

## China's Growing Influence in Africa: Assessing its Challenges and Benefits to African States

**Preye Kuro Inokoba**

*Department of Political Science  
Niger Delta University PMB 071  
Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State*

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### Abstract

For the past 35 years or so, China's economy has metamorphosed from a centrally planned and closed system to a more market driven, and prosperous economy. The resultant phenomenal increase in its economic, financial and industrial outputs has made China not only a major player in the global economy but also a country in search of external markets outlets as well as natural resources and inputs to feed its ever-expanding industries. Given the continent's enormous natural resource endowments, China's participation in the African region throughout the years has phenomenally increased in scope, significance and consequences. It is in light of this that the research is carried out to principally examine the opportunities, benefits and challenges of this ever-expanding Chinese influence and impact on Africa. This paper posits that China's distinctive economic strategy towards Africa satisfies the funding and infrastructure requirements of African nations. But the partnership framework has been criticised heavily, especially when it comes to China's loans backed by natural resources, which have caused people to worry about the future of the continent and its policy for sustainable development. As a result, the discourse proposed that concerted efforts are needed at the national, regional and continental levels in order to surmount these challenges and make the expanding Sino-Africa relations more beneficial to African states.

*Corresponding Author:*

Preye Kuro Inokoba

## **Background to the Study**

It is no longer news that the Western World is gradually and steadily losing its grip and influence on Africa to China. Several African leaders have attested to this undeniable fact:

*The President of Senegal has expressed concern that Europe is at risk of losing the competition in Africa. Meanwhile, the President of Botswana has noted that China treats their country as an equal partner, whereas the West treats them as a former subject. During a banquet held in honour of China's President, Nigeria's former President expressed his belief that the current century presents an opportunity for China to assume a leadership role on the global stage. When assuming global leadership, we aspire to closely follow your lead (cited in Okpeh, 2009, 7).*

The rapid and remarkable expansion of China's influence has been observed across various spheres, including the economic, political, and security domains. The commercial transactions between the African continent and China have experienced a significant increase of nearly twenty times since the year 2000, leading to China overtaking the United States as the primary trading partner of African countries. China's Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) has emerged as the foremost contributor to United Nations (UN) African peace missions among the constant participants of the UN Security Council. Notably, the PLA has deployed a significantly larger number of peacekeepers to Africa, which is 20 times greater than the number of peacekeepers it dispatched to the continent in the year 2000. Furthermore, the population of Chinese residing in Africa has increased to around one million, which marks a significant rise from the mere few thousand individuals who lived there twenty-two years ago. To summarise, the rise of China is potentially the most noteworthy geopolitical and economic occurrence of the period following the conclusion of the Cold War. (Thrall, 2015: xi).

China has significantly enlarged its trade relations with Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s, to the extent that it has emerged as the primary export and development partner of SSA in 2013. Currently, China accounts for approximately 25% of Sub-Saharan Africa's trade, which is a significant increase from the 2.3% recorded in 1985. (Pigato & Tang, 2015, 1). Approximately 33% of China's energy imports are sourced from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which serves as a crucial trade connection. This is particularly significant given that China's energy consumption rates have increased at a rate exceedingly twice the global average within the last 18 years. At present, there exist 2,200 Chinese enterprises that are conducting operations in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the majority of them being privately-owned entities. (UNCTAD, 2014; Pigato & Tang, 2015, 2). Likewise, the number of foreign exchanges and mutual assistance and cooperation projects has increased significantly, and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which was established in 2000 and now meets every three years, has grown to become the main formal forum for China's tactical involvement with Africa. (Pigato & Tang, 2015, 2).

The aforementioned advancements can be attributed to the liberalisation of the late 1970s Chinese economy, which entailed a swing from a command economy to a market-based economy. China's imports have experienced significant growth under a capitalist socio-

economic system, rising from \$20.6 billion in 1978 to \$1.8 trillion in 2006. This has resulted in China ranking third in the world in terms of total imports. Additionally, Chinese foreign exchange reserves have increased from \$167 million to over \$1,000 billion, positioning China as the world leader in this regard. (Tamen, 2009: 154). In addition, Chinese companies have rapidly climbed up the rankings of the world largest firms, having six companies in a ranking of the top 25 where a few years ago there was none (The Economist 2007).

Like other economic giants before it, China's attraction to Africa is found in the reality that the region has enormous potentials that are easily exploited and translated to economic fortunes for the benefits of the economic giants of the world. According to Vogt (cited in Orngu, 2009: 89) the importance of Africa in global political economy essentially stems from the fact that the continent is a storehouse of several strategic minerals such as bauxite, chromium, copper, diamond, gold, iron ore, manganese, uranium and petroleum. Thus, it can be asserted that the interest of China like any other extra-continental actor in Africa essentially derives from the importance of the continent as a source of vital mineral resources as well as a ripe zone for investment and enormous trade opportunities (Orngu, 2009: 90).

Although China has a prolong account of contact with Africa, its recent involvement in the continent has no precedence. The increasing interest and involvement of China in African nations pose significant opportunities and challenges during a crucial juncture in the region's history. This paper as such critically assesses China's expanding curiosity and role in Africa and the opportunities, benefits and challenges this Chinese "new found love" for Africa portend for the continent.

### **Theoretical Discourse**

There is no gainsaying that theories are central to the analysis, explanation and understanding of the vast and complicated events and activities that make up international relations. A plethora of theories abound in etching the contours of world politics. As such the problem that confronts scholars of contemporary international relations is that of identifying and applying the most suitable theoretical model in their investigation of global issues (Orngu, 2009: 91).

Among competing and mutually reinforcing theories in contemporary international relations, two grand and rival theories have dominated international politics since it emerged in 1919 after World War I as a separate academic discipline. Realism and liberalism are two distinct theoretical perspectives in international relations. Realism is classified as an explanatory or positivist theory, whereas liberalism is the predominant theory within the constitutive or normative theoretical tradition. Realism, akin to other theoretical frameworks, endeavours to reveal patterns in human conduct and elucidate the societal realm in a manner analogous to how a natural scientist might explicate the physical realm. (Inokoba, 2014, 52; Smith, 1997). Stated differently, their orientation and content are characterised by behaviourism and positivism. In contrast, the ideology of liberalism, which serves as the primary framework of the constitutive (or normative) theoretical tradition, aims to achieve a superior and more harmonious global community by means of human intellect, contemplation, and rationality.

Given the complexity of global politics, no single theory can provide a comprehensive explanation. Therefore, this study aims to adopt an eclectic research approach in order to better understand the opportunities and threats presented by China's continuous interest and impact in Africa. The foundation of this concept is based upon three major foreign relations ideas, namely liberalism, realism and Marxism (specifically, the Dependency model). The adoption of multiple theories in this research is attributed to the inadequacy of a single theory in comprehensively addressing the issues at hand. Realism is a prominent theoretical framework within the field of international relations that places significant stress on the concept of national defense, values, and state autonomy. This approach prioritises these factors over ideals, social reconstructions, or ethical considerations. The term is frequently used interchangeably with the concept of power politics. Nation-states, also referred to as autonomous agents, are the main participants on the international scene, according to the theoretical underpinning of realism. Realist scholars such as Hobbes, Machiavelli, Rousseau, and Morgenthau argue that the global system is characterised by an ongoing competition for power and interests, particularly in the realms of politics and economics, among nation-states. This competition is driven by the pursuit of self-interest and the desire to maximise national interests. Realists assume that the determination of a nation's national interest should not be influenced by personal morality. Due to the nation-state's inherent responsibility for its security and survival, scholars within this theoretical genre often present a bleak outlook regarding the effects of national authority. Therefore, the global systems is perceived as a system of threat, wherein states strive to attain their security and interests by compromising those of their neighbouring states. The interstate relationship is commonly perceived as an ongoing power struggle, with states seeking to exploit one another. (Inokoba, 2014:53; Dunne, 1997:197). The subsequent inquiry pertains to the degree of pertinence of this theoretical stance to the matter under consideration. The examination of China's growing interest and impact in Africa necessitates a consideration of the tenets and conjectures of realism. Certainly, it could be argued that China's main goal in working with Africa is not to help the people and governments in the area get better or change. The presence of these individuals in Africa is the main driver by the potential possibilities and advantages that the region can offer to support their domestic endeavours towards industrialization and advancement. China has demonstrated a significant interest in the natural resources of Africa, particularly its energy resources, in addition to the potential market for its manufactured goods and the favourable business climate of the continent. China is cognizant of the competitive advantage and increased potential that Africa's vast opportunities offer in its rivalry and strategic discord with other significant economic, industrial, and military powers such as the United States, the European Union (EU), and Japan. The recent surge in Chinese engagement and influence in Africa can be adequately elucidated solely through the theoretical framework of realism.

In contrast, the ideology of liberalism posits that the preferences of the state, rather than its capabilities, serve as the principal factor influencing the behaviour of the state. In contrast to the realist perspective that perceives the state as a singular actor, the liberal approach acknowledges the possibility of diverse state conduct. Hence, the preferences are subject to variation across states, contingent upon factors such as cultural norms, economic structures,

and forms of governance. Thus, it can be inferred that the internal dynamics of states are a significant factor in shaping their external diplomatic relations. Scholars such as Keohane, Nye, Lebow, and Mearsheimer, who identify as liberals, argue that the relationship between states extends beyond the realm of politics (high politics) to encompass economic considerations (low politics), which may involve commercial entities, organisations, or individuals. (Keohane, 1993). Consequently, rather than a state of anarchy prevailing in the international system, there exist numerous prospects for collaboration and more expansive conceptions of power with respect to socio-economic and cultural matters. As per the perspective of liberal scholars, the current inter-state system is distinguished by interdependence among states, rather than by competition and rivalry among the primary actors of the international system. (Orngu, 2009:94).

The primary focus of liberal ideology centres on addressing the adverse consequences of anarchy by means of fostering international collaboration. Advocates of this theory contend that the concept of power politics is inherently shaped by ideological constructs. The prevailing ideologies and perspectives of states, particularly those of their leaders, have the potential to alter the character of global politics in a significant manner. (Inokoba, 2014, 66). This perspective is grounded in the fundamental tenet of liberalism, which posits that humanity is capable of achieving perfection and fostering peace. The establishment of novel institutions, such as the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) systems, has the potential to bring about a transformation in the political landscape at the global level. The establishment of international organisations and regimes aimed at promoting peaceful behaviour, disarmament, arbitration, and enforcement was a fundamental aspect of idealism. (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1996:60; Herz, 2003). Furthermore, the pertinence of liberal theoretical ideology to the aim of our investigation is evident in its prioritisation of collaboration in domains of lesser political significance, such as the partnership among China and Africa in commerce, business, and the economy. The argument being presented is that contrary to the realist perspective which views the international system as a harsh environment defined by power dynamics between states, the Sino-African relations are primarily characterised by non-military matters that are mutually advantageous to both entities, similar to other interactions between nation-states in global politics. The liberal model recognises the significant and strategic function of non-state actors, such as multinational corporations, in interactional relationships. This is evidenced by the presence of numerous Chinese multinational corporations that facilitate interactions between China and African nations.

The third pertinent theoretical framework in our investigation is the dependency theoretical model, which is a derivative of the Marxian Political Economy. The aforementioned scholars within this theoretical genre, including Gunder Frank, Dos Santos, Samir Amin, Daniel Offiong, and Claude Ake, attribute the underdevelopment of Africa primarily to imperialist exploitation. The argument says that there is an asymmetrical economic relationship between imperialistic powers and less developed countries (LDCs), like Africa, in which a large surplus value is consistently taken from the LDCs to help the imperialistic countries grow and advance. The condition of dependency in the LDCs implies that the affected nations are

devoid of independent and autonomous development. This process of surplus transfer is what has vitiated the development of the economies of the Third World societies especially Africa, resulting in dependency and underdevelopment (Inokoba, Adeyemi-Suenu & Paki, 2007; Alapiki, 2004, 5)

Under this mode of reasoning, the underdevelopment of African states through the instrumentality of unequal economic relations with the developed capitalist nations is not just a Marxist truth, but an historical reality. It was thought that the discourse had to use the dependency model because there was an imbalance in Sino-African economic relations, just like there was in the commercial relationships between western imperialist nations. The economic relationship between China and African nations is heavily skewed in favour of Chinese interests. Once more, the industrial needs of the Chinese economy, rather than the internal processes of African countries, largely determine the character of Sino-African ties, particularly in the field of commerce in natural and mineral resources. The use of the dependency theory is justified due to its capacity to elucidate the asymmetrical character of the economic ties between China and Africa.

### **Historical Antecedents of Sino-African Relations**

The historical links between China and Africa have altered and expanded in many ways since 1978, when the Chinese economy was opened up and market-oriented changes were implemented. (Thrall, 2015, 25; Vogel, 2011). Due to swings between active engagement in the 1960s and early 1970s and disinterest in the 1980s, Ayuba (2009, 130) described the association between Africa and China as intermittent. Similar to this, Van de Looy (2006), claimed that there have been three separate eras in China and Africa's connection over the previous 60 years. This passage discusses three distinct phases in Chinese history: the early independence era, the period following China's permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 1971, and the post-Maoist period marked by economic liberalisation and growth.

Relations between China and Africa began during the Ming Dynasty, when the Chinese admiral Zheng He led expeditions with his fleet. Orngu (2009, 96–97) says that the voyages were a way to bring Chinese culture to Africa by giving gifts and titles from the Ming emperor to local rulers and setting up a wide tribute-paying network that stretched from the Horn of Africa to the Mozambican Channel. As early as the fourth century AD, African individuals were a topic of discussion in China. Chinese porcelain and coins have been found at different sites from the Red Sea to Madagascar. This shows that there was a lot of trade between Africa and China before Zheng's travels. (Ayuba, 2009, 130).

In modern times, the 1960s can be seen as the start of relations between China and Africa. During this time, between December 1963 and January 1964, Zhou Enlai went on a diplomatic mission to ten African countries. The main goal of this trip was to make political and economic connections with the continent, which would be good for both sides. (Orngu, 2009, 96). The historical period of the China's involvement with Africa was principally driven by ideological and geopolitical considerations, with the main objective being the dissemination of Maoism as a counterbalance to the influence of the United States and the

Soviet Union. The aforementioned entailed principles of "Third World Solidarity" in addition to providing "moral and material support" to African liberation movements, with Beijing projecting its anti-colonialist stance to the global community. In 1954, Beijing, in conjunction with New Delhi, established the five tenets of harmonious cohabitation, which espoused an international system characterised by non-intervention by external nations in internal matters, endorsement of self-determination, and reciprocal non-aggression. (Vogel, 2011, 26). During the 1955 Bandung Conference, which brought together 29 Asian and African states, the five principles of peaceful coexistence were officially established. The commonality among all the nations at that time was their collective historical background and their perception of the prevalence of Western hegemony and exploitation. (Van de Looy, 2006, 3). As a consequence of the conference, China increased its provision of economic, technical, and military aid to African nations in an effort to counterbalance the dominant Western powers and establish an international political framework that aligned with its national interests. The aforementioned period coincided with the epoch of independence movements among African nations. (Van de Looy, 2006, 29).

The 1960s represents a challenging period in Sino-African relations as African States became new members of the international political system after independence. At this early period of their independence, most African states maintained an ambivalent attitude to communist PRC because they were still firmly tied to the apron string of their erstwhile colonial overlords. There was no clearly articulated official Pan African diplomatic policy towards communist China. With China not having had a long-standing engagement with colonial Africa, most independent African states perceived China from the official colonial mind-set, seen as a communist nation and as enemy of the imperialists who were the benefactors of most of the first generation of African leaders (Oseghale & Bartholomew, 2009, 118). As a result, to protect their nascent sovereignty, the newly independent African states had to embrace the foreign policy of non-alignment. China on her own part, tried to establish an influential relationship with the non-aligned movement. To an extent, it was through this platform that majority of African States engaged China in international issues (Oseghale & Bartholomew, 2009, 119).

In spite the above challenges that have arisen in Sino-African relations, it is noteworthy that this relationship has been characterised by five key issues. Initially, there was a gradual increase in the several countries in Africa that established diplomatic relations. The number of foreign posts China had created in Africa rose from 13 to 30 between 1967 and 1974. (Van de Looy, 2006, 3). China replaced Taiwan as a permanent member of the UN Security Council in 1971. Several African countries, whose political ties with China had gotten stronger over time, approved of this. The Tanzania-Zambia railway became the largest assistance project in Africa in the 1970s, beginning China's commitment to carrying out major projects all over the region. States that showed devotion received access to federal facilities such as arenas, industries, roads, medical teams, and student exchange programmes. (Snow, 1988). In addition, China provided ongoing backing to nationalist movements advocating for self-determination and the cessation of imperialistic practises. The military extended support to Africa on multiple occasions, recognising the necessity for African nationalist movements to

extricate themselves from the dominant Western powers. The Peking Review of January 26, 1973, sanctioned the use of armed resistance as a means of eliminating colonialism, apartheid, and racial discrimination in Southern Africa and Guinea, asserting that it was the only viable option. China emphasised the presence of a dichotomy between global superpowers and their comparatively weaker counterparts, advocating for the latter's alignment and assistance in their sustenance (Van de Looy, 2006, 5).

It is important to remember that China's relationship with African states was influenced by geopolitics, national interests, and socialist solidarity ideology and rhetoric. (Shinn, 2008). The pragmatic approach of Maoist China in its African relations is exemplified by its reconciliation with the anti-communist Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, presently known as the Congo Democratic Republic (DR), and its concurrent endorsement of Robert Mugabe's insurgency in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. The competition between China and the USSR, which existed within the communist bloc, was manifested through their efforts to gain influence in Africa, both against each other and against the capitalist West. During the late 1970s, the Somalia-Ethiopian Ogaden war saw Beijing and Moscow backing opposing factions. Beijing offered the Somalis restricted diplomatic and military aid. The relationship between Beijing and South Africa was influenced by Sino-Soviet tensions, leading to a shift in Beijing's support from the African National Congress (ANC) to the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) due to the ANC's proximity to Moscow. (Thrall, 2015, 27).

Even though Beijing's involvement in African politics and support of sub-state liberation movements is less than that of the US and the USSR, it shows how limited its supposedly non-political attitude towards Africa is. These actions go against how the People's Republic of China currently interprets the Five Principles, which place a lot of weight on the principle of not getting involved in the internal affairs of other countries. At the beginning of the 20th century, the level of political activity between China and Africa was much higher than the level of economic activity. In 1950, the amount of trade between China and Africa was only \$12 million a year, but by 1960, it had grown to \$100 million. China has extended aid to African development by dispatching engineers and labourers to aid in the construction of the Tanzania-Zambia railway. Additionally, China has been sending medical professionals to African nations since the early 1960s. (Thrall, 2015, 28).

The economic interests of China have taken precedence over its previous ideological and political interests in driving its behaviour in Africa, following the repercussions of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. The rise of China's economic influence is evidenced by a series of economic and political developments spanning the last thirty years. These include China's transition to an oil-importing nation in 1993, the restructuring of aid, trade, and investment to Africa by the Chinese Community Party in the mid-1990s, China's accession to the World Trade Organisation in 2001, and a significant increase in economic relations over the past decade. In comparison to its previous behaviour, the present involvement of China with African nations is devoid of ideology. The Chinese government readily interacts with regimes of various types, including democratic, authoritarian, and theocratic. The Sino-African engagement, as stated in China's White Papers of 2006, 2010,



and 2013, is based on the principle of pursuing mutual benefits while avoiding political factors. Beijing has consistently cited the Five Principles as the fundamental basis for its diplomatic ties with Africa. (Thrall, 2015, 29).

### **The Benefits and Challenges of China's Growing Interest in Africa**

China's growth has been steady for over 30 years, and it has gone from being an economically underdeveloped area to having the third largest industry on earth. In terms of size, reach, and complexity, the Chinese economy has grown a lot in the past 35 years. Over the course of thirty years subsequent to Deng Xiaoping's initiation of economic liberalisation in China during the late 1970s, the nation has undergone a transformation from a Third World country to a highly esteemed global economic powerhouse, boasting substantial foreign reserves. The Chinese economy has exhibited an average yearly growth rate of 9.6 percent, surpassing the global average annual economic growth rate of 3.3 percent. Moreover, China has augmented the global labour supply by over 100 million workers, thereby doubling it, owing to its population of more than 1.3 billion. China has emerged as a significant participant in the worldwide political economy. (Taman, 2009, 154)

From 1980 to 2003, China's trade relationships grew very quickly, which showed how the country's economy changed and grew. China's share of global exports and imports went from 1.2% to 2.5% and 4.2%, respectively, between 1980 and 2002. Between 1993 and 2002, there was a significant increase in the annual rate of goods exports, which reached 17.3 percent. Similarly, her export value of \$366 billion ranked as the fourth largest in the world, following the export values of the United States, Germany, and Japan. By May 2003, her imports amounted to \$323 billion, ranking her sixth in terms of size. (Emordi & Oaki, 2009, 74).

China's relationships with the rest of the world have changed a lot because of its growing economy. China's foreign policy has changed from being selfish and focused on itself to being more practical, focused on the rest of the world, and open to new ideas. This is so that China can keep up its impressive economic and industrial growth. The growing presence of China in Africa can be attributed to the notable evolution of its economic and foreign policy in the last quarter century. The nature and extent of China's shift are still being discussed among Chinese observers; however, there is a general consensus that China has been pursuing a more assertive position within the global framework. Beijing has significantly broadened and strengthened its bilateral diplomatic ties globally, while also becoming a member of regional institutions that address both security and economic matters. Furthermore, China has increased its participation in multilateral organisations. China's diplomatic policy is widely regarded as more vivacious, creative, adaptable, and confident than in previous decades. (Tull, 2006, 460).

China's policy towards Africa is executed at a heightened level and is characterised by greater intricacy, multifacetedness, and ambition. Consequently, it involves more significant risks. This is the context in which the policy is implemented. The summit held in Beijing in November 2006 between China and Africa's leadership was marked by a profuse exchange of sentiments. China's increasing economic involvement is linked to strategic objectives that are

notably focused on obtaining access to limited, high-value mineral resources, particularly energy resources, as well as strategic markets and investment opportunities. In terms of diplomacy, Beijing has exhibited a renewed resolve to finalise the elimination of bilateral relations between Taiwan and a decreasing number of African capitals. Additionally, Beijing aims to leverage its increasing presence in Africa to strengthen global alliances and assert its purported leadership of the developing world. Beijing has assumed a more proactive stance in the realm of security. The number of soldiers and police personnel contributed by China to United Nations peacekeeping operations, with a focus on the African region, has experienced a ten-fold increase since the year 2001. As of May 2007, China had contributed more than 1,800 troops, military observers, and civilian police to the ongoing United Nations peacekeeping missions. Approximately 75% of Chinese peacekeeping troops provided assistance to United Nations operations on the African continent. (preliminarily Liberia, Sudan, and Congo DR.) (Gill, Huang, & Morrison, 2007:6)

Even though China's relationship with Africa has many different parts, smart analysts of Sino-African relations can see that China has moved away from its Maoist approach of ideological unity and cooperation with Africa and instead adopted a forceful strategy of economic encroachment on the African continent. (Orngu, 2009, 101). Several analysts argue that China's recent expansion into Africa is akin to the multi-layered incursions of Western colonialism, positioning Beijing as a significant global economic power within the framework of the international capitalist system.

According to Orange (2009, 101-102) it was as a result of the above that Hu Jintao of China graciously declared 2006 as the year of Africa; to concretize this declaration Hu Jintao decided to embark on a 12-day visit to eight African nations in early 2007. In November 2006, about 50 African heads of state met in Beijing for an important summit, which was hosted by the city; and in that summit, China signed bilateral trade treaty with Africa to the tune of \$50 billion (Orngu, 2009, 102). In the same vein, as reported by British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) (Cited in Orngu, 2009:102), China wrote off at least US \$1 billion worth of Africa's debt. Again, World Bank record show that the Chinese Import-Export Bank gave out loan valued at least nearly US \$13 billion in infrastructure projects in Africa alone. This culminated in the decision of the African Development Bank (ADB) to hold its Annual Summit in Shanghai in 2007.

Available statistics also show that Chinese investment in Africa has more than doubled since the turn of this century. As per the report by Xinhua News Agency (as cited in Orngu, 2009), the aggregate trade volume between China and Africa in 1999 amounted to \$6.5 billion. The Sino-African trade volume had reached \$39.7 billion by 2005 and surged to \$55 billion in 2006, positioning China as one of the top three trading partners of Africa in the present day.

The principal impetus for China's vast influence in Africa is its own interests. China's economic objectives, which view Africa as a profitable area for investment and a possible market for its manufactured goods, are what drive the changing patterns of Sino-African ties. Chinese makers are conscious that there is a larger market for their goods in Africa, where the

customer market is more varied and the economy is still developing in contrast to Western established countries. Likewise, China and its venture capitalist operating in Africa perceive the continent as a region abundant in natural resources, specifically crude oil, that can be utilised for economic gain. Hence, it is not unexpected that China exerts significant control over Sudan's energy industry through a \$10 billion investment. China has reportedly made a significant investment of more than \$2 billion towards the development of infrastructure in Angola, which has resulted in the implicit acquisition of Angola's oil resources. (Orngu, 2009, 103). According to reports, significant financial resources were allocated by Chinese investors and state agencies towards infrastructure development in Kenya, including road construction, as well as the establishment of a hydroelectric dam in Ghana and a mobile phone network in Ethiopia, during the period spanning from 2000 to 2005. China has established a Mandarin-language newspaper in Nigeria, known as the West African United Business Daily, which boasts a readership of approximately 50,000 individuals. This community is potentially larger than that of the British during the height of British colonialism in Nigeria. (Orngu, 2009, 104).

Furthermore, several “strategic bilateral partnership” agreements have been concluded between China and Africa countries. For example, in South Africa, China reached an agreement on clothing and textiles and signed a pact of peaceful nuclear cooperation. In Angola, China extended a \$2 billion credit to the country to support the reconstruction of its war battered economy. She has also subsequently extended her investment into other sectors such as fisheries and construction in Angola. In Ghana, China is committed to funding development projects, while in Egypt, trade agreements on oil and natural gas were signed between the two countries (Tame, 2009, 158).

To further cement Sino-African relations, the third China-Africa summit of 4-5 November 2006 which took place in China, was attended by 40 African heads of state, more than 2,500 politicians and hundreds of African business men. The significance of the conference was multifaceted, encompassing both political and economic dimensions. Specifically, it constituted a substantial portion of the United Nations' voting power, a considerable share of global natural resources, and, in conjunction with the host country, approximately one-third of the world's population. (Ayuba, 2009, 135). The summit has endorsed a triennial action plan aimed at establishing a novel form of strategic partnership. During the summit, China made a commitment to increase its aid to Africa twofold by the year 2009. Additionally, a China-Africa Development Fund worth \$5 billion was established to incentivize Chinese companies to invest \$3 billion in concessional loans and \$2 billion in concessional buyer's credit for African nations. China has pledged to forgive all outstanding debts resulting from interest-free government loans that were due by the end of 2005 for 31 African countries that maintain diplomatic relations with China. This debt relief is estimated to total approximately \$1.4 billion. The Sino-African trade conference resulted in China expanding its market to include exports from African states. This was achieved by increasing the number of products receiving free tariff treatment from 190 to 440. China has committed to providing training for 15,000 African professionals, increasing the number of Chinese government scholarships awarded to Africans, and dispatching 100 senior agricultural experts. China provided support

to the African Union (AU) through the construction of a new convention centre located at the AU's headquarters in Addis Ababa. (Tamen, 2009, 159, Emeje, 2006).

It is interesting to note that Nigeria has the most economic agreements with China than any other country in Africa, with a total of seven agreements. These agreements cover a wide range of projects, such as the purchase of a controlling stake in Nigeria's Kaduna refinery and a \$2 billion deal in which China's offshore oil field company (CNOOC) will buy a 45% stake in the Akpo oil field. When it starts up, Akpo's oil field is expected to make 225,000 barrels of oil per day. The Chinese government also proposed to invest about US \$4 Billion in the development of Nigeria's oil infrastructure after securing four oil drilling licenses. Other Chinese investments in Nigeria are in the telecommunication industry, agriculture and mineral resources (Tamen, 200, :160; Abbah, 2006:55). China has ventured into the areas of rice and cassava plantation, agro research and aquaculture activities. In the health sector, China is interested in setting up malaria medicine factory and plantation garden, AIDS medicine research facility and emergency medical equipment factory (Emeje, 2006, 33).

The pertinent question is why the dramatic change in China's attitude towards Africa, which despite a history of long contact, remained worlds apart until the 1990s? China's recent emphasis on Africa can be attributed to a straightforward rationale. In order to maintain its economic growth, Beijing must seek out additional sources of raw materials, particularly mineral and energy resources, as well as explore new markets for its manufactured products. The heightened demand for oil and other primary commodities in China has prompted a shift in China's African policy and a revitalization of diplomatic efforts on the continent. This is a widely acknowledged phenomenon. Within a span of approximately ten years, China transitioned from being the primary oil exporter in Asia to becoming the second largest consumer of oil worldwide in 2003 and, subsequently, the third largest importer of oil on a global scale (2004). Beijing's decision to put energy security at the forefront of its foreign policy formation is justified by the fact that China's economic growth, social stability, and the survival of the CPP are all dependent on securing resource supplies. This assertion is supported by Zweigh and Jiawai, as cited in Alden and Alves (2009,4).

Even though China produces 4.8% of the world's oil and has the second-highest capacity and output of refineries (8.5% and 8.7%, respectively), it has trouble meeting less than half of its own oil needs, (Alden & Alves, 2009; 4). Over the course of the past ten years, there has been a twofold increase in China's utilisation of petroleum. Similar to the United States, China is exploring alternative nations and suppliers to meet its oil demands, with the aim of broadening its sources and attaining energy stability. China has a viable opportunity to exploit newly discovered reservoirs in Africa. Over the years, China has allocated significant military, politico-diplomatic, and economic resources to acquire and maintain control over these sources.

China has significantly penetrated the extractive industry sector in Africa. In recent years, China has emerged as the foremost global consumer of a majority of base metals, surpassing the United States in this regard. The presence of non-fuel minerals in Africa enhances its

appeal to Chinese investors, with South Africa being particularly noteworthy due to its location atop one of the world's most abundant mineral deposits. The presence of non-fuel minerals in Africa enhances its appeal to Chinese investors, with South Africa being particularly noteworthy due to its location atop one of the world's most abundant mineral deposits. South Africa is a prominent global producer of platinum, accounting for 80% of the total production and possessing 90% of the world's reserves. Additionally, it is a major producer of manganese, holding 75% of the world's reserves. Furthermore, South Africa is ranked as the second-largest producer of gold worldwide. (overtaken by Australia in 2007). The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) holds the position of being the foremost producer of cobalt, accounting for 36% of the global production, and is home to approximately 50% of the world's identified cobalt reserves. Additionally, the DRC is a notable producer of diamonds. The Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, and Botswana collectively contribute more than 50% of the worldwide production of diamonds and possess 60% of the recognised reserves. Several African nations have garnered Chinese attention due to their substantial mineral reserves. These countries include Gabon, which possesses manganese; Zambia, which has copper and iron ore; Zimbabwe, which boasts platinum; and Angola, which holds diamonds, copper, and iron ore. (cited in Aden & Alves, 2009, 17).

China's increasing interests and influence in Africa has become a subject of much speculation and controversies especially with regard to the impact of such relationship on governance, socio-economic development, democracy, human rights and security in the continent. Several analysts and scholars sometimes hold diametrically opposite views on the implications of the new Chinese found 'love' for the continent on African development prospects. The debate is between those who see the upsurge in Sino-African relations as an opportunity and beneficial relations and those who conceive it as an imperialistic relationship; that is a threat and major challenge to Africa's development aspirations and prospects.

### **The Optimists Perspective to the Sino-African Relations**

Advocates of Sino-African relations are quick to support increased Chinese involvement in Africa and express a positive outlook on its progress. Academics belonging to this particular ideological framework not only endorsed the existing Sino-African relations but also argued that such relations would significantly benefit the continent and its inhabitants. Given the unbridled neoliberalism under the guise of globalisation, the African nations require conscientious and adaptable trading associates to invigorate their economies and strengthen their position on the continent. The thesis posits that enhancing the relationship between China and Africa would yield substantial economic benefits for the latter and augment its negotiating leverage in the contemporary globalised context. This is premised on the shared historical experience of both regions as victims of European imperialism. (Okpeh, 2009, 30).

The present discourse is grounded on several prospects and benefits that African nations are poised to gain consequent to the burgeoning sway and concern of China in the region. China has significantly aided in the creation of difficult infrastructure such as highways, railroads,

and hydroelectric projects. As per a recent study conducted by the World Bank, the investment made by China, which reached its highest point in 2006 with a value of \$7 billion, is playing a significant role in fulfilling the aforementioned requirement. Annually, the estimated amount of the investment backlog in infrastructure is \$22 billion. (cited in Alden & Alves, 2009, 14; World Bank, 2008, 29). China's financing of ten major hydropower initiatives is expected to increase Sub-Saharan Africa's overall hydropower production capacity by 30%. These projects will collectively generate 6,000 megawatts of power. Africa's railway network is undergoing a substantial expansion, with businesses undertaking the repair of 1,350 kilometres of existing railway and the construction of 1,600 kilometres of new railway. This development represents a noteworthy addition to the existing 50,000 kilometres of railways on the continent. (Foster, 2008, 47). The intensification of China's involvement with Africa has seemingly led to a rise in Chinese investments, developmental assistance, and the promotion of economic agency on the continent.

The growth of Sino-African trade relations has led to a substantial increase in China's investment in Africa. An enumeration of such endeavours would reveal a substantial quantity of undertakings related to construction, transportation, telecommunications, water preservation, hydroelectric power generation, petroleum exploration and extraction, industrial facilities, and other development initiatives. The efficacy of this point could be further elucidated through the provision of illustrative instances. Chinese contractors are currently involved in various construction projects across Africa, including the development of a port in Gabon, a football stadium, office buildings, and an industrial complex in Sierra Leone, the Heglig pipeline and a dam in Sudan, as well as road construction in Rwanda and other general infrastructure projects in Botswana. Moreover, the Chinese have made noteworthy investments in the telecommunications sector in Kenya and Ethiopia, the oil industry in Sudan, the coal and gold sectors in South Africa, the copper mining industry in Zambia, the nickel industry in Burundi, and the cobalt and copper industries in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Additionally, they have established extensive coffee, vegetable, and fishing operations in Uganda and Zambia. This statement pertains to supplementary commercial arrangements in the Nigerian oil and gas, textile, railroad, and aero-technology domains, along with educational, vocational, and tourism-related expansions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. (Okpeh, 2009, 33). According to these optimistic views, China is contributing to the establishment of the foundation for Africa's economic growth by addressing the continent's inadequacies in terms of infrastructure.

The economic growth of Africa is significantly impacted by the trade and investment relations between China and the continent. The African continent experienced a rise in its gross domestic product (GDP) from an average of 3.3% during the period of 1997–2001 to 4.2% between 2001–2004. Subsequently, in 2005, the GDP increased to 5.4% due to a surge in the prices of its exports. This increase in export prices was attributed to the heightened demand and investment from Asia, with China being a significant contributor. (Ayuba, 2009, 138). As China progresses in its industrialization efforts, it will inevitably generate a demand for raw materials from Africa, leading to a transformation in the agricultural and mineral sectors of the continent. Presently, China serves as the principal importer of African cotton and various

other agricultural commodities. This serves as a driving force for African nations to fortify their vulnerable agrarian industries. As per the analysis of US experts, China is expected to consume approximately 12 million pounds of cotton by the year 2010, which accounts for nearly 50% of the worldwide production. (cited in Okpoh, 2009:30). The impact on the agricultural sector is self-evident. It is plausible to assert that Africa is poised for revitalization following the historical subjugation by Western European powers, as China's economic relations with the continent continue to expand and strengthen.

Likewise, the continent of Africa has experienced advantageous outcomes as a result of China's unquenchable thirst for natural resources. China's demand for raw materials is a significant contributor to Africa's export industry. Between 1996 and 2006, there was a significant increase of 99.7% in the exports of the region, which rose from US\$76.3 billion to US\$172.4 billion. Out of the total export value mentioned earlier, raw materials exported to China constituted 21.2%, equivalent to US\$18.2 billion. From 1995 to 2005, China reportedly expended approximately \$40 billion on the acquisition of raw materials from the African continent. (cited in AFRODAD, 2007, 35). The aforementioned factors have notably augmented the public revenues and foreign exchange earnings of African countries. As per the observations made by experts, China has infringed upon the conventional domain of influence and authority that the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) wield over the economies of Africa by employing lending conditions that are comparatively less stringent. One of the primary goals of Chinese debt relief initiatives is to enhance Africa's creditworthiness, thereby stimulating fresh investments and augmenting its economic potential. The adaptable lending conditions offered by China pose a challenge to the traditional influence of Western nations on the internal policies and affairs of nations that are indebted. (AFRODAD, 2007,36).

Presently, the Chinese are making substantial and rapid investments in African infrastructure, a phenomenon that has been rare in the past. China prioritised investments in the areas of telecommunications, transportation, and infrastructure, with a focus on resource extraction. The Angola Model is a framework wherein Chinese construction firms, who typically obtain credit facilities from China Exim Bank, undertake construction projects only after obtaining consent from the host nation. In this particular model, the disbursement of funds to the recipient nation does not occur through direct lending. Subsequent to the borrowing country's agreement, the Chinese enterprise specialising in the extraction of natural resources, specifically oil or minerals, will be bestowed with the privilege to excavate said resources. This will be achieved either through the procurement of equity shares in the national oil corporation or by acquiring production licences from the host nation in return for the provision of infrastructure. In Gabon, Sinopec, a Chinese enterprise, revitalised a pair of desiccated petroleum wells that had been abandoned by Total and Agip. Similarly, Minmetals opted to commence the extraction of iron ore in the secluded Belinga area of Gabon following several fruitless endeavours by the indigenous administration to attract supplementary stakeholders.

China has become the biggest creditor among the "new" donors working in Africa. It is bigger than the others, especially when it comes to "debt sustainability." China is being accused by donors from the industrialised west of engaging in "free-riding" on international development initiatives and impeding the capacity of low-income nations to manage their debt. This is particularly true for older donors. (Notwithstanding the fact that China has also granted debt relief.) China's financing practises have been criticised by its Western rivals for allegedly promoting corruption, eroding democratic values, and fostering a low tolerance for debt. Empirical research has demonstrated that China has enhanced its capacity to tolerate debt by augmenting its exports, infrastructure, investments, and gross national product. (AFRODAD, 2006, 36). Emeje (2006) and Tamen (2009, 62) assert that the advancement of Sino-African relations is beneficial to African countries due to China's provision of loans without the constraints imposed by Western establishments such as the World Bank and the IMF. Chinese intervention efforts in Africa seem to be less constrained by bureaucratic red tape and restrictive conditions compared to similar efforts from the West and international financial institutions.

Proponents of Sino-African relations say that the above benefits and prospects of increased Chinese investments, development aid, technological expertise, and trade in goods and services will give African economies the push they need to get started in the increasingly competitive global economy of today. People who believe this say that Africa can improve its relationship with China by putting together a group of motivated, nationalistic, and active leaders. They argue that this is the sole prerequisite for maximising the benefits of the current relationship.

### **The Sceptics Viewpoint- The Challenges and Dangers of China's Influence in Africa**

Scholars have come up with a number of possible risks and problems that could arise in the growing Sino-African partnership because China is so involved in Africa. The sceptics argue that the financial assessments for substantial investments in business are ambiguous and that a considerable number of them are likely to yield unfavourable outcomes. The efficacy of China's capacity to transform Africa's infrastructure, where other actors have faced challenges, remains to be demonstrated. Beijing is currently encountering obstacles in achieving its vision of establishing a strategic partnership with Africa. (Gill, Ifuang & Morrison, 2007, 9).

Because Africa is more sensitive to the effects of neo-colonialism and because the global energy markets are becoming more competitive, "Petro powers" are seen as being uncaring in Africa. Because of this, it is important to think about the possibility that China could have a lot of political power and replace the power of other actors. China has chosen Angola and Nigeria, two countries in Africa that are both rich in energy resources, as its preferred partners. Zimbabwe has also gotten a lot of help from China, even though the country's political and economic situation is hard. China has chosen to build relationships with these three countries, even though they are all hard to do business in. The recent rise in kidnappings in Ethiopia, Niger, and Nigeria shows how vulnerable Chinese assets are to instability and uncertainty in the region. Beijing has learned that its political ally, the country of Sudan, is in the middle of major political and moral conflicts that were caused by Sudan's own actions. The area in



question is now in a part of South Africa where a breach of sovereignty is especially dangerous. (Gill, Huang, & Morrison, 2007, 9).

Despite the fact that numerous African elites and intellectuals perceive China as a favourable economic paradigm that should be emulated and a possible driver of socioeconomic progress, sceptics of Sino-African relations argue that there is no essential differentiation between Chinese-African trade relations and those with Western African trading partners. The assertion is made that the extent to which China's participation will tangibly enhance Africa's prospects for advancement remains ambiguous. (Goldstein et al. 2006). The commercial objectives of Beijing in Africa bear some resemblance to those of Western nations, as they are predicated on its primary trade partners. The statement suggests that the swift growth of economic relations between China and Africa will not significantly modify Africa's uneven integration into the global market or diminish Africa's dependence on a limited range of primary commodities that are susceptible to price volatility, accounting for 73% of the continent's overall export revenue. There exist certain reasons to doubt whether China's economic engagement will facilitate sustainable economic progress in Africa beyond the scope of the mining sector. An analysis of the textile industry in Africa, which is considered one of the few recent economic success stories, presents a complex outcome. (Tull, 2006, 471). In the year 2000, subsequent to the implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), sponsored by the United States, a considerable number of Chinese textile companies opted to transfer their manufacturing operations to Africa. Initially, the objective was to capitalise on the advantageous access to the United States market that the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) had conferred upon specific African products, such as textiles and clothing. This action was undertaken with a secondary objective that was closely interrelated. Chinese companies have relocated their factories to Africa as a means of circumventing the trade restrictions imposed on them by the Uruguay Round's agreement on textiles and clothing. These restrictions were implemented to protect markets in Europe and the US from the influx of low-cost Asian imports. The AGOA agreement, in conjunction with the flexible business models of Chinese firms, has contributed to the expansion of the textile industry, particularly in Southern and Eastern Africa. (Tull, 2006, 471). The textile industry in Africa experienced a decline subsequent to the termination of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing on January 1, 2005, which resulted in the removal of entry barriers for Asian textiles into Western markets. The decline in American demand for African fabrics is attributed to the preference for more affordable clothing produced in China. Consequently, Chinese enterprises with manufacturing facilities in Africa are reportedly repatriating to China in significant numbers. (IMF, 2005:15–20). The loss of employment affected a significant number of workers in various African countries, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Nigeria, and Kenya.

Besides, Chinese investment and trade with Africa have also adversely affected local industries, resulting in job losses. It was estimated that an upward of 300 firms folded up with 60,000 job losses in South Africa while 80 percent of textile factories were closed in Nigeria with over 250,000 rendered jobless. In both countries, business and trade unions have also put pressure on their respective governments to take decisive measures to check the influx of

Chinese textile and clothing into their domestic economies (Ayuba, 2006, 49). Thus, critics of China's presence in Africa have continued to express fears concerning the growing influence and domination of the country over the continent's economy. They argue that the resultant effects of the uncontrolled flooding of African market by cheap Chinese goods especially textiles have continued to manifest in the stifling of markets that Africans are trying to develop, thereby increasing unemployment and the rampant closure of factories across the continent to the ultimate economic advantage of Chinese businesses. Perhaps worried by this appalling development, critics of this new trend in Sino-African relations, like Thabo Mbeki, then president of South Africa, cautioned that China has the tendency for replicating in Africa the kind of colonial relationship experienced in Africa under Western colonialism (Orngu, 2009:106).

African nations' endeavours to expand their economies and commodities have persistently encountered significant hindrances, partly attributable to the dominance of Chinese commercial concerns vis-à-vis African economies. Despite being the most developed economy on the African continent, South Africa is experiencing adverse impacts. Initially, the proportion of manufactured goods included in consignments dispatched to China experienced a decline from 50% in 1993 to 8% in 2003. The trade relationship between South Africa and China is characterised by a preponderance of basic resource exports, which comprise 90% of the former's shipments to the latter. This pattern reflects the broader challenge of trade imbalances in Africa. (for example, ore, platinum, and diamonds). In 2004, there was a trade imbalance of \$1.9 billion between South Africa and China. Without Beijing's importation of fundamental resources such as energy, the trade relationship between Africa and China would have exhibited a significantly greater imbalance. (Taylor, 2004, 98).

African manufacturers can't compete with Chinese firms in their home markets because Chinese firms' production costs and rates are subsidised by the government. Chinese merchants who do business overseas create a lot of competition, which has made local people feel more and more angry at them, especially because of how they affect local businesses. (Tull, 2006, 472).

While it is commendable that there has been an increase in the variety of trading partners, it is imperative for African nations to acknowledge that China's involvement in the global economy may not necessarily yield favourable outcomes for their respective industries. According to Tull (2006; 472), Mbeki asserted in 2004 that the economic policies of China were not driven by humanitarian considerations. The primary contenders in the realm of investments and marketplaces with respect to labour-intensive and export-oriented production of textiles and apparel are Chinese and African companies. (Jenkins & Edwards, 2004). Currently, there is no indication that Africa will be capable of effectively competing with China, given the favourable support that Chinese enterprises receive domestically. Tull (2006, 472) asserts that the aforementioned discrepancy has the effect of weakening labour markets in Africa while concurrently creating prospects in China. The economic strategy of China, which aims to benefit both parties involved and places importance on the relationship between China and Africa, is challenged by this situation, despite it being a result of lawful

market competition. It can be asserted that the discourse emanating from Beijing often falls short of aligning with the stark realities. Despite the image projected by Beijing, there exist a limited number of enduring Chinese investments in Africa beyond the mining sector. The individuals who are sceptical of the relationship between China and Africa argue that it would be unwise for African nations to unquestioningly accept Beijing's rhetoric regarding solidarity between developing nations. The stark reality is that China exhibits a level of self-centeredness that is comparable to that of any other sovereign nation. (Tull, 2006, 472).

A different dark side of China's commercial dealings with Africa is that most of her infrastructural and development assistance are seen by curious observers as more Greek gifts. For instance, there is an argument that China has been issuing grants-in-aid to Nigerian government in the area of rails, roads and other infrastructures, realizing that in most instances it is the Chinese companies that stand to benefit from such construction contracts. In fact, many analysts contend that China's goodwill to Nigeria like other African countries is deliberately calculated at capturing, dominating and controlling the Nigerian economy for the over-riding interest of the expanding Chinese economic empire. This explains why every goods market in Nigeria today is heavily stocked with Chinese products. Most of these products, which are sub-standard, range from very simple toys to complex mobile phones, agricultural implements, drugs, electronics as well as textile, clothing and shoes. Most of the Chinese products in Nigerian markets like elsewhere in Africa, especially drugs and electronics, are believed to be cloned and branded to service specific market needs in the interest of Chinese entrepreneurs to the detriment of the Nigerian consumers (Orngu, 2009, 110).

Other concerns expressed by the sceptics of the Sino-African economic relations revolve around the following: The Chinese business model does little to develop capacity in Africa in terms of skills and technological transfer; it also promotes the casualization of labour and poor labour practices. There are also other impacts that are detrimental to the welfare of their host countries. These complaints range from insincerity in the accounting procedure in order to evade taxes and draining of the host economy especially in the oil sector. China is also accused of not being conscious of environmental issues. Chinese aid and loans also have imbedded in them, stringent conditionality and strings that requires that Chinese enterprises and contractors are used in addition to sourcing over 50 per cent of the equipment, materials and technology and services from China (Wuam, 2009, 193-194).

The demand for increased transparency in the business practises of Chinese multinational corporations (MNCs) is intensifying in certain regions where they operate, as various organisations concerned with domestic labour, local industry, environmental issues, and human rights are spearheading this movement. Chinese are notorious for paying low wages and have poor record of health, safety standards and utter disrespect for labour rights at work. Ayuba (2009: 150) reported that low wages paid to African staff in a mine in Ndola managed by a Chinese firm has produced numerous complaints amongst Zambians. In another incidence, six workers were shot dead at a Chinese managed mine in early 2006 after they demanded an improvement in working conditions. In March 2008, the BCC reported that

some 500 Zambians miners were sacked after protesting against low wages, health and safety and poor working conditions. This terrible industrial relations reputation of Chinese businesses operating in Africa is aptly captured by Andrew Giltholm, China analyst at Control Risk:

*People have said that China's mining industry has some of the worst health and safety records in the world. Also, it has been seen that when Chinese companies work in other countries, they don't follow Western standards of corporate governance and responsibility. State-owned enterprises are not subject to the same regulatory and reputational constraints as Western companies and are not accountable to shareholders (cited in Ayuba, 2009, 151).*

Another critical dark side of Sino-African relations is that China ignores human right issues in most of the states it does business with on the continent. China's policy of disregarding other nations' human rights records while securing raw materials and addressing its high demand for oil has proven to be advantageous. The term "enterprise" refers to a business or organisation engaged in commercial or industrial activities. China's lenient approach has enabled it to establish close relationships with several authoritarian regimes worldwide, such as Sudan, Zimbabwe, North Korea, and Myanmar. China provides political support to its allies and enables authoritarian leaders to implement oppressive measures, despite attempts by the United States and Europe to impose sanctions, censure, and alter the behaviour of these dictators. (Kamp, 2007, 44).

The Sino-African relationship poses a potential threat to the sustainability of democracy and openness, as China does not impose political limitations on its economic partnerships with African nations, unlike Western countries. The autocratic regimes in Sudan and Zimbabwe were previously subjected to isolation by the international community; however, this measure has inadvertently provided them with a means of survival. China has impeded the United Nations Security Council's ability to implement impactful sanctions or other preventative actions in response to alleged human rights violations and crimes against humanity in the Sudanese conflict, serving as a concrete illustration. In a comparable vein, the Chinese government provided backing to the Mugabe administration in Zimbabwe, despite its widely condemned human rights record on the global stage. (Okpeh, 2009, 3). China has persisted in supporting authoritarian regimes, even in the face of their poor human rights records, as a means of advancing its economic objectives.

The trade of Chinese weapons has made a big difference in Africa's security and has become a point of contention between China and African countries. China's share of the global weapons market is still small, but between 2006 and 2009, more than 98% of its exports went to countries with less developed economies. (Alden, 2011, IV). Based on available data, China currently ranks as the fifth largest manufacturer of weapons globally. The Chinese government aims to establish its military industrial complex as a significant global participant by the year 2020. (Okpeh, 2009, 27). The Beijing authorities have identified Africa as a crucial focus for a substantial segment of their military industrial complex, as part of an ambitious and patriotic

strategy. Hence, it is not surprising that China, as per certain evaluations, was the exclusive purveyor of weaponry to sub-Saharan Africa within the aforementioned period (2006–2009), providing a diverse array of traditional armaments to numerous nations. The military sector in China, which is state-owned but has an economic focus, perceives Africa as an emerging market. China is perceived by certain individuals as a viable alternative to Western nations that refrain from supplying weaponry to African military forces. (Alden, 2011, iv). China provides cost-effective armaments to military forces in Africa. Because of the types of weapons involved, the Chinese arms shipments have made war and instability in Africa worse. This statement is true because Chinese light and heavy weapons are used all over the world, especially in places where people are fighting with each other. The fact that so many countries, from Angola to Guinea, Sudan to Somalia, Rwanda to Burundi, Ethiopia to Eritrea, Liberia to Sierra Leone, and Sudan to Sudan, are involved in armed conflicts shows that China has had a big impact on how these countries have changed. Chinese weaponry has been used by government troops, rebels, and insurgent groups in Sudan to contravene international humanitarian law and infringe upon human rights. In addition, despite the Sudanese government's recurrent violations of the United Nations' arms embargo in Darfur, China persisted in supplying arms to Khartoum. (Alden, 2011: IV). An in-depth analysis of the political economy of China's arms trade with multiple African nations would provide insight into China's strategically constrained economic motives, which have minimal impact on the welfare of the predominantly impoverished population of the continent.

From what has been said, it is clear that the Afrocentricists have a good reason for saying that some of China's actions on the African continent are similar to how the Europeans used to rule there. People who believe in the "Second Imperialism" theory say that China's presence in Africa is not primarily meant to help the continent develop, but rather to take advantage of the opportunities it offers. (ala Okpeh, 2009, 25). Okpeh and other Afrocentricists express apprehension regarding the potential for contemporary African economies to function as safety valves for China's capitalist economic transition, which they perceive as a recurrence of the continent's experiences during the colonial era of the 19th and 20th centuries.

### **Conclusion**

The preceding analysis suggests that contemporary Chinese engagement and initiatives in Africa present authentic opportunities, complexities, and risks for African nations. Also, it's clear that China, like the colonial West, has no plans to help Africa develop through its presence in the area. The main reason the Chinese are in Africa is for economic reasons. The area has many benefits that are important to China's long-term process of growth and development. The existing state of affairs suggests that economic ties between China and Africa are characterised by significant imbalances, often mirroring the asymmetrical relationships that Africa has historically had with Western nations—a phenomenon that Beijing has consistently sought to distinguish itself from. Despite the notable surge in Chinese interest in Africa, the continent's external economic relations have become more diversified. Hence, it can be argued that China's economic pursuits in Africa bear resemblance to those of Western nations, thereby exacerbating Africa's marginalisation in the global political economy. This marginalisation is marked by Africa's restricted value as a natural resource

provider. China's aid has not yielded the expected outcomes in the realm of development due to the unfavourable conditions associated with these development assistance programmes and their focus on the elite. The expanding presence of China in Africa typically yields economic benefits for state leaders, which in turn can have political implications.

In summary, it can be inferred that China's significant and unregulated re-engagement with Africa may have unfavourable political implications, which could potentially undermine endeavours aimed at promoting peace, prosperity, and democratic governance across the continent. It is imperative for Africa to respond appropriately to China's evolving interests and actions in the region, while simultaneously mitigating any adverse consequences.

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