

Sino - Africa Relations: Philia or Phobia?

Dev D. Tewari

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8338-8781>

Abstract

China has become the second largest trader of Africa and total value of trade is crossing some more than \$250 billion. Many African leaders see it as a new beginning for the journey of African development. However, the evidence indicates that China's trade with Africa is guided by some other political and national needs of China and with very little for the concern for Africa. In this article we examine how the strategic trade and investment relations between China and African countries has come to be identified and labeled in the discourse on Sino - African relations. The emerging narrative is that Chinese investment in Africa is fraught with issues such as low-quality projects labor abuses, risky loans, imported labor, illegal export, and environmental degradation therefore contributing critics labelling of Chinese activities in Africa as neo-colonialism. Gleaned evidence from the review of literature and current actions of China are convincing that China's objectives are hidden and Africa should tread cautiously in this endeavor. Nevertheless, we identify good Chinese-financed business outcomes, suggesting that Chinese investments in Africa have positively impacted technology transfer and significantly bridged Africa's infrastructure gap. In making explicit how these competing perspectives play out in the form of Sinophilia and Sinophobia, we conducted an overall review of the two perspectives to delineate the affection/disaffection phenomena characterizing the evolving Sino - Africa engagements. Conclusion and recommendations were made.

Keywords: Sino - Africa, Economic Engagement, Non-Economic Engagement, China, China - Africa relations, Sinophilia, Sinophobia

1 Introduction

The signs of China's economic expansion are becoming increasingly manifest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over the last decade, China has built a network of trade, aid, and investment links with close to 50 African countries, and there has been a rush to buy up concessions to Africa's natural resources. Chinese companies are mining oil in Angola and Sudan, building roads in Ethiopia, working with the electricity sector in Kenya, building infrastructure and developing the tourism industry in Sierra Leone, and servicing mobile phone networks in Kenya and Nigeria (Zafar 2007). Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, Chinese companies are building vital infrastructure, including dams, ports, and roads, and helping to renovate government offices and other buildings. China's foreign policy is being increasingly driven by its domestic development strategy and the need for resources (Zweig & Jianhai 2005). However, the interest is not confined solely to natural resources, as Chinese firms have ventured into the light manufacturing and services sectors and entered into agroprocessing, apparel, and telecommunications. Meanwhile, Africa is increasingly awash with low-cost Chinese motorcycles, electronic goods, and T-shirts, benefiting the consumers in the continent (Zafar 2007).

Over the last several years, China has intensified diplomatic links with Africa. Under the auspices of the China - Africa Cooperation Forum of 2000, comprising 46 of 53 African countries, bilateral trade and economic cooperation have entered a new realm. In a symbolic gesture that carries much hidden weight, the Chinese foreign minister has maintained a policy of making his first official overseas trip each year to Africa (Zafar 2007). In January 2006, the Chinese government issued its official Africa policy, calling itself the world's largest developing country and seeking the establishment of a new strategic partnership with Africa marked by an intensification of dialogue on the political front combined with closer economic cooperation (China Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). In November 2006, a very high-level China - Africa summit, with the participation of more than 40 African heads of state, was held in Beijing to cement trade and investment relations between the world's fastest growing economy and the world's poorest continent. China's economic size in 2005, measured in purchasing power parity terms, is more than five times that of Sub-Saharan Africa, while its physical size is much smaller (International Monetary Fund (IMF hereafter) 2006). According to the World Bank's Atlas method, GNI per capita in 2005 was \$745 in Sub-Saharan Africa, contrasted with \$1,740 in China. However, there is a large convergence of interest based

on economic complementarities and strong possibilities for mutual gain (Zafar 2007).

As a rising power, China is altering some of the prevailing practices and parameters in development assistance. One analyst, Joshua Cooper Ramo, has termed the Chinese approach the ‘Beijing Consensus’, with the development of new attitudes toward politics, development, and the global balance of power (Ramo 2004). China’s distinctive approach involves a combination of aggressive diplomacy and the cultivation of friendly ties with a ‘no-strings attached’ financial and technical assistance package. The only real prerequisite for Chinese assistance is support for Beijing’s one-China policy (in relation to Taiwan, China). China’s pledge of noninterference in countries’ internal affairs and lack of lending conditions on governance or fiscal management have elicited positive reactions from several governments. However, China’s lack of attention to governance, democracy, and human rights issues in Africa, as testified by its support of pariah regimes in Sudan and Zimbabwe and its delinking of aid from political reform, has raised concerns that the flow of Chinese aid may cause African governments to delay reforms that promote openness and accountability. Given the propensity for corruption in the management of natural resources, China’s lack of attention to matters of resource transparency and mechanisms of oversight among its African partners has been a cause for concern. Moreover, the tendency of Chinese companies to import labor from China, coupled with allegations of poor labor practices and unfair competition against local enterprises, has generated an anti-Chinese backlash in several African countries, notably South Africa and Zambia. Finally, the disregard for environmental impact assessments risks derailing the progress that has been made on that front over the last two decades. In sum, there are fears that this neglect of governance and proper standards may be detrimental to many countries’ overall development efforts (Zafar 2007).

China has found Africa as a lucrative destination for her Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Over the years the FDI has increased continually from as little as \$75 million in 2003 to 5 billion in 2008 and then 4.2 billion in 2020 (<http://www.sais-cari.org/Chinese-investment-in-Africa> 2021). Increasing FDI is simultaneously followed by the increase in trade between two regions. For example, trade between China and Africa rose from \$3b in 1995 to \$10b in 2000, \$40b in 2005, and \$55b in 2006 (Soutman & Hairong 2007:79). Trade increased to \$254b in 2021 and shows the continually rising trend (Mureithi 2022). Both rising FDI in the continent and increasing trade value over the

years are good indicators in general; however, there are many other things which go unnoticed when discussing trade issues only and this does not do a good job if evaluation. One should hence look at both trade and non-trade issues in total and see how this is going to play in the long run context. I follow hence a more comprehensive approach of assessing the gains and losses from the Africa-China economic engagement. The discussion here is arranged under 4 sections. Section 2 looks at the brief history of economic engagement and possible reasons for its growth and concerns. Section 3 on the other hand looks at the non-economic engagement and its possible impacts on Africa. An overall assessment of both economic and non-economic engagements is done in section 4. Possible challenges and policy actions are envisaged in section 5.

2 Sino - Africa Economic Engagements

2.1 A Brief History of China's Relations with Africa

China's relations with the African continent date back to the 15th century. In the Ming Imperial Tomb in Beijing is a wall painting of a giraffe-it was the famous Chinese admiral and seafarer Zheng He who brought it to the court in Nanjing during one of several expeditions to the Arab world and the east coast of Africa between 1413 and 1419. In modern times, official relations were established with South Africa after Sun Yat-sen was elected Provisional President of the Young Republic of China in 1911. As the communist leadership consolidated its hold on power in the early 1950s, China launched a more active policy of establishing contacts in Africa. Under the shadow of the Cold War, 29 leaders from political movements in Africa and Asia assembled in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. They discussed peace, economic development, and decolonisation, and agreed to increase cooperation between the peoples of the 'third world', a term coined by China's then leader Mao Zedong. Although China at the time was relatively underdeveloped, it provided extensive assistance to emerging African countries. A well-known example from the early 1970s is the Tanzam railway project, which connected the copper belts in Zambia with the port of Dar Es Salaam. This enabled Zambia to export copper without having to pass through South Africa or Rhodesia (Stein& Uddhammar 2021).

China began trading with North-east Africa before the Christian era. Several Chinese travelers reportedly visited Africa during the early part of the Christian era. China's first significant contact with Africa occurred during the

Ming Dynasty when the fifth and sixth voyages of the famous Zheng He naval fleet reached the north-east coast of Africa during the first quarter of the fifteenth century. The voyages were, however, an anachronism in Chinese history and were followed by a return to China's inward-looking approach to the rest of the world (Snow 1988: 30-31). A hiatus in the China–Africa relationship then set in for several centuries until Chinese labourers and traders came to several regions of Africa beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century (Shinn & Eisenman 2012: 17-26).

After taking power in 1912, Sun Yat Sen and the Republic of China (ROC) developed official relations with South Africa, where a Chinese community had become well established. South Africa soon became and remains the country with the largest number of persons of Chinese origin on the African continent. Most of the early migrants retained a strong allegiance to China and supported the Chinese nationalist party, the Kuomintang. The Second Sino - Japanese War (1937–1945) united the Chinese community in South Africa with China and led to fund-raising campaigns in support of the ROC (Yap & Man 1996: 255-277). The ROC had brief interaction with independent Liberia and was in contact with the Chinese community in the French colony of Madagascar. Challenges to its ability to rule China severely limited its engagement with Africa (Shinn & Eisenman 2012: 26–29). Relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Africa were slow to develop because of Mao Zedong's need to consolidate power and the fact that there were few independent African nations in 1949. According to Shinn (2019), several themes subsequently developed in the China–Africa relationship as it became more intense. They are presented thus:

- *First*, there have been different phases in China's relations with Africa that depend largely on global issues, and political and economic developments in China, not in Africa. They began with China's support for African revolutionary movements, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the Cold War, and the Sino - Soviet split during the leadership of Mao Zedong. This was followed by China's more pragmatic foreign policy, a focus on China's domestic reform, and a pulling back from Africa under Deng Xiaoping. Jiang Zemin, partly concerned by negative fallout from the Tiananmen Square events, again reached out to Africa and set the stage for a major expansion of the China – Africa relationship. Hu Jintao took advantage of his efforts and significantly increased China's trade, aid, and investment with Africa.

Xi Jinping has continued the economic engagement begun by Hu Jintao and expanded China's involvement in the security and political sectors, especially party-to-party cooperation.

- *Second*, implicit in the first theme, it is nearly always China that initiates important developments in the China–Africa relationship. This is not surprising and could also be said for the US relationship with Africa. A single large and powerful country can more easily initiate ideas and projects than can fifty four countries, many of which are small and weak. Although the African Union is slowly improving its ability to speak for the continent, it is not even close to functioning like a national government.
- *Third*, and lastly, the China–Africa relationship has always been asymmetric. The second theme is the most obvious manifestation of this asymmetry. Interestingly, however, economic but not political asymmetry once favoured Africa. For example, from 1980 to 1984, Africa's global merchandise exports averaged US\$79 billion annually. In 1983, China exported only US\$50 billion worth of goods. In the years immediately after Mao Zedong came to power in 1949, even the economies of South Africa and Egypt were probably stronger than the economy of China. By the 1990s, however, China had a significant political and economic advantage over African countries individually and collectively. In 2016, China's global merchandise trade was US\$3.7 trillion; Africa's was US\$790 million. As with the United States, it is a highly asymmetric relationship that has only increased with the passage of time.

Table 1 shows a summary of the different phases of China–Africa engagements which correspond roughly to China's changes of leadership.

Table 1: A Summary of Evolution and Characteristics of China - Africa Engagements

Phase	Evolution	Characteristics
Pre-nineteenth century until 1949	In the first quarter of the fifteenth century Chinese labourers and traders came to several regions of Africa. After taking power in 1912, Sun Yat Sen and the Republic of China developed official relations, notably with South Africa.	Chinese labour migration to South Africa and Madagascar.
Mao Zedong (1949-76)	The seizure of power by the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1949 did not result immediately in any significant outreach to Africa. Mao Zedong was preoccupied with consolidating his rule in the early years of the new regime. With the decolonization of African countries, China began to pursue a more pragmatic policy in Africa and achieved a huge political victory in October 1971—admission to the United Nations.	After the Bandung conference of 1955, the PRC's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were established and remain essential to China's foreign policy until today. They include: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.
Deng Xiaoping (1978-92)	The number of African countries recognizing Beijing's 'One China' policy increased from forty-four in the 1970s to forty-eight in the 1980s; fifty-five African presidents visited China from 1981 to 1989.	But China's economic modernization left the country short of capital and unable to provide Africa with the same level of economic assistance.
Jiang Zemin (1992-2002)	This period witnessed an intensification of China-Africa diplomatic relations and unprecedented high-level Chinese official visits to several African countries. For example, Jiang Zemin made state visits in 1996 to Kenya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mali, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. For the first time, China deployed personnel to a UN peacekeeping operation in 1989.	The main features of China's involvement with Africa are reflected in five areas: development aid; considerable increase in arms export; increased trade; loans for infrastructure; UN peacekeeping.
Hu Jintao (2002-12)	When Hu Jintao relinquished power in 2012, only four African countries—Eswatini, Burkina Faso, Gambia, and São Tomé and Príncipe—recognized Taiwan. This represented a significant victory for Beijing's 'One China' policy.	The second FOAC ministerial meeting took place in Addis Ababa in 2003 attended by Premier Wen Jiabao, thirteen African leaders, and more than seventy ministers from Africa and China. In a side session, nearly a hundred Chinese business representatives assembled to meet with their African counterparts.
Xi Jinping (2013-)	Xi Jinping oversaw the 6th FOAC, China released its second Africa policy paper. It emphasized the following themes (China, 2015): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing political mutual trust. • Deepening cooperation in international affairs. • Deepening economic and trade cooperation. • Deepening and expanding cultural and people-to-people exchanges. • Promoting peace and security in Africa. The key initiative for achieving this new order is Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China agrees to new projects; they routinely become part of BRI.	During the 6th FOAC, China announced a US\$60 billion loan, trade, and aid package to African countries. The package also included debt relief to the least developed African countries. China also announced more scholarships for African students to study in China. By 2015, there were almost fifty thousand African students studying in China.

Source: Adopted from Shinn (2019)

2.2 China's Economic Engagement with Africa: Trade and Investment

China is currently Africa's largest trading partner, having surpassed the US in 2009. It is undeniably appeal to African states as a trading partner and the increase in trade is a reverse of the decreasing economic importance to the West. In the past few years, the Chinese have built a network of trade, aid and investment with close to fifty countries. China's investment in Africa has reformed the position of Africa in the global economy. From a problem continent, China has contributed extensively to change Africa into a region with endless business opportunities. In 1975, the number of China aid programme in African countries outweighs the number of aid programmes provided by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was established in 2006 and meant to boost trade and investment in Africa. Three major drivers of this endeavor were markets, resources in particular energy, and political support in the United Nations (Alden *et al.* 2008). In the FOCAC which was held in Beijing in year 2012, former President Hu Jintao announced new measures that the Chinese government will implement to strengthen Africa-China cooperation, such as US\$20 billion in loans to boost investment, personal exchanges, also peace and security (Bodomo 2013). With such significant amount of public investment, there will eventually be productive employment and a maximal utilisation of resources and all this leads to economic development. In the past century, availability of capital in Africa was one of the constraints to economic development (Boko *et al.* 2007). Thus, with China's significant amount of investment, Africa's economy could be developed rapidly, provided that the amount of money is managed efficiently.

Meanwhile, Africa's economy is also affected in a negative way that its internal markets for domestic producers have been deteriorating due to the private Chinese investment in Africa. Private Chinese companies which invest in Africa usually have a low cost of production, which will cause the presence of cheap Chinese wholesale in the African market. The market price of products being manufactured by Chinese firms will be extremely low and as a consumer, we will purchase cheaper and more affordable products and this is good for the well-being of the Africans. However, if this situation persists long-term, it will affect domestic African producers and local retailers badly. African producers who are unable to compete with Chinese companies in terms of cost of production and market prices are left with options of firing workers

or deducting wages until they could regain competence. Lastly, they will be driven out of the market if they are unsuccessful in facing the fierce competition from private Chinese investment. For instance, Comatex and Batexci, two leading textile firms located in Mali have been severely affected by cheap fabrics from China (Ighobor 2013). The *Economist* noted too, that hundreds of textile factories collapsed across Nigeria because they could not compete with cheap Chinese garments. However, there are exclusive cases such as that South Africa is not severely affected because of temporary bilateral agreements between the governments that limit Chinese imports (Adisu *et al.* 2010).

In economic terms, I believe the positive impacts of Chinese investment in Africa far outweigh the negative impacts. With Chinese investment, regardless private or public investment, Africa's economy will be developed enormously because capital availability is an important factor to develop an economy. Also, China has created jobs for African which Africa would not been able to get for the past decades. Without China's investment, African countries' economy will still be underdeveloped as a result from reduction in export, only local-production goods are available in market and many more. Also, the aforementioned negative impacts could be overcome by implementing certain mutual agreement that benefits the locals as well as Chinese investors, but if we totally disallow Chinese investment, I believe the negative impacts will be much more severe.

3 China's Non-Economic Engagement

3.1 Political Engagement

With the huge Chinese unconditional aid in Africa such as the US\$20 billion loan provided, relationship of Africa-China government-to-government has increased profoundly. China has close relations to the Islamist government in Sudan, democratic government in Botswana as well as authoritarian governments in Togo (Shinn 2011). They pay effort to develop and maintain a close government-to-government relationship and it is generally more successful than western countries in establishing close ties with African leaders in recent years due to Beijing's non-interfering policy. Unlike the West and International Monetary Fund (IMF), economic aids are often tied with conditions. A recent example of their close relationship would be China's new president Xi Jinping has chosen Africa as his first few official international trips. Xi visited Tanzania, South Africa, Congo during his trip to Africa during March 2013. Thus, there is no doubt that China's investment regardless the

state's investment or private enterprises investment improves the Africa-China relationship. With the establishment of a good relationship, China will be Africa's ally and Africa will be supported by China when it comes to financial, political matters. However, there are some certain negative political implications as far as it is concerned. Africa has a long history of unhappy experiences with foreign powers exploiting their country. Olusegun Obasanjo, president of Nigeria has criticized Chinese firms for violating safety and working standards (Courier 2011). For instance, In Nigeria, the Western Metal products Company Limited (WEMPCO), a Chinese company has been accused of releasing raw sewage into the river, polluting water resources which were supposed to be local fishermen's source of income.

Chinese investment is often related with conditions such as providing jobs for Chinese staff and profits for state-run firms, or in other words, profit-oriented. However, Beijing makes no issue of human rights concerns. In Zimbabwe, its president Robert Mugabe has been widely criticised for abusing human rights during his three decades in power as a president. China has been a supporter of Mugabe's government on the international stage and it would not oppose sanctions as it has a policy of not interfering African nations. As the video 'The Chinese are Coming' shown by BBC, the locals also agree that the presence of China in Zimbabwe makes life easier for Robert Mugabe (BBC 2011). With Beijing's support, Robert Mugabe will continue to stand strong as a President and abuse human rights, as the Chinese would not interfere in them. It is said that many of the worst autocratic leaders in Africa tend to favour China as an ally. In my opinion, the negative implications of Chinese investment in Africa only occur in particularly a few countries but not every African nation in whole. Without Chinese investment, Africa-China relations might not be as strong as it is currently. Besides, by having China as an ally, there will be financial support, pooled resources for Africa and it will be transformed from a problem continent to an economically, politically strong continent.

3.2 Social-Cultural Engagements

Globalization is also defined as a process which involves an increasing interaction of people of different cultures, languages, and identities. As Chinese private investment begins to take place in Africa, there will be an influx of Chinese workers into Africa and thus causing the population of Chinese in Africa to increase. With the presence of Chinese ethnicity in Africa, there will be an increase in interaction between local Africans and Chinese and

cross-cultural experiences. Africans may have the opportunity to understand more about Chinese culture. For example, a private Chinese company sets up a business and the owner will reside in Africa. Eventually, their children will attend local African schools and learn to speak local African languages. This will be a major cultural breakthrough, where you see a young Chinese kid learning African language. Moreover, there are other beneficial socio-cultural impacts due to the Chinese investment such as inter-race marriages, presence of Chinese food in an African community, as well as an African kid practicing Chinese culture for example, the children in Tanzania practicing Tai Chi by the Tanzanian Beach, as shown in the BBC video. Besides, Chinese investment in aid form helps to develop Africa's infrastructure, including railway and road reconstruction, schools, clinic, hospitals. These plans improvise African community's standard of living. This can be illustrated with the establishment of road and railways; citizens could travel around easily. The Tanzania-Zambia Railway is one of the biggest complete sets of projects China has ever undertaken in overseas aid items (Jansson, Burke & Hon 2009). It has become a major truck line of communication linking the two countries and improving the well-being of citizens from both countries. The people of Tanzania and Zambia as well as other African nations praised this plan as 'the road to freedom' and a 'model for south-south cooperation'. The socio-cultural implications from China's investment in Africa are positive-inclined. Chinese investment in various African countries exposes African citizens to multiculturalism, where they could experience a new culture after experiencing the West's influence, but at the same time they could retain their unique identity and culture as Chinese are not there for colonization purpose.

China's activities in Africa are not decent as per the code of ethics. Myriad of activities by Chinese firms and tacit support by the Chinese government proves that this hypothesis can be accepted without much doubt. A brief summary of some selected incidents is reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Lack of transparency in trade and dealing, China in Africa

Particulars	Brief
Diamond mining in Marange, Zimbabwe by Chinese Company Anjing.	Ex-president Robert Mugabe announced that Anjin has looted diamonds worth \$15b.

Source: K. Chimhangwa, 28 May 2021. <https://www.opendemocracy.net>

Major Problem: Anjing resisted its books being audited by the Auditor-General of Zimbabwe. Human rights watchdog Global Witness says that Zimbabwe security silenced dissent. In 2012, US office of Foreign Asset Control claimed that Anjin smuggled 3.7m carat of diamonds to Shanghai.

Particulars	Brief
Locals are not paid equal to Chinese labor counterpart	Local labour in Zimbabwe is paid only \$35 per month and are asked to work under inhuman conditions in 2021. Some 21 people were huddled in one room under COVID-19 epidemic restrictions.
<p>Sources: <i>Economic Times</i> 15 September 2021. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/zimbabwe-under-complete-control-is-any-noticing</p> <p>Kenneth Matimaire. Zimbabwe: Chinese and military owned diamond firms score richest claim to diamonds under unclear circumstances, 21 January 2021. <i>Zimbabwe Independent</i>. https://www.business-humanrights.org</p>	
<p>Major Problem: Mistreatment of African labor and disrespect for the local law and order of Zimbabwe.</p>	

Particulars	Brief
African Union building operations was spied on by China for 5 years.	AU building was built in 2012 by China and was spied on digitally. It was caught in 2017. <i>Le Monde</i> , a French newspaper, did an investigation.
<p>Source: <i>Quartz-Africa</i>. https://qz.com/africa/1192493/china-spied-on-african-union-headquarters-for-five-years/</p>	
<p>Major Problem: China, although it is claimed that it is developing good relations with African countries by building the AU building, actually has nefarious intention of acquiring information illegally. In 2017 when it was caught, China declined comment and termed the allegation as ‘absurd’.</p>	

Particulars	Brief
Chinese company effectively imprisoned 300 workers for over a year in a factory during the COVID-19 lockdown in Mozambique.	Some 300 workers were not allowed to go out from the compound of Dugongo Cimentos for a year and lost their job if they decided to go out in 2020.
Source: Bowker. T. 2021. ‘We’re being treated like slaves’: Factory Workers Stuck Yearlong during Lockdown. 24 August 2021. https://www.vice.com/en/article/wx5kmw/were-being-treated-like-slves-factory-workers-stuck-in-year-long-lockdown	
Major Problem: Chinese companies do not care for human rights and do not respect local country laws.	

Particulars	Brief
State capture in Congo and bribe of \$10 million to Kabila family.	State capture and fraud.
Source: Fraud, bribery linked to China - Congo ‘deal of the century’: Report. Read more at: https://www.aninews.in/news/world/others/fraud-bribery-linked-to-china-congo-deal-of-the-century-report20211201213818/	
Major Problem: Corruption and illegal gain.	

Particulars	Brief
Land grabbing in DR Congo	A Chinese company, ZTE International, leasing thousands of unutilized hectares of land was labelled by Oxfam, a UK charity and others as ‘land grab’.
Source: Ighobor, K. 2013. China in the Heart of Africa: Opportunities and Pitfalls in a Rapidly Expanding Relationship. <i>Africa Renewal</i> January. https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/january-2013/china-heart-africa	
Major Problem: China’s inroads into Africa’s agricultural sector include the 20 demonstration centres that President Hu said will ‘help African countries	

increase production capacity’. But there was a backlash when the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo leased thousands of unutilized hectares of land to ZTE International, a Chinese company, in a deal that Oxfam, a UK charity, and others have labelled a ‘land grab’. The ‘land grab’ accusation may be overstated, according to a study by the UK’s Standard Chartered Bank. But the authors of the study believe that in the longer-term China could well seek to import much more food from Africa which, by World Bank estimates, has 60 per cent of the world’s uncultivated land. ‘Given Africa’s potential, China is likely to turn towards it’.

Particulars	Brief
Collapse of local textile industries in African countries like Mali, Nigeria, etc.	Many Africans often refer to the poor quality of Chinese products and blame their low prices for the collapse of local industries.
<p>Source: Ighobor, K. & A. Haidara 2012. Malian Women Create Beauty and Profit: Hand-dyed Fabrics Win Praises, Capture Markets. <i>Africa Renewal</i> April. https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2012/malian-women-create-beauty-%E2%80%94-and-profit</p> <p>Ighobor, K. 2013. China in the Heart of Africa: Opportunities and Pitfalls in a Rapidly Expanding Relationship. <i>Africa Renewal</i> January. https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/january-2013/china-heart-africa</p>	
<p>Major Problem: Comatex and Batexci, two leading textile companies in Mali, have been severely affected by cheap fabrics from Asia. ‘Hundreds of textile factories collapsed across Nigeria because they could not compete with cheap Chinese garments’, noted the <i>Economist</i>, which approvingly added that the Tanzanian government has stopped Chinese from selling in that country’s markets. Chinese are welcome as investors, but not as ‘vendors or shoe shiners’, said the <i>Economist</i>.</p>	

Particulars	Brief
Crippled Furniture Industry in Zimbabwe	Import of Chinese furniture has continued to affect the African furniture industry.
Source: Ighobor, K. 2013. China in the Heart of Africa: Opportunities and Pitfalls in a Rapidly Expanding Relationship. <i>Africa Renewal</i> January. https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/january-2013/china-heart-africa	
Major Problem: In May 2013, Neil Bruce, head of Zimbabwe’s Furniture Manufacturers Association, told the country’s parliament that imported Chinese furniture, ‘which is not strong’, is crippling the local furniture industry.	

Particulars	Brief
Abuse of Workers in Chinese-owned Mines in Zambia.	Chinese-run copper mining companies in Zambia routinely flout labor laws and regulations designed to protect workers’ safety and the right to organize.
Source: Zambia: Workers Detail Abuse in Chinese-Owned Mines. A Report by Human Right Watch on 03 November 2011. https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/03/zambia-workers-detail-abuse-chinese-owned-mines	
Major Problem: Performance assessments of some Chinese investors have not been stellar. The managers of Chinese-run mines in Zambia have been accused of not taking adequate safety measures for their local workers.	

Particulars	Brief
Destruction of Natural Habitat in Gabon	Uproar of Conservative following Operations of Chinese-run Oil Company in Gabon.
Source: Alfroy, P. 2006. China Sparks Conservation Uproar in Gabon. <i>IOL</i> 29 September 2006. https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/china-sparks-conservation-uproar-in-gabon-295607	
Major Problem: A Chinese oil firm is exploring in a Gabonese national park, angering environmentalists. State-run Sinopec, the largest refinery in energy-hungry China, has been prospecting for oil in the Loango national park in southern Gabon and has employed methods that critics say respect	

neither the law nor the environment. The company, which has declined all comment on the affair, was ordered by Libreville this month to halt all prospecting activities in the park. But the embarrassing case continued to cause upheaval in a country torn between the pressure to develop and the pressure to preserve its natural heritage.

Particulars	Brief
Poaching and illegal exports wildlife	African Wildlife is under threat due to the illegal activities of the Chinese.
Source: Pilling, D. & E. Feng E. 2019. The Impact of Chinese Investment in Africa, Including Development, Job Creation & Possible Environmental Degradation: How Chinese Entrepreneurs are Quietly Reshaping Africa. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 04 April 2019. https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/the-impact-of-chinese-investment-in-africa-including-development-job-creation-possible-environmental-degradation/	
Major Problem: Not all Chinese entrepreneurs have a positive impact. In Madagascar, they are blamed for illegal exports of rosewood and zebu, a type of cattle. Chinese demand for African wildlife also fuels poaching, from Zambia to Mozambique.	

4 An Overall Overview

An overview of China's engagement in Africa will be done by bringing together relevant but scattered evidence of the positive impacts (Sinophilia) and the negative impacts (Sinophobia) of the operations of Chinese firms and investments in Africa, in order to extend our understanding of the emerging academic tribes and territories shaping the evolving Afro-Chinese economic engagement landscape. Chinese presence in Africa holds a great fascination for most African nationals, academics, and commentators (Lekorwe *et al.* 2016; O'Brien 2016). Their achievements in technological and infrastructure advancements are a matrix by which African states and entrepreneurs can be measured.

Sinophilia: The Chinese economic reforms which have catapulted a once agrarian economy into one of the world's largest industrial economies are inspiring and remarkable. Many Africans and scholars therefore see the Chinese socio- economic and infrastructure development model as a blueprint that can be duplicated or borrowed in order to unlock the huge developmental potential of many African economies (Johnston & Earley 2018). From the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 until the modern times, Chinese foreign politico-economic policy instruments have been far more aligned to the needs and interests of African governments (Anshan 2007; Campbell 2008); their past diplomatic records, devoid of colonialism and imperialism, have left no negative records on African states (Alden 2007). In the 1960s China's anti-colonial ideals and Marxist belief that independent states are obliged to help colonized states to achieve and defend their national independence, actually led to increased Chinese activism on the African continent (Alden & Alves 2008). Anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements in Africa greatly benefited from Chinese support. Indeed, China provided monetary and technical support to several African countries in the heady days of the independence struggle, with countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola, and Ghana being beneficiaries of such support (Alden & Alves 2008; Gao 1984; Yu 1977). This financial support, post-colonially, has transformed into substantial resource-backed loans and grants to help finance much- needed infrastructure projects in many African states. Especially welcome is the fact that the Chinese loans, interwoven with aid and trade, are relatively cheap and easily accessible with few or no conditions, which represents a major shift from the 'strings-attached' financing policies of Western donors and the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that were inimical to most African economies in the 1980s (Tan-Mullins, Mohan & Power 2010). This is 'China's "exceptionalism"' (Alden & Large 2011). An exceptionalism pillared on the foreign policy framework and principle of non-interference in internal affairs – the 'Beijing consensus' (Ramo 2004) – and underpinned by the belief that the best way to minimize conflict and instability is to improve economic development. In summary, African leaders' affection for China has increased substantially over the last few decades due to China's long- established, non-colonial diplomatic partnership and, more recently, its decision to provide soft loans and invest in building infrastructure in Africa. We now turn our attention to the significant role and patterns of Chinese - African engagement in order to unpack what is driving Africa's new affection for China.

Sinophobia: As noted earlier, unlike the pre-1990s when China's foreign policy in Africa was primarily based on politico-ideological or politico-diplomatic favor-procuring considerations, China's post-1990s foreign policy engagements in Africa have been purely structured around politico-China in Africa economic considerations (Konings 2007) and resource security concerns, with the acquisition of oil and hard natural minerals forming the epicenter of these economic motivations (Alves 2011; Wang 2012; Taylor 2006; Jaffe & Lewis 2002). This comes as little surprise given that China's enormous growth in the manufacturing and technological sectors has necessitated the sourcing of commodities from the outside world (Sanfilippo 2010; Jaffe & Lewis 2002). Resource security has even become more pertinent in China's foreign policy framework since the nation's social stability as well as its regime survival has come to depend on the maintenance of its massive economic growth achieved over the last couple of decades (Alves 2011). Within this context, Africa – with its large but little-exploited resources – has caught China's eye and has thus emerged as a new frontier for Chinese resource acquisition (Jiang 2009). Indeed, China has also caught the attention of African governments and this can be explained by the fact that many African governments resent the conditions attached to Western donor assistance (Shinn 2007). China, however, positions itself as an undemanding investor. Therefore, many African governments, in desperate need of funding opportunities to rehabilitate or construct major infrastructure projects, have embraced Beijing with open arms. Beijing, in turn, has not resisted this warm welcome. Consequently, China has carefully ramped up its official development assistance (ODA) flows to African states in furtherance of its foreign policy interests (Dreher *et al.* 2018) including resource acquisition objectives (Taylor 2007). These types of grants and loans in particular, collateralized by strategically important national assets with high long-term value and mostly to be repaid in kind, have mainly targeted not only well-known mineral rich countries such as Angola, Sudan, Nigeria, and the DRC but also new oil-producing countries such as Ghana and Uganda (Alves 2011). Indeed, many African countries have received millions of dollars of loan facilities from China (Were 2018). A recent dataset released by the China Africa Research Initiative (CARI) at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies reveals that between 2000 and 2017 African governments and their SOEs had received loan facilities worth US \$143 billion from Chinese government, banks and contractors, Angola being the top recipient with US \$42.8 billion (CARI 2018). Herein lies the danger, the Sinophobia engendering deep-seated

discontent among some Afro-Chinese analysts. Seeking to interpret the Chinese infrastructure-for-resource loans ‘black box’, some analysts suggest that the loans are meant to ‘debt trap’ African states, to ‘resource grab’ the extensive mineral riches of Africa. The U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson opines that the Chinese predatory loan practices undermine African regimes and mire them in debt (Kazeem & Dahir 2018). A closer look at the debt situation of some African economies lends credence to these assertions: while Chinese loans are less substantial in the debt of some African countries, Chinese loans in Zambia, the DRC, and Djibouti remain the most significant contributor to high risk of or actual debt distress (Eom *et al.* 2018). Kenya’s debt to GDP situation makes for grim reading (Sanghi & Johnson 2016) and as of March 2018 its debt to GDP ratio had surpassed 62%, with China its largest lender and accounting for 72% of the bilateral debt (Dahir 2018). This raises serious concerns about the debt sustainability management of these African nations. Similar concerns have been raised in oil-rich Angola which owes about half of its external debt to China (Adegoke 2018).

Bilateral and external debts are nothing new. All countries, whether rich or poor, are financially indebted to another in some way. It is the structure of the Chinese loan deals with Africa and other debt-strapped countries that is so alarming (Ayittey 2017): Chinese loans are sometimes shrouded in secrecy and mostly do not require good governance guarantees (Taylor 2007); they are collateralized with important national assets and there always exists the prospect of the Chinese government taking over these assets in case of default by the borrowing country. This is what Chellaney (2017) refers to as ‘China’s debt trap diplomacy’ and ‘creditor imperialism’. Illustrative of the worrying ‘risky-Chinese-loan deals’ phenomenon in Africa is the loan agreement signed between the DRC government and the Chinese SOEs in 2007 (*Global Witness* 2011; Kabemba 2016; Marysse & Geenen 2009). Examining the specific features of the agreement – the suspensive and resolute conditions, the barter principle that masks the real price of the commodities, its expansive duration, the exemptions from taxes, etc. Marysse and Geenen (2011) find that even the renegotiated version of the deal represents an unequal exchange, with the Congolese government having been the weaker bargaining party in the contracts. Kabemba (2016) finds the loan agreement to have been negotiated in secrecy. A report by Global Witness confirms that very little information is publicly available on the Sino - Congolese ‘infrastructure for resource’ deal signed in 2007 and further reveals that the deal was negotiated behind closed doors without any prior international bidding process (*Global Witness* 2011).

Over the past few decades, Afro-Chinese relations have grown steadily in all arenas – socio- economic, political, and development co-operation (Alden *et al.* 2008) – with China increasingly becoming an important source of financial support for many African nations. Frequent diplomatic exchanges, pillared on past and present politico- economic alliances, have also strengthened the ties between the two. Their ‘developing country’ tag also continues to shape their present alliance. However, while many African countries still struggle due to minimal industrialization coupled with huge deficits in infrastructure, the Chinese have succeeded in achieving a phenomenal economic rise. Therefore, many African states are now considering shackling their economic and political future to a Chinese lead precisely because of its demonstrable achievements and its perceived economic trajectory (Alden *et al.* 2008). However, despite the fact that the African economic landscape continues to benefit from Chinese-funded infrastructure and industrial projects aimed at enhancing economic development, claims about the impact of China in Africa, often portrayed as a ‘Chinese scramble for Africa’, have fomented fear within Afro-Chinese engagement. We argue that within African policy circles (governments, scholars, and special interest groups) the tensions between opposing perspectives on the value of the Sino - African business relationship have reached a crescendo.

First, some Chinese loan deals with African governments lack the necessary transparency to fit with the often touted ‘win-win’ Afro-Chinese relationship; they have also been shown to be skewed in favor of Chinese interests.

Second, although there are nuanced and sometimes good labor relationships between Chinese employers and African employees, empirical findings frequently reveal a worrying theme of labor abuses and Chinese entrepreneurs’ disregard for labor union regulations.

Naturally, these disturbing revelations overshadow any positive Afro-Chinese undertakings. I therefore recommend that African public financial officials carefully strengthen their financial negotiation capacity in loan deals by involving civil society organizations and, if necessary, competent foreign financial firms in the transaction of such deals. The Forum on China - Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) can also help in this regard. Ministers of finance and economic planning should co-ordinate and find mechanisms to superintend

such huge financial transactions as the Sino - Congolese deal. Interventions must not always come from other foreign financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank as happened in the Sino - Congolese deal.

5 Challenges and Policy Goals

On the flip side, China's engagement with Africa brings forth some challenges. One of the challenges is the assurance that the Chinese imports meet the various quality and safety standards. Another is the risk of emergence of Chinese monopolies in the medium to long term after which they may also embark on collusive and predatory business practices as well as extraction of monopoly rents just like the current operators. This is especially the case since majority of the Chinese enterprises are still state-owned or are closely tied to the central government or the various provincial governments and can be part of the global strategy of the Chinese state. Possibly more daunting is the challenge posed by cheap Chinese imports the already eroded industrial of many African countries. Specifically, if, as is already the case in South Africa and Nigeria, for example, Chinese imports are resulting in factory closures and the inevitable job and income losses, Chinese imports may intensify the de-industrialization process initiated by the liberalization policies embedded in the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP. See Wilson III, 2005; Shin 2005 and Kaplinsky *et al.* 2006) for experiences of specific examples of how these situations have arisen in specific African countries.

Perhaps more fundamental challenge is the fact that cheap Chinese imports may actually discourage diversification of the productive based of these African economies away from crude agricultural and mineral products towards manufacturing and eventually service or knowledge intensive activities. This is a real challenge because new investors may either find it unattractive to compete with cheap Chinese imports or find it unnecessary because Chinese imports are so large leaving no significant excess demand which new entrants can aspire to meet. In that case, instead of Sino - African trade partnership lending assistance to the transformation and development process in Africa, it will actually truncate it. This along with the de-industrialization effects of cheap Chinese imports will indeed reverse the gains of industrial development made during the first two decades of independence in Africa.

Africa has experienced more violent conflict over the last four decades than any other continent. These conflicts have predominantly been in countries like Angola, DRC, Sierra Leone and Sudan that are endowed with immense natural resources including oil and minerals. The main source of conflicts has primarily been over how to control these resources. Peace and stability are beginning to prevail in many countries, although in some – like Sudan – violent conflict is still the biggest single obstacle to development. Oil revenues earned from China's trade partnership with some of these governments may also be used to prop up dictators, obstruct transparency in commercial transactions and fuel conflicts and human rights abuses in Africa (Lyakurwa 2006). These conflicts often plunge the poor into deeper poverty. The challenge is for the African rulers to prevent escalation of conflicts and socio-political instability. The instrumentality of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in this regard cannot be over-emphasized.

Foreign companies involved in oil, minerals and other extractive industries must make their payments more open to public scrutiny. Oil and mineral exporting African countries should continue to enforce the rule of law and reduce corruption and rent-seeking activities so that revenues from oil and minerals can contribute to economic growth. This has been the route of countries like Botswana that have implemented such policies and have experienced economic development, growth and reduction in poverty (Olomola 2005). The challenge is for African rulers to insist on these foreign companies subscribing to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) as a precondition for granting mining concessions.

Chinese direct investment in Africa is driven primarily by the need to secure key commodity and energy assets as well as capturing under tapped markets (China Online 2006). In short, Chinese FDI are primarily resource seeking and secondarily market seeking. In contrast, Chinese investment in OECD countries is primarily market seeking, in which case, they go into strategic partnership with enterprises in the host countries. Chinese FDI in Africa is also typically accompanied by Chinese workers and most of the supplies are sourced directly from China. This is not universally the case. For example, in response to complaints by Nigeria and South Africa, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce has encouraged its companies to increase investment spending in developing countries, aiding technology development and personnel training. Specifically, in response to complaints by Nigeria's Minister of Science and Technology, Huawei Technologies Nigeria Limited, a Chinese FDI has established a training centre in Nigeria to train 2000 telecoms

engineers annually. Finally, China has a way of extracting extremely generous terms for its investment outside the resource seeking activities. For example, Nigeria offered incentives including no expatriate quota, full repatriation of capital and profits in addition to other generous incentives. China Monitor 2006. The challenge, therefore, is for African countries to invest the inflow of resources from the commodity booms in improving investment climate, developing human resources necessary to support investment in new industries and establish development banks necessary to provide financial support to nascent private investors. In this connection, there must be good and transparent governance while implementing these initiatives in order to ensure that the desired outcomes are realized. Successful implementation of these initiatives under good governance will create necessary conditions for Chinese FDI to have significant backward and forward linkages in the host economies. Needless to say, careful monitoring and evaluation processes, including requisite research must be carried out regularly to ensure that Chinese and, indeed, FDI from other sources and in any sector are beneficial to the host countries.

South African President Jacob Zuma warned in July 2013 that the then ‘unbalanced’ trade pattern is unsustainable. He was referring to the tendency of Africa to export raw materials to China while largely importing only cheap manufactured goods. Maged Abdelaziz, the UN Secretary-General’s special adviser on Africa, told Africa Renewal that the continent must develop a strategy for its dealings with emerging economic giants such as China, Brazil and India. Along this line, talks began in South Africa in June 2011 to merge three regional trade groupings (the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Southern African Development Community) into a ‘grand free trade area’ incorporating 26 countries with a combined gross domestic product of \$1 trillion. Such a combined strength could give Africa a more assertive voice at the negotiating table. The China - Africa relationship will get stronger. The editors of *China Returns to Africa* sum it up: So long as Africa’s development requires huge foreign investments, so long will China continue to be relevant. ‘Irrespective of the concerns being voiced in some circles in Africa, Chinese involvement is widely considered to be a positive-sum game’.

6.0 Conclusions

In all, the positive economic, political and socio-cultural impacts of China’s investment far outweigh the negative impacts. China’s investment in Africa is

mutually beneficial for both countries. It is clear that China has been the most effective country in meeting the needs of Africans so far. Comments made by African leaders in the past shows that African countries welcome Chinese investment. Moreover, Chinese investment developed Africa nations in recent years such as Tanzania, Zambia and many more. As compared to investment by the West, Africa only obtained mere benefits from it and did not achieve any form of outstanding development. Although there are several limitations of Chinese investment as discussed, I believe those could be overcome by implementation of policies such as the limiting Chinese imports, enforcing strict regulation on private Chinese companies' labour standards. African countries must insist an equitable economic relation with China. They should not be satisfied by the means of increase in trade, but should receive technological transfers and more in exchange, so that they could be less dependent on other countries in future. African governments should further develop policies and strategies to increase transfer of technology and Chinese-local business integration. After all, the ultimate goal is to render benefits to Africa's economy.

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Professor D.D. Tewari
Dean of Teaching and Learning
Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law
University of Zululand
TewariD@unizulu.ac.za