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# The Secret Weapon of Globalization: China's Activities in Sub-Saharan Africa

Kehbuma Langmia, *Howard University*



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# **THE SECRET WEAPON OF GLOBALIZATION: CHINA'S ACTIVITIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

**By Kehbuma Langmia\***

## **INTRODUCTION**

The continent of Africa has become the place where advanced nations have resorted to scramble for its natural wealth. Since the era of slave trade and colonization, Africa has become the victim of exploitation from external forces. The reason for this state of affairs can be attributed to a plethora of factors. Firstly, Africa is very rich in mineral and natural resources that is attracting outside forces. Secondly, it is still recovering from the throes of slave trade and colonization. As a result, these outside forces take the opportunity to cripple it further under the guise of aiding the ailing continent. Thirdly, Africa is riddled with dictators who have connived with some Western powers to reduce the continent to a beggarly state. So the people of Africa have been yearning for democratic governance that will ensure equitable distribution of the national cake. Fourthly, the continent of Africa has a high rate of malnutrition, disease, and death, making emigration an alternative choice. Talented Africans are leaving the continent for greener pastures abroad. This makes the continent vulnerable.

This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the role of China as another outside force that is playing a double-edged role in the economic, political, and technological development of Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper will examine in greater detail existing literature on the state of affairs in Sub-Saharan Africa with the arrival of China under the guise of "global development." Research articles selected under the rubric of purposeful non-probability sampling techniques will be used to critically examine China's new role in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **CHINA'S ACTIVITIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ISSUES**

It was Rodney who said in his most acclaimed book "How Europe

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\*Kehbuma Langmia is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at the Department of Communications, Bowie State University, Maryland. He has published several journal articles and books. Recently he and Cosmas Nwokeafar published *Media and Technology in Emergent African Democracies* (2010).

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Underdeveloped Africa”<sup>1</sup> that “the capitalists of Western Europe were the ones who actively extended their exploitation from inside Europe to cover the whole of Africa.”<sup>2</sup> This is the fate that has befallen Africa since independence. For this trend to continue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is regrettable. Africans are still suffering from the pains of colonization. This period in the lives of Africans has made them subservient to their colonial masters. They have never been masters of their own destiny in their own land. They were forced to stoop low and expose all they had to the stranger who exploited them with impunity. That is why even after most African countries gained their independence in the 60s, they were still beholden to the Western colonial powers. They were introduced to new socio-political, economical and cultural modes of life that made theirs despised and downgraded. Consequently, we had Africans who assumed the helm of power, and instead of practicing democratic governance to make sure genuine development was taking place in the continent, chose rather to march to the tune of Western drum beats of exploitation and marginalization. Today the same song seems to be played under a new name called ‘globalization’. And China is playing that leading role in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The term globalization as we know it today is actually a tradition that started thousands of years ago. States and governments practiced interdependence of shared love, culture and trade. The Han dynasty in China is credited for having made the first visit to the African continent with the dispatch of Du Huan<sup>3</sup> around A.D.759. He met with the ancient Nubian cities in Eritrea and Sudan. This was followed by another dispatch, this time by the Ming Dynasty. Zheng He<sup>4</sup> is credited for making over seven trips to East Africa from 1405-1433. Though ruled by an Emperor, China never conquered Africa like its Western counterparts did in later years. The Cold war with the Soviet Union greatly affected Sino-African ties though China still maintained minimal roles in some states in the continent. Now they are returning to play a much larger role under what is now commonly referred to as globalization which has assumed new and broader dimensions.

Globalization has been viewed differently by scholars. Ali Mazrui<sup>5</sup> approaches the concept in three different but interrelated ways. Firstly, he believes that the need to achieve interdependency for global economy will help world market to burgeon. Secondly, technology has ushered in a new form of communication that can link people from far flung areas together especially with the birth of the Internet but Africa is yet to completely benefit from this. Thirdly, globalization to him is creating a phenomenon where we are all in a global village whereby distance between nation states becomes blurred and cultures are “homogenized.” But he argues that the world is still to be “villagized” i.e. experience the communality and shared love that characterizes people in a typical village setting. Generally, it is believed that with globalization the world will eventually become “a global village”<sup>6</sup>. This



presupposes a much more quick and easy inter-national commercial activities where the flow of raw materials and finished products are readily available for consumers at reasonable and affordable prices. However, according to Ali Mazrui and many others, globalization has not achieved these ideals. This group of scholars have noticed a trend where North-South collaboration on this matter is turning to benefit the North more than the South. It is not uncommon to find more Western manufactured materials in African markets as you would find African goods and services in the Western markets. This is what Ali Mazrui calls "hemispherization" as evidenced in this assertion:

For the Third World full globalization would only arrive when, in addition to North-South exchange, there was substantial South-South exchange. The North already has massive North-North exchange (trade between North America, Europe and Japan). The North has also created in its own image a North-South Exchange. Globalization will only be complete when South-South exchange becomes substantial, to counter-balance the exploitativeness of North-South relations.<sup>7</sup>

This has created an imbalance that is neo-colonial in nature. This is what prompted other scholars to define globalization as a disguised form of exploitation where the influence of the West on the rest of the developing countries is overwhelming. Sholte affirms that: "Globalization is a dynamic whereby the social structures of modernism (capitalism, rationalism, industrialism, bureaucratism, etc.) are disseminated the world over, normally destroying pre-existent cultures and local self-determination"<sup>8</sup>. This is what has complicated the systemic wind of Western globalization in Africa, and regrettably, that is why the new South-South cooperation championed by China is gaining ground in Africa. It is beyond simplistic reasoning to think that the presence of China in Africa for 'developmental' purposes is the answer to the woes of Western influence in Africa. After all, China was against the concept of globalization in the first place:<sup>9</sup>

Before reform, China was the world's most important opponent of globalization. It had an autarkic economy. It opposed the global economic order. It opposed the global political order and the major global institutions such as IMF and the World Bank. It believed that global disorder was a good thing, and under Mao Zedong, it actively promoted disorder throughout the world, including promotion of

insurgencies in most of China's neighbors, in much of Africa and Latin America, and even in our universities.<sup>10</sup>

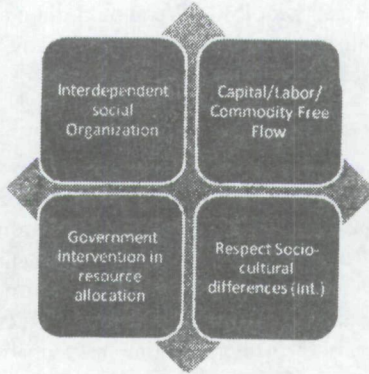
Ian Taylor<sup>11</sup> exposes the arms trade of China to Sub-Saharan Africa since 1985. A total of about 337 exports of Chinese weaponry were sold to governments of Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe to crush insurgencies and civil unrests in these countries. To think that this same country that contributed in suppressing insurgencies in Africa just as France, Britain, the United States and other Western nations did is coming this time with a different objective is perplexing. The reason why China has become one of the most reliable development partners for Sub-Saharan Africa under the rubric of globalization is the subject of this paper. The decision to view Sub-Saharan Africa as a place to engage developmental initiative for China should be looked upon closely since psycho-political, economic, and cultural implications are all involved. Attempts will be made through a critical analysis of existing literature on this topic coupled with the researcher's observational lens as an African scholar living in the Diaspora, who often makes occasional visits back home to Africa.

#### *Why Now?*

In order to understand the stakes that China faces as it embarks on global development-led initiatives especially with respect to Sub-Saharan Africa, it is necessary to situate her development model. Pan Wei<sup>12</sup> outlines four subsystems that characterize the Chinese development model: China's social organization is in such a way that the state and society co-exist unlike in the West but similar to some societies in Sub-Saharan Africa. They co-mingle in what Pan Wei calls "concentric circles." When it comes to their economic development model, they are unique in that they don't follow the Western free market economy or the social market style economy. Their labor and commodities move freely in a rather complicated style characterized by some form of fraudulent operations because of the intensity of their bi-lateral cooperation as admitted by Pan Wei. However, this very model has been creeping towards a global export initiative at the expense of domestic production. Thomas Palley<sup>13</sup> believes that China has become a global manufacturing powerhouse, and its size now renders its export-led growth strategy unsustainable. With reference to government, which is the third important element in China's development sub-systems, it intervenes in land distribution, natural resource allocations, the banking sector regulations and most importantly, the international transactions. When it comes to international cooperation, the Chinese follow the non-interventionists approach of mutual respect for socio-cultural differences.



### Chinese 4 Sub-System Development Model



Source: Pan Wei (2007)

It is an empirical question from the perspective of this paper whether China has remained true to its commitment of non-interference in her trade and political dealings in Sub-Saharan Africa. And also it will be interesting to see if Chinese activities in this continent do not constitute another form of neo-colonial domination.

Western countries that participated in the annexation of territories in Africa and all the ugly effects of colonization left in the early 1960s, with the exception of Portuguese colonists which remained under colonial rule up to the 1970s. Most African countries that were under the yoke of Western domination gained their independence and so started the journey of self-determination. Their style of governance was marred by corruption and dictatorship paving the way for another new form of colonization called neo-colonization. The Bretton Woods system institutions such as The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) started seeking ways to help Africa in the form of aid and loans. This economic aid plunged the continent into more debt since they hardly could repay the loans they borrowed. This created more room for disdain and disillusionment. This economic stagnation pushed most leaders to hold their grip on power so as not to be held accountable. As such, a situation came about whereby the West and other foreign nations were ready to provide solutions to the manifold problems besetting the continent. Expatriates from all fields were now welcomed in Africa. This is what prompted China to rekindle partnership for development with Africa. Whether this partnership was triggered firstly by

Africans or by the Chinese is not important. This is what Domingos Muekalia said of China before their onward march to Africa:

In a revealing statement, Chairman Mao said: "What the imperialists fear most is the awakening of the Asia, Africa and Latin American peoples... We should unite and drive the US imperialism from Asia, Africa and Latin America back to where it came from."<sup>14</sup>

Was this an attempt by the Chinese leader to rewind the clock 59 years after and follow the proceedings of the Bandung Conference of 1955<sup>15</sup> for Asian-African cooperation? What happened during these long years is worth investigating. The imperialist Europe and its allies were already promoting capitalism and all the other "isms" in the continent and reaping it off of its natural resources. If the Cold War is to blame for most of China's absence in Africa, why has China most recently been actively engaged in supplying arms in support of the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe?<sup>16</sup> The answer to these questions will provide clues as to the nature of China's developmental goals in Africa even though it was against globalization from the onset.

Scholars like Jaffe & Lewis (cited in Piet Konings)<sup>17</sup> are of the firm belief that energy and economic quests are the driving forces behind China's aggressive expansion in Africa. If that be the case, it is analogous to the same motive for the wanton scramble for African territories by the erstwhile Western countries. Therefore, Africa has become the land for outside forces to experiment, rape and pillage, as much as they please since its citizens are not able to tap, manage, and export all the minerals that the continent has been endowed with. If the latter were an option, Africans would determine the prices of energy and other rich minerals in the world market and use the proceeds to bring the much needed development in the continent by themselves, and not wait for outsiders to do it for them. The simple law of economics state that profit making is the driving force in commerce. We did not have genuine development initiative from the onset where the interests of Africans were the primary motive for European colonization or with the dictators who took over. Should we expect something different from China? Already some scholars have listed some of the benefits of Chinese presence in Africa since their arrival in 2006.

#### *Advantages of Chinese presence in Africa*

The following is an official statement by Hu Jintao, Chinese President on the Eight-measure economic development initiatives to Africa presented at the FOCAC 2006 meeting in Beijing:



1). Double its 2006 assistance to Africa by 2009; 2). Provide 3 billion U.S. dollars of preferential loans and 2 billion U.S. dollars of preferential buyer's credits to Africa in the next three years; 3). Set up a China-Africa development fund which will reach 5 billion U.S. dollars to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Africa and provide support to them; 4). Build a conference center for the African Union to support African countries in their efforts to strengthen themselves through unity and support the process of African integration; 5). Cancel debt in the form of all the interest-free government loans that matured at the end of 2005 owed by the heavily indebted poor countries and the least developed countries in Africa that have diplomatic relations with China; 6). Further open up China's market to Africa by increasing from 190 to over 440 the number of export items to China receiving zero-tariff treatment from the least developed countries in Africa having diplomatic ties with China; 7). Establish three to five trade and economic cooperation zones in Africa in the next three years; 8). Over the next three years, train 15,000 African professionals; send 100 senior agricultural experts to Africa; set up 10 special agricultural technology demonstration centers in Africa; build 30 hospitals in Africa and provide RMB 300 million of grant for providing artemisinin [sic] and building 30 malaria prevention and treatment centers to fight malaria in Africa; dispatch 300 youth volunteers to Africa; build 100 rural schools in Africa; and increase the number of Chinese government scholarships to African students from the current 2000 per year to 4000 per year by 2009.<sup>18</sup>

From those eight measures, it can be seen clearly that they will provide almost 98% of aid to Africa to help the beleaguered continent. Exports from Africa and scholarships to African students are the only items Africa will do in China.

Authors like Piet Konings have enumerated some of the benefits of Chinese development goals in Africa. He noted in his recent article "China and Africa in the era of neo-liberalism"<sup>19</sup> that China is like the breath of fresh air in Africa after the failed neo-liberal politico-economic agenda of the West. Since the World Bank and the IMF have failed to actually bring sustainable change in the continent it was time for Africa to look to China for help. This



is basically the *raison d'être* for FOCAC 2006 in Beijing i.e. the ministerial come together of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation that brought African Presidents and Ministers. One of the key points as highlighted by Konings on the Beijing Action plan that came out from that meeting was their pledge to: "deepen and broaden mutual beneficial cooperation in political relations, economic cooperation, international affairs and social development."<sup>20</sup> One other important issue related to this Sino- African agreement is the fact that both countries agreed that China will not interfere in the internal affairs of any nation in Africa. This is where it gets a bit complicated.

The implication of this is the fact that China would not play any part in influencing political leadership in Africa in whatever form. Therefore, as the rulers carryout undemocratic measures to further ruin the lives of their people and stay indefinitely in power by manipulating election results, China will just be doing business. Business cannot prosper in a chaotic environment. So if there is a rich mineral resource that is central to the Chinese government's, "developmental needs" where ever it is located, and under what condition in Africa, they will look for a way to look for it. Another disturbing situation about the Beijing Action Plan is that China is purposely doing business with Africa with the two parties agreeing to mutually respect each others 'interest' or benefit. But according to Piet Konings again:

There are in fact rising concerns amongst the African business sector, labor unions and other civil-society actors about China's impact on Africa. One reason for concern is the arrival of low-cost consumer goods which enabled Africans to purchase basic items formerly beyond their reach, but are themselves a threat to local manufacturing capacity and employment.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time that there are benefits that accrue from China's presence in Africa, Piet Konings also points out some of the loopholes.

Brookes and Shin<sup>22</sup> also highlight some of the advantages of Chinese presence in Africa. They point to the fact that not only has Africa created a relationship with China, they have come to see China as a long lasting friend to fight for them diplomatically, financially, and militarily. By doing this, China will seek to curtail any other 'troubled' relation that they may have with Europe and America. Secondly, Sino-African cooperation is a significant step to 'isolate' Taiwan from gaining foot hole for any diplomatic relation with any African country. These are some of the strategic advantages of having Chinese influence in Africa. But like Konings, Brookes and Shin also mention some of the loopholes that may come as a result of these benefits: "The most pernicious effect of the renewed Chinese interest in Africa is that China is legitimizing and

encouraging Africa's most repressive regimes (earlier discussed), thereby increasing the likelihood of weak and failed states."<sup>23</sup> But this goes contrary to the Beijing Action Plan of FOCAC 2006 for China to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of nation states in Africa. It is this apparent contradiction and hypocrisy from the Chinese that leaves one to speculate about the ulterior motives behind the much heralded Sino-African cooperation.

This has been the case as earlier mentioned with Zimbabwe where Western powers condemned the action of China for secretly shipping weapons to safeguard and protect the brutal regime of Robert Mugabe.<sup>24</sup> When this ship was tracked by Western powers and reported on CNN, China quickly refuted the claim. This situation is made more problematic when they mention that Africa accounts for 25% of China's oil imports. In order to sustain this gain, China is using all available technical resources including human capital to make construction and for other infrastructural maintenance. This is being done in Algeria, Angola, Gabon, Nigeria, Sudan and Zimbabwe. They also maintain regular visits to the continent to ensure proper management of their investments.<sup>25</sup> This is what makes the issue of praising the effort of China's presence in Africa for globalization effort problematic. It now seems like a double edge sword when one thinks that China is bringing jobs and prosperity to Africa by investing in its minerals, oil and other rich natural resources. They seem to be thinking about developing their country first in similar ways that European imperialists were doing in Africa. Todd Hofstead highlights some elements of the mutual agreement speech made in China in 2006 regarding their relations with Africa: "Sincerity, friendship and equality... Mutual benefit, reciprocity and common prosperity."<sup>26</sup> If sincerity was the catch phrase for their partnership then China needs to come clean about dealing with dictators in Africa that perpetuate misery through corruption and favoritism. China should consult and negotiate with local firms on mutual trade partnerships before shipping cheap exports to Africa that stifle the growth of local industries.

#### *China and Ordinary African citizens*

Some scholars are of the view that China's presence in Africa does not benefit the ordinary folk on the street as it does the African governments. Gu, Humphrey and Messner, confirm the issue of China's clear objective in Africa. To them, China is in Africa so as to counter the overwhelming influence of Europe. Their aim is to curtail Western domination in Africa. An example they cite is the \$2 billion they provided to Angola to pay off its IMF debt in exchange for its mineral resources that are being shipped to China. So their target is not to improve living standards in Africa for the ordinary folks per se



but rather to pursue private goals as evidenced below:

At the Beijing Summit in November 2006, China promised to double aid to Africa by 2009 grant \$5 billion in concessional credits, a further \$5 billion to support Chinese investment in Africa, and to make further investments in African human resource development. It is important to note, however, that the Summit was only the culmination of intensive diplomatic efforts to court *Africa's leaders* (emphasis, mine)<sup>27</sup>

This is a confirmation of the mission of replacing the Western powers in Africa so as to have a firm grip on the continent. There is really no place for the ordinary African in the mind of the Chinese as noted by Tull, 2006 "Chinese policies benefit elites in Africa rather than ordinary citizens."<sup>28</sup> The ordinary citizens in Africa need poverty reduction measures by the government that they elect and backed by the foreign investors who maintain economic ties with the ruling government. Interestingly, poverty reduction was one of the criteria for the creation of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development). This was one of the agreements of the African Union members to create such a consensus to foster good governance alongside poverty reduction in the continent. Amazingly, China seems to be treading a careful path with respect to NEPAD. The kind of developmental initiative it is carrying in Africa is within the forum that they share with Africa. According to Drew Thompson<sup>29</sup> China wants to avoid any conflict with having to deal with the expectations of NEPAD which include political as well as economic implications within each state.

Though China seems to be dealing more with the power wielders in Africa, there are scenarios, according to Drew Thompson whereby China has demonstrated some real progress with respect to catering for the well being of African citizens. In the field of Science, they are helpful in offering some training to African medical experts and students in China. In addition, they provide medical equipment and instrument to Africa and are actively engaged in fighting HIV/AIDS and other diseases in Africa. This is the summary of the role of China in helping ordinary citizens as presented by Drew Thompson:

China deployed its first medical team in 1964 at the invitation of the Algerian government. Since then China has cumulatively sent over 15, 000 doctors to more than 47 countries and treated approximately 180 million African patients. ...Additionally, Chinese military medical units have been deployed on UN peacekeeping operations in

### Africa<sup>30</sup>

This is one of the areas (suggested by Thompson) that have seen positive changes in the lives of the ordinary African citizens. Below is the list of Chinese provinces that are providing medical assistance in Africa:

#### CHINESE PROVINCIAL HEALTH BUREAU MEDICAL TEAM COOPERATION WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES

| Chinese Province | African State                      |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Fujan            | Botswana                           |
| Gansu            | Madagascar                         |
| Guangdong        | Equitorial Guinea                  |
| Gaungxi          | Niger, Comoros                     |
| Henan            | Zambia, Eritea, Ethiopia           |
| Hubei            | Algeria, Lesotho                   |
| Hunan            | Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, Zimbabwe |
| Inner Mongolia   | Rwanda                             |
| Jiangxi          | Tunisia                            |
| Ningxia          | Benin                              |
| Quingxia         | Burundi                            |
| Shaanxi          | Mauritania, Guinea, Sudan          |
| Shandong         | Tanzania, Seychelles               |
| Shanghai         | Morocco                            |
| Shanxi           | Togo, Cameroon, Djibouti           |
| Sichuan          | Mozambique, Guinea Bissau          |
| Tianjin          | Republic of (Brazzaville), Gabon   |
| Yunnan           | Uganda                             |
| Zhejiang         | Mali, Namibia, Central Africa      |

Source: Thompson, (2005)



From the table above two things are evident: 1) Chinese medical assistance to Africa is covering the North, East, Central, West and South of Africa. In essence, they are covering the entire continent. 2) They seem to be partitioning Africa in a way similar to what the Europeans did after the Berlin Conference of 1884. The only difference is that instead of partitioning the continent among other Asian countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and the two Koreas, they are partitioning it among provinces within China itself. Their original intention is that of medical assistance as opposed to colonial quest.

### *Implications of Chinese Aid in Africa*

It is no longer a secret that when Western powers were strongly in control in Africa, their target was not actually a 'civilizing mission'; it was to drain the continent of its resources for their own interests. Today, China is aiding Africa strongly. Questions linger about their underlying motive. Princeton Lyman speaking under the banner of the Council on Foreign Relations about China's influence in Africa made these allegations:

Chinese influence and involvement nevertheless waned in the 1980s as it was unable to compete with Western aid programs and no longer was as fearful of Taiwan's presence-though reducing recognition of Taiwan remained ( and remains today) an important Chinese objective. What has changed in recent years, however, is China's emergence as a significant world power player on the economic scene and its own need for oil and other natural resources. China returns to Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with not only a need for economic resources but with the cash to play the game dramatically and competitively.<sup>31</sup>

Reading all the preceding excerpts as an African scholar makes me cringe. China, like its Western counterparts is playing the same hypocritical game with the continent of Africa. They are fighting to secure their own interests by blocking the influence of their competitor on the continent. Must Africa open its wide arms to any outside force coming to tap its God-given resources? Are there no terms that can be agreed upon with devastating consequences if these terms are not adhered to? These questions and many more trouble me as I write this paper. This is what Zhou Wenzhong, former Chinese deputy foreign minister said about China's involvement in Africa in New York Times, August 4, 2004: "Business is Business. We try to separate politics from business...You [the West] have tried to impose a market economy and multiparty democracy on these countries which are not ready for

it. We are also against embargoes, which you have tried to use against us.”<sup>32</sup> So China wants to separate business from politics? What about its political involvement with protecting Robert Mugabe? What about protecting Sudan from being sanctioned by the Security Council because of her genocidal crimes? What about trying to curtail Taiwan's influence in the continent? These are issues that make one to perceive a new writing on the wall with regard to the presence of China in Africa.

The hypocritical role of China in Africa is what causes eyebrows to be raised. By decrying the West for making Africa to practice multiparty politics because they are not ready for it does not solve the problem of seeking ways to make the African government more representative and accountable to its people. If Africans are not ready for multiparty democracy, then what are they ready for? China should provide a solution for that because doing business where conflict is rife is not sustainable. Doing business in Africa and at the same time protecting the dictators that have demonstrated high handedness and cruelty to its people for decades on end does not make China immune to criticism. Genuine business for long term goals and sustenance warrants transparency, freedom, and peace. Without these cardinal goals being met, the long term goals of China's partnership in Africa are in jeopardy.

A classic example of the gloomy long term strategy as regards Chinese partnership with Africa is the tendency for China to stifle the growth of African goods and services. Cheap Chinese exports now flood the African markets. Princeton Lyman enumerates some of the dangers: “Exports of Chinese textiles to Africa are undermining local African industry while the growth of Chinese exports to the United States is shutting down the promising growth of African exports.”<sup>33</sup> This is where Africa's economic might in the future is doomed. African businessmen have nowhere to turn. This is where Africans need to come to the realization that they need some kind of trade protectionist policy to counter the influence of Chinese goods in their local markets. This is what according to Princeton Lyman led to the industrial workers' nationwide strike in South Africa in 2005. They wanted protection of their jobs. COSATU, the federation of Trade Union organizations in South Africa called for the government to restrict Chinese goods in the country. But this can be a extremely tough battle given the fact that the government of South Africa like many other African governments, has signed a deal with China. Such deals often fail to take cognizance of the implications of such agreements on long term development goals of the countries and the lives of their citizens at large. A good example is seen in the effect of over-reliance on imported goods that create unemployment for Africans. Todd Hofstead lists some of the effects of Chinese investment in Africa that not only cause unemployment but go a long way to endanger the lives of Africans:



In September 2002, a fire at a Chinese-owned factory in Nigeria killed at least thirty-seven Nigerians "after a factory foreman reportedly locked the building doors"; in early 2008, striking Chinese workers clashed with police in Equatorial Guinea, resulting in two deaths and several injuries. An explosion at a Chinese-owned copper mine in Zambia in April 2005 killed over fifty people and led to demonstrations amid accusations that safety regulations had been ignored.<sup>34</sup>

If adequate measures had been taken by the powers that be to ensure that Chinese companies abide by appropriate security standards, these incidences would have been averted. But these deaths go to show the level of callousness and arrogance that have characterized the so-called "Sincerity, friendship and equality" that is to characterize the mutual relationship enshrined in the speech of Chinese president during FOCAC 2006. Based on these kinds of reports, there is little grounds to assume that Sino-African relations though framed on a common principle to uphold mutual cooperation will be achieved, all other things being equal. It is now time for Africa to take the upper hand of assuming an active role in shaping the destiny of the continent rather than relying all the time on outside help.

## SOLUTIONS

### *Africans should take charge*

For over half a century now Africans have passed on the burden of developing their continent to foreigners. Maybe the reason for this is rooted in the colonial mentality that Africa needs help from the international community. It may also be rooted on the notion that when it comes to industrial and technological revolution, Africa always trails the rest of the world. It is really hard to pin point one issue that is preventing Africa from becoming self-sufficient. Africa is always needing help and thinking that the only way this is going to happen is by resorting to the same imperial forces that have been largely responsible for the mess in the first place. Then, when ways are seemingly difficult, they welcome the 'helping hand of China.' It is indeed mind-boggling that some African leaders have decided to entrench themselves in power, while their people wallow in wanton poverty and misery. For the people of Zimbabwe to suffer from the pangs of a high costs of living, inflation, chaos, malnutrition and deaths while their sitting president is protected by China's military might is not only baffling but beyond human

reasoning. For the entire international community to decry the number of killings, kidnappings and corruption in Zimbabwe and yet do nothing about it is a sad commentary on the low level of commitment by the international community to upholding human dignity in all parts of the world. So the people of Zimbabwe should take charge. People who benefit from the government need to look back and say to themselves enough is really enough. For them to become the pawn in the hands of their diabolical governments who use them to murder and kill their own people does not help the situation. A kind of mental revolution is needed whereby Africans need to come to the conclusion that individual wealth and power do not satisfy long term positive goals for the country. Some kind of *conscientization* effort is necessary by the people of Zimbabwe in one form or the other without resorting to violence. The same can be said about all other African countries facing similar internal strife in their state and society relations.

*Africa is not a milking cow*

This may sound idealistic but when a continent is pillaged by the people with the complicity of the West and China, something needs to be done. We must not turn a blind eye on the growing anger boiling in the continent when its wealth is being pillaged for outsider benefits. A case in point is the diamond and gold that is exploited with impunity from the Republic of Congo. "Blood diamond", the movie about this situation is a reminder that Africans need to take the destiny of their continent into their own hands. Maybe the urgency of the situation has been echoed by President Obama when he visited Ghana in 2009 and told Africans to take the destiny of their continent in their hands. Right now, oil rich regions of Africa have mortgaged their natural wealth to China in exchange for arms deals and paying off external debts and not only that:

In March 2004, Beijing extended a \$2 billion loan to Angola in exchange for a contract to supply 10.000 barrels of crude oil per day. Under the agreement, the loan will be heavily reinvested in infrastructure construction, with 70 percent of the loan funds going to Chinese companies and the remaining 30 percent going to local subcontractors.<sup>35</sup>

From the mathematical calculation of benefits, it shows that a majority of the deal will indeed benefit China. This is what constitutes the main problem for Africa. It does not have a any special advantage on the bargaining table. China may be reluctant to carry out the project and Africa will now have to turn



to the other ambivalent source of support, which is the West. But it will not, because of the lessons of the Cold War period and colonization. It will look itself in the mirror and say we don't have the necessary industrial infrastructure to extract the natural endowment of crude oil that we have so what do we do? Let's go along any deal with China because it is the least of all the other "evils." This has been the fate of a continent endowed with huge quantities of mineral resources. To resolve this, African leaders need to come to their senses and invest huge amount of resources to train engineers, technicians, and miners, so as to extract her natural resources without outside help, or with very little assistance. This is what has made Japan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and South Korea forge ahead in industrialization and technology more than Africa. Africa has lots of its own expert citizens that have studied and trained abroad. But most of them remain abroad because of lack of incentives at home. When incentives are created with more resources devoted to sending more of those young Africans for training abroad, the future could also be bright. Incentives should also be created for their smooth return and transition through increased salary payments and other benefits, so that the issue of "brain drain" can become something of the past.

In conclusion, the African continent as a matter of fact will be able to sustain itself if its various governments and people put aside greed, corruption, economic and political disengagement, dictatorship, anarchy, and dependence on foreign aid, to pursue a system of good governance, adhere to democratic principles, the promotion of economic growth through partnership with its own indigenes, and overall, encouraging Africans to invest in the continent.

#### NOTES

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