table outlining the favorability of China in selected African countries, the United States, Britain and Germany.

“Beijing’s strongest supporters are in Asia and Africa.”

- Pew Research Center
Global Attitudes Project

Positive perception of China in various countries



Source: Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project ⁸⁹

As seen above, China is much more popular in Africa than it is in the United States or Europe. This does not mean, however, that the United States has fallen out of favor in African countries. In fact, the same Pew Research Center report reveals that the seven surveyed African countries have a slightly more favorable view of the United States than they do of China. The median favorability of the United States among the above listed African countries is 77% whereas that of China is 72%.⁹⁰

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WHAT AFRICANS THINK ABOUT THE CHINESE IN THEIR CONTINENT

Despite China's popularity in the African continent, Chinese nationals have had several violent clashes with local populations. China Daily, one of the most popular English newspapers in the country has chronicled the attacks as follows:⁹¹

DATE	EVENT
April 18, 2014	2 Chinese engineers working at an oil field belonging to a Sudanese oil company in Sudan were abducted by unidentified men. ⁹²
Feb 12, 2014	1 Chinese worker died and 6 were injured after gunmen attacked a Chinese company in the Zambian capital Lusaka.
Feb 7, 2014	29 Chinese nationals kidnapped at Sinohydro Corp Ltd were rescued and arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, escorted by Chinese personnel.
Jan 12, 2013	Unidentified armed men ambushed 4 Chinese workers from a transportation project team in Sudan's Darfur region. They were later rescued.
October 2012	Over 100 Chinese suspected of illegal gold mining are detained in a sweep investigation carried out by a Ghanaian watchdog, among them a young man surnamed Chen who was beaten to death.*
August 4, 2012	A Chinese manager died, 4 other workers were injured and property was seized during labor unrest in a China-invested coal mining company in South Zambia
March 8, 2012	6 Chinese workers die in an ammunition explosion in Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo.
January 31, 2012	25 Chinese workers at a research institution from Tianjin are kidnapped by Egyptian armed men in the Sinai Peninsula and were later rescued.
October 15, 2010	Chinese personnel open fire, causing 11 local worker deaths. 3 Chinese were also injured at a coal mine run by China in south Zambia
October 18, 2008	Armed men in South Sudan killed 5 Chinese nationals in an attack at the China National Petroleum Corp.
July 6, 2007	A staff member at a Chinese company was kidnapped in north Niger by unidentified armed men and later rescued.
June 2, 2007	A subsidiary company of East China's Shandong province was attacked in Togo's capital, Lome, with a property loss of nearly 150,000 RMB.
April 24, 2007	A project team at a China-owned oil company was attacked and kidnapped, leaving 9 dead and 7 rescued in south Ethiopia.
January 25, 2007	9 Chinese workers at a China-owned oil company were kidnapped in Nigeria, and later rescued.
January 5, 2007	5 Chinese workers were kidnapped by militants in Niger River Delta in south Nigeria and later rescued.

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WHAT AFRICANS THINK ABOUT THE CHINESE IN THEIR CONTINENT

“The seven surveyed African countries have a slightly more favorable view of the United States than they do of China. ”

- Pew Research Center
Global Attitudes Project

Considering that China has been engaged in Africa since the 1960s and that there are an estimated 1 million Chinese nationals living in the continent, it is perhaps expected that local populations would be resistant to the Asian giant's advances. Scarred by centuries of colonialism, some Africans are wary about economically advanced foreign powers showing much interest in their countries. However, African views on Chinese entities are likely to moderate in the coming years. Many in the continent are beginning to understand that the Chinese could be both good and bad for Africa and that it is up to African leaders to look after the interests of their countries.

“Utilized properly, China's investment can skyrocket Africa's Development. ”

- Zemedeneh Negatu
Partner - Ernst & Young - Ethiopia

As the Ethiopian managing partner of Ernst & Young, Zemedeneh Negatu expressed, China is a great partner for African countries such as Ethiopia, which protect key industry areas such as the financial and retail sectors from Chinese invasion.⁹³ “Utilized properly,” he said, “China's investment can skyrocket Africa's development.”

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