

Chinese Politico-Economic Engagement in Africa: Strategy of Economic Diplomacy and Beyond

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Abstract

Since the late 1990s, while China's official announcement of its 'going out strategy' and soon after, during early 2000s collaborations with World Trade Organization (WTO) to persuade economic engagements beyond Chinese geographical boundaries, expansion of its Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) vis-à-vis trade exploration with both African continents has increased proportionally. Particularly, China's current rigorous economic forecasting with plummeting stock markets, an overall rise in its overseas trade and industry engagements in African continent merits an assessment of the 'China's Model' of economic exploration within ever-increasing international political economy and also entails that China's economic engagement possibly be more reliant on relations with such regions than discussed earliest. Moreover, differentiating the politico-economic engagements in play within Africa, China's going out strategy can be more precisely comprehended as kind of reliant and mutual cooperation approaches as region specific.

Key Words:

Africa, China, Political Economy, Foreign Direct Investment, Non-Interference

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Introduction

Since the Late 1990s, Chinese initiated their 'going-out' strategy influenced by politico-economic perspectives (Backaler, 2014, p. 52). Thus, politically facilitates the access to safeguard the natural-capital, critical to supporting inland expeditious economic growth and economically to make new engagements to increase long-term economic expansion. According to *World Investment Report (WIR) 2018*, China's outwards FDI flow was US dollars 18.8 billion in 2005-2007 and reached US dollars 124.63 billion in 2017; whereas outward FDI stock was US dollars 882 billion in 2014 and reached US dollars 1,482 billion in 2017 (UNCTAD, 2019). China's commitment to Africa for last more than a decade has been the predominant feature of current expansions in the continent. Moreover, China's engagement in sub-Saharan (African) has also increased many times during this period.

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China relieved the United States in 2009 to assume lead as major trade contributor in the region, engaged over forty states on the continent in mutual trade agreements. Sino-African trade value reached US dollar 215 billion in 2014 from US dollar 10 billion in 2010, though the observed a slight decline in 2016 (CARI, 2019). China's 'Foreign Direct Investment' (FDI) in the African continent has also been increasing consequently, yet estimates 50-80 percent exploitation in natural capital sources endorsed (Porcaro, 2009). Since 2001, Chinese have reached almost half of the demand increase of the world for metals, whereas around two-fifths of the oil demands increase (WB, 2013). Additionally, China also tries to find out open-markets for its foreign exchange reserves just over US dollar 4 trillion during 2014, though faced declination to US dollar 3.12 trillion in 2016 (Neely, 2017).

Since, inception Sino-Africa relationships are predominantly driven through economic pursuits of independent interests (Shinn & Eisenman, 2012). Irrespective to the conditions of relationships, Africa supports the energy supplies, the greatly desired resources to fuel China's inland economic growth expansions (Butts & Bankus, 2009). However, in exchange, China invests in politico-economic development and expansion in the continent (Zondi, 2017). Moreover, China on diplomatic fronts, China has joint UN peacekeeping operations along with its policy of non-interference in Africa (Sullivan, 2018). Evidently, the majority of African states consider China's interest and investment as an offer to their developments (Hanauer & Morris, 2013). Consequently, several states leadership anticipates China's interaction, in many folds, is diverse from US and West (Songwe, 2019). Several African social cadres believe in benefiting from China's current engagement in African development and poverty reduction measures (Leonard, 2008). Whereas, many believe that China has greater humane drives than Western corporative designs (Lafargue & Hall, 2006).

This research article intents making an attempt to simplify the most complex character of Sino-Africa relationship yet focusing the politico-economic objectives of bilateral engagement, the primarily.

China's Economic Engagement in Africa

Ever since 2000, the formation of the 'Forum on China-Africa Cooperation' (FOCAC) (Taylor, 2010), China's *official development assistance* (ODA); referred as: government's aid to promote and particularly intent ensuring economic growth and interests of developing states (OECD, 2019); (OECD, OECD i-library, 2019); to African continent has expanded significantly. Odd to refer, that mere analysis covering the determining factors of Chin's ODA provisions to the African continent are accessible. Moreover, accessible literature mostly centered on overall aid support, while China's motives may vary in allocations depending; socio-political, socio-economic infrastructure, services vis-à-vis the production zones. During, years 2000 to 2014, China earmarked 1,327 projects under ODA to the African continent for social, economic infrastructures along with services and the production areas. (Guillon & Mathonnat, 2018).

According to the regional trade statistics by China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), Sino-African import-export trade values reached US dollar 170 billion, 2.7 percent more than the common trade increase in 2017. Exclusive to Chinese exports to Africa amounted US dollar 94.74 billion, and imports amounted US dollar 75.26 billion in the same year 2017 (MOFCOM, 2018). During, the period from January to December

2017, the Sino-African trade growth was just lesser than Oceania region and Latin-America, while the imports growth was 16.9 percent more than the same time in the year 2016 (MOFCOM, 2018). Sino-African trade expanded from US dollar 765 million in 1978 to US dollar 170 billion during 2017, indicating growth over 200 times; whereas achieved 17.7 percents annual, making around US dollar 82 billion during the first half of 2018 (XINHUAN, 2018).

Mostly, China's imports from Africa reached up to 70.2, 44.5, 18.0 and 11.2 percent respective sectors in 2017, making up increase against 62.2, 34.4, 14.7 and 10.7 percent in the year 2016 (WB, 2019). At the same time, China's exports to Africa includes a bulk portion of consumer goods (44.6%), capital goods (29.6%) and intermediate goods (24.8%) during 2017, marking up competitive against 45.6, 29.5 and 23.8 respectively in 2016 (WB, China Product export, 2019). Moreover, China's ministry of commerce added that its exports to African continent amounted US dollar 68.54 billion, making up 10.0 percent; while the imports amounted US dollar 65.62 billion, making up 33.4 percent; hence the surplus remained US dollar 2.92 billion, around 77.7 percent annual in 2018 (MOFCOM, 2018). Furthermore, it claimed that the average growth of China's FDI with African states marked highest in the international market, particularly, the imports average growth reached 10.8 percents as more than that of Latin-American, the second highest in the international market during this period (MOFCOM, 2018).

Over the past two decades, China's FDI in African continent increased significantly; recorded US dollar 40 billion during 2016 against US dollar 16 billion during 2011, while placed fourth following US (57 billion), UK (55 billion) along with France (49 billion) (RIIA, 2019). Despite, determinedly slow overall international growth, China's ODI reported increasing, moreover, China's nonfinancial ODI also improved by +44.1 percents in 2016, reached US dollar 170.1 billion (Beijing, 2017). Hence, Africa's investment account, FDI Intelligence for the year 2017, marked rise in capital investment by forty percent contrast to last years (Klasa, 2017). Though, China FDI ventures faced ten percent of the decline, however, capital-investments increased by three percent, recorded US dollar 59.1 billion (Fingar, 2017).

Recently, the academia on the determining factors of China's ODA to Africa as well as non-Africa, measured the character of politico-economic interests of both stockholders, mainly the donor (China) and recipients (African States) and classified ODA into sectors including the social infrastructures along-with services, the economic infrastructures along-with services and the production sectors (OCED, 2019). Evidently, China's engagement in African states is predominantly characterized by the crude oil producing countries, Angola stands leading during 2018, provided around 10.4 percent of its total crude oil imports from rest of the world (WTEx, 2019). Historically, the Sino-Angolan strategic joint ventures rely mostly on oil collaborations, where both states maintained interest for mutual cooperation and expansion by increasing trade, energy and natural resources capital exploitations (Mo, 2012). However, Sinopec (China's oil Corporation) and Sonangol (Angola's corporate group), established a joint venture but terminated in 2016, after statement made by Orlando Pontes, ANP (*Agence Nationale du Pétrole*) director stating: "Among several breaches and violations, Sinoangol never provided the Sao Tomean state with information regarding the amount received from the transfer of 30 percent of participatory interest in block 2 that occurred on March 31, 2014" (Adler, 2016).

Currently, Sudan emerged as of particular importance to China; emerging up over half of the world twice biggest oil purchaser's crude-oil capital. Moreover, '*China's National Petroleum Company*' (CNPC) maintains forty percents oil-assets in the Blue-Nile Petroleum shares, hence the largest actor in Sudan's crude-oil capital (SourceWatch, 2008). During the 2000s, China's NOCs maintained a minor share of worldwide investments, which too remarkably in Sudan and Republic of Kazakhstan, by means of the collective global productions of 140,000 barrels per day. However in 2013, China's NOCs were maintaining near 2.1 million barrels per day among forty-two major oil producing states in the world and CNPC was the major contributor by almost 924,000 barrels per day, followed by Sinopec Oil Company with 630,000 barrels per day, and CNOOC claimed 441,000 barrels per day (Patey, 2017). Meanwhile, just like in Angola along with other oil producing states, a very large number of technical staff and working labor brought in Sudan to maintain and administer these ventures. However, as Chinese now purchase ten percents of whole exports of Africa, it is imperative to register that Chinese trade with African sub-Saharan region was merely 3.2 percents of its entire global trade during 2006, while Chinese imports were around one-third of its oil-purchase from Africa, with West and America apiece sharing around one-third (Zezeza, 2008).

Factually, Chinese engagement policy towards Africa's sub-Saharan states proffers offering aid-support programs; mega infrastructure development projects to include road networks, rail-tracks, shipping yards, and mega hydro projects like dams, along-with social infrastructure development projects like sports facilities, departmental infrastructures, and national or presidential residences; debt releases; flexible loans; low-cost credits; community healthiness, educational and training ventures; technological aids; and long-drawn-out access to Chinese market. Moreover, around 3,100 Chinese corporate companies made investments in Africa, including major ventures of transportation, energy-sectors, telecoms, manufacturing industries, agricultural reformations, hydro project, educations and health sectors (XINHUAN, 2018). Importantly, the infrastructure development has remained on the priority table of Sino-African mutual engagement connecting the Belt-and-Road program that engaged over twenty African states, covering areas through rails, roads, shipping-yards and power production initiatives; hence, 480 kilometers of rail tracks provided by China, opened to link Nairobi to Mombasa, thus reduced traveling by half and created 46,000 job opportunities (ChinaDaily, 2018). Furthermore, during 2015, China declared ten main projects for Sino-African cooperation to support speedy industrial development with agricultural transformation; thus, a US dollar ten-billion, Sino-African manufacturing capability collaboration support has been ascertained to hold up collaboration ventures like economic and industrial sectors on the African continent (XINHUAN, 2018).

China's engagements in raw material extraction and communication networks expansions are criticized and noted for high capital demanding projects with negligible low cost labor opportunities for Africa, study on China's building companionships working in Angola and few other African states established that these hardly contend with local corporations as they have generally low competence for huge ventures (Davies, 2006). Though, Chinese companies utilize the bulk of local labors, however, concern little to enhance local labor capacity, as most of the Chinese building companionships working in Africa prefer bringing won labors and are reluctant to engage locals (XIAOYANG, 2016). Even, in a few cases, on China's supported ventures, the proportion varies with seventy

and thirty percent for Chinese and local Africans respectively (Rocha, 2006). Similarly, the Chinese corporations administering the huge project like Sudan's Merowe dam venture on great river Nile is objected for not showing respect to human-rights as over 50,000 locals displaced forcefully under construction compulsions (Askouri, 2006). Finally, the rush forward in migration, internal and external (ZHOU, 2017) that has facilitated inductions of large numbers of Chinese in many African states during last decades which will considerably transform the outlook of the African continent (Alden, Large, & Oliveira, 2008). Now, China's presence is observed in complete Africa, it includes not simply industrial staffs, workers, and frequent traders, however even possibly all walks of trade and business ventures.

China's Political Engagement in Africa

China's policy of "non-interference" marks an appeal to most African governments referring its assurance for peaceful socio-political development process within states facing conditions while formulating investment ventures and presenting growth support (Tochalo, 2009). Though, many of the states offering space to Chinese ODA and FDI remained under constant ruled of corrupted despotic leadership and notables who closed the eyes to human-rights violations and the missing rule-of-law. However, China is criticized for its eagerly concluding deals even that lack limpidity, responsibility, and many other institutionally recognized factors like ecological effect assessment studies, consideration of state's economic priorities, and improved socio-political conditions. Moreover, China's politico-economic engagement in Africa provides such states, the opportunities to push-a-side such conditions and backs government rulers who repress resistant socio-political activities, and yet the society that demands political transformation, diplomatic postures, fairness, justice and equality, and above all the eradication of corruptions (Dollar, 2016). In this perspective, the policy of non-interference might have been precisely considered "extremely hypocritical" (Alden, Large, & Oliveira, 2008).

Considerably, the comprehending the character of the Sino-African engagement is decisive for evaluating the repercussions of China's engagements throughout the African continent Van de Walle (2001). Furthermore, it appears impracticable to comprehend the economic-policies effects in Africa's post-colonial regime, failing of strategy reforms exclusive of few characters of neo-patrimonialism including favouritism, natural capital access, power centralization, and hybrid administrations (Austin, 2010). Mostly, in Africa, state control is not implemented for the social goodness or promoting progress; hence the autocratic rules in natural capital-rich African states have awfully meager incentives to expand their politico-economic activities and expand developments beyond resource sectors (Piombo, 2012). Certainly, difficult as it might not be the choice to promote and expand politico-economic developments. Hence, stated by Jakkie Cilliers that "Africa will remain turbulent because it is poor and young, but also because it is growing and dynamic" (Cilliers, 2017). Rodney argued the managing the immense differences among the west and others can merely be explicated as the victimization of the last by the first (Rodney, 2018). However, it is learned that there are twenty-three states in the internal community that originate almost sixty percent from exports of energy sectors, however, not even single is established diplomatic government (PATRICK, 2012). Consequently, the general leaning towards goods production and resource lease is expected to intensify a few forms of bad governance in African states (Dollar, 2016).

Over the last decade or so, China has revisited extends of its politico-economic engagements, developing cool, reconsidering development aids and moreover, restrictive itself to humane support. China's such development has also been recognized internationally, expressed by the secretary general, UN: "China has attained notable development expansion in current years, with an exceptionally reduced poverty, and dedication to share its achievement through different programs namely the Belt and Road" (UN, 2018). President of China paid a visit to Africa just before the FOCAC, third summit and endorsed that African developments have vast potentials; the continent is filled with optimism; Sino-Africa cooperation has a larger landscape, and even inclusive strategic as well as cooperative relationships (Xuequan, 2018). Moreover, while the third summit of FOCAC hosted many new entries and the president Ramaphosa lauded that it imitates the exceptional and strategic character of a corporation that facilitates the understanding of African development ambitions through a practical relationship in the pursuit of win-win support (Reports, 2018). Undoubtedly, too much critical approach towards Sino-Africa politico-economic engagement might be challenging in numerous behaviors, yet, by granting sustain to an oppressive system, China might demoralize political solidity desirable for the long-standing politico-economic relationship it searches.

China's politico-economic engagements, often hinge on principle of self-government indeed is anticipated to defend the trade and industry investments of the exceptional patrons in the course of its conditions less support of the existing government in a specific state that facilitates access to natural capital resources (Sornarajah, 2015). Yet such an approach if loaded with insufficiencies while the state's concrete authority over own natural capitals and public are increasingly warned, hence intimidating the outsider's mistreatment with natural capital. Recently, China's critically reviewed by Seifudein Adem, who presented three major schools of thoughts: the Sino-pessimists, the Sino-optimists, and the Sino-pragmatists, considering Africa to lose more and gain less, but are however keen to set aside sentence awaiting dust to settle (Adem, 2016). Noticeably, there are increased apprehensions and disparagements even from within the African continent on China's politico-economic engagements. Moreover, the most awful enduring crisis, are the volatility in the Darfur-Sudan (Daly, 2007), found with arms sullies OF China through UN records (Melber, 2007). However, Sudan's government secluded by Chinese vote of veto in the UNSC from the sanctions and also supported UN/AU hybrid mission in Darfur (Lanteigne & Hirono, 2013), coupled with contributed over 2,513 troops and civil-police for UN peacekeeping operations within Africa (UN, Peace Keeping, 2019).

The Strategy of Economic Diplomacy and beyond

China's politico-economic engagement in Africa and the major cantors of its overall strategies towards economic diplomacy may be grouped into socio-economic engagements mutual interests and bilateral concerns, socio-political engagements, the extended role of soft power, the favored entrance to the market of China and civilizing interactions (Nantulya, 2017). Wang Li considers Chinese strategy for the African continent as "deeply thought-out however executed cautiously" (Li, 2018). Sarah Chan evaluates China's strategy of African politico-economic engagement as "framework that developed over time along with trade and industry evolution" (Chan, 2018); while, Fowler, summaries China's character by developing cheap markets; ensuring supply safety; and futuristic viability (Fowler, 2019). China's quest to reach out the natural capital resources and pursue the

investment policies though has influenced the yearly increase of economic expansion rate in Africa (Hanauer & Morris, 2013); yet it needs more demonstrative proportion of mutual benefits in terms of parallel linkage in growth and productivity (PHAM, BELLO, & BARRY, 2018). Historically, understanding reveals the comparative industrial decline of African economy (Moseley, 2018); while evaluating China's politico-economic engagement with African states, Barton endorsed that Chinese have assisted African economies to develop infrastructure missions in a short period (Barton, 2016).

Conclusion

China's politico-economic engagement in African continent undeniably emerged as most considerable politico-economic development among reshaping international order in general and the African continent in particular. Indeed, there is meaningful and understandable apprehension that China applies while implementing its economic strategy in Africa, if data analysis is unfolded, managing sustained and stronger despotic governments by regional elites while engaging the natural capital assets exploited and leaving general public as dreadfully deprived and ineffective as always. Still, it is precipitate to underline authoritative conclusions over China's politico-economic engagement in Africa; since Sino-African engagement, certainly, features long recognized the model of socio-political and socio-economic bilateral engagement. Contrarily, introducing any raw model to explore Sino-African engagement in the international politico-economic order, China's engagement perceived to emphasize the former. However, China holds a predominate posture in its engagements with African states. Hence, China's persuade strategy in the African continent, particularly the politico-economic engagement, as discussed, Beijing uses multiple apparatus and policies, which has worked reasonably. Therefore, many African stakeholders appear incredibly optimistic regarding China's politico-economic engagement posture in Africa. Moreover, China's politico-economic engagement in African continent must also be assessed in emerging geopolitical order in Africa, hence not purely as American's potential competitors and occupants of western space. Particularly, the rising economies of Asia, leaning China's increasing posture in the African continent have also led economies like Japan, India and Malaysia to accelerate their participation in the region.

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