MASTER THESIS

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"China-Africa: neocolonialism or a "win-win" relationship"

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"On my honour as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it."

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary China-Africa relations are developing at an unprecedentedly rapid pace. China's influence has spread across the continent as evidenced by Beijing's penetration into the economic, social and political spheres of Africa. This topic is particularly relevant in the context of mass-accumulated debts for infrastructure projects loaned by China, which leaves African countries in a vulnerable situation of being exploited for economic and political reasons. This raises a concern about whether or not China's behaviour can be defined as neo-colonialism or globalization with a new face.

The current Master Thesis will explore China's economic activities on the continent and will focus on underlying consequences of this relationship. For this purpose, the main research question is stated as follows: ***"Does the economic expansion of China in Africa negatively impact the development of the continent?"***. The following sub-question will serve as a guideline to answer the main research question: ***"Which elements of the Sino-African relations pose the biggest threat to the African economies?"*** The main theoretical framework for this research is rooted on the notion that China-Africa relations are based on principles of neocolonialism: a quest for new sources of raw materials, search for new markets, and spread of geopolitical influence. At the same time, this type of relationship possesses an unprecedented level of connection to infrastructure development and investments.

In an attempt to confirm the stated theory and answer the research question, this paper will examine China's investment activity in Africa over the past 20 years. The methodology includes quantitative and qualitative analyses of countries with the highest levels of investments from China: Angola, Zambia, and Kenya. The implications of the infrastructure projects and the performance of African countries based on economic and social factors in the long run are projected to demonstrate a causal connection between China's economic expansion and neocolonialism. The main purpose of this Master Thesis is to contribute to the growing literature by trying to reveal what China's true motives are, and how this translates into economic consequences for the African countries.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die heutigen Beziehungen zwischen China und Afrika entwickeln sich in einem beispiellos schnellen Tempo. Chinas Einfluss hat sich über den gesamten Kontinent ausgebreitet, wie das Eindringen Pekings in die wirtschaftlichen, sozialen und politischen Sphären Afrikas beweist. Dieses Thema ist besonders relevant im Zusammenhang mit den massenhaft angehäuften Schulden für von China geliehene Infrastrukturprojekte, die afrikanische Länder in eine verwundbare Situation bringen, in der sie aus wirtschaftlichen und politischen Gründen ausgebeutet werden. Dies wirft die Frage auf, ob Chinas Verhalten als Neokolonialismus oder als Globalisierung mit einem neuen Gesicht definiert werden kann.

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit wird Chinas wirtschaftliche Aktivitäten auf dem Kontinent untersuchen und sich auf die zugrundeliegenden Konsequenzen dieser Beziehung konzentrieren. Zu diesem Zweck wird die Hauptforschungsfrage wie folgt formuliert: ***"Wirkt sich die wirtschaftliche Expansion Chinas in Afrika negativ auf die Entwicklung des Kontinents aus?"*** Die folgende Unterfrage dient als Leitfaden zur Beantwortung der Hauptforschungsfrage: ***"Welche Elemente der chinesisch-afrikanischen Beziehungen stellen die größte Bedrohung für die afrikanischen Volkswirtschaften dar?"*** Der wichtigste theoretische Rahmen für diese Forschung basiert auf der Vorstellung, dass die chinesisch-afrikanischen Beziehungen auf Prinzipien des Neokolonialismus beruhen: die Suche nach neuen Rohstoffquellen, die Suche nach neuen Märkten und die Ausbreitung des geopolitischen Einflusses. Gleichzeitig besitzt diese Art von Beziehung eine noch nie dagewesene Verbindung zu Infrastrukturentwicklung und Investitionen.

In einem Versuch, die aufgestellte Theorie zu bestätigen und die Forschungsfrage zu beantworten, wird in dieser Arbeit Chinas Investitionstätigkeit in Afrika in den letzten 20 Jahren untersucht. Die Methodik umfasst quantitative und qualitative Analysen der Länder mit den höchsten Investitionen aus China: Angola, Sambia und Kenia. Die Auswirkungen der Infrastrukturprojekte und die Performance der afrikanischen Länder auf der Basis wirtschaftlicher und sozialer Faktoren werden langfristig projiziert, um einen kausalen Zusammenhang zwischen Chinas wirtschaftlicher Expansion und Neokolonialismus aufzuzeigen. Das Hauptziel dieser Masterarbeit ist es, einen Beitrag zu der wachsenden Literatur zu leisten, indem sie versucht aufzuzeigen, was Chinas wahre Motive sind und wie sich dies in wirtschaftlichen Konsequenzen für die afrikanischen Länder niederschlägt.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades the topic of China's growing presence in Africa has been in the focus of scholars, experts, politicians and mass media. As a newly emerged global power and the second largest economy in the world, there have been a lot of debates about China's true intentions on the African continent.

While some suggest that the Chinese intervention and rapid development of African economies helped foster unprecedented growth on the continent, others argue that China's actions in Africa are driven by the pursuit of natural resources and geopolitical influence in the region.

Although Sino-African relations have been at the center of attention in the last 20 years, the history of cooperation between Africa and China goes back to 1955, when 29 countries of Africa and Asia gathered in Bandung, Indonesia for a historic conference[1]. Despite national, political and cultural differences, all participating countries had one thing in common- they were all former colonies of European powers. The Conference aimed at promoting economic and cultural cooperation between Africa and Asia and to oppose to colonialism or neocolonialism by any nation. The adoption of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence at the Conference laid out the foundation for the future partnership framework between China and Africa. It was the first step towards integration of the two continents.

The new wave of decolonization that happened in the 1960s put around 20 new sovereign states on the political map of the world. While the USSR and the United States of America were in the middle of the Cold War, China seized the opportunity to spread its influence in the African continent and in 1961 joined the Non-Aligned Movement[2] of countries that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union.

China embarked on the path of cooperation with Africa. As a result, it found itself in a position of a major player and investor in region. One of the first projects that Beijing invested in was the construction of a railroad in 1965 that connected the port of Tanzania with the Central Province of Zambia[3]. The railroad construction was funded with a USD 406 million interest-free

[1] Appadorai, Angadipuram. "The Bandung Conference." India Quarterly 11, no. 3 (1955): 207-235.
[2] Miskovic, Natasa, Harald Fischer-Tiné, and Nada Boskovska, eds. The non-aligned movement and the cold war: Delhi-Bandung-belgrade. Routledge, 2014.
[3] Mutukwa, Kasuka S. "The Tanzania-Zambia Railway." Africa Report 17, no. 1 (1972): 10.

loan and with an obligation to purchase Chinese goods on an annual basis. This project marked the beginning of Chinese expansion to Africa.

The next crucial event for the Sino-African relations took place in 1971[4], when UN General Assembly held a vote to decide which of the two countries, the Republic of China or the People's Republic of China, should represent China at the United Nations. Despite the efforts of the United States, the closest ally of Taiwan, Beijing took over the seat thanks in large to 26 African countries that voted for the People's Republic of China to represent the country. Since then, China has only been growing its presence and influence in the region. China's investment policy is directly connected to the political allegiance of the countries, which was quickly picked up by African states interested in Chinese funds. Between 1971 and 2018, the number of African countries that legally recognized Beijing as a subject of international law increased to 53, with Eswatini maintaining as the only African state that still maintains its diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

At first glance, it seems that Beijing's investments in Africa were designed to promote the development of the continent and the growth of trade. However, due to the scale of China's activities, this region may find itself under pressure in the future. Africa occupies a key place in the "Belt and Road Initiative" [5] project, which is designed to strengthen China's geopolitical influence and give it access to African oil reserves and other natural resources, as well as strategic points on the map. According to the China Africa Research Institute, in the time period from 2000 to 2019, African countries have received loans for more than USD 153 billion. The majority of the loans were concentrated in the transport, power and mining sectors, which reflects the interest of China on the continent. At the same time, the dispersion of these loans among African countries has been uneven, where more than 50% of the total loans in the last 20 years were given to 5 countries. The type and depth of engagement between China and individual African states is of crucial importance, as it will showcase the specific interests of Beijing in developing the region.

The main objective of this Master Thesis is to analyze and evaluate China's engagement in Africa, identify the main factors driving high interest of the former in the continent, and examine the impact of this relationship on Africa, which in recent years has been characterized as a new form of neocolonialism.

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[4] Chai, Trong R. "Chinese policy toward the Third World and the superpowers in the UN General Assembly 1971-1977: a voting analysis." International Organization (1979): 391-403.

[5] Lim, Tai Wei, Wen Xin Lim, Henry Hing Lee Chan, and Katherine Hui-yi Tseng. China's one belt one road initiative. World Scientific, 2016.

In this context, the current study will focus on the following main research question:

"Does the economic expansion of China in Africa negatively impact the development of the continent?"

The following sub-questions will serve as a guideline to answer the main research question:

"Which elements of the Sino-African relations pose the biggest threat to the African economies?"

In order to accomplish the set objectives, this paper will mainly analyze the trends in the Sino-African relations in the last 20 years since the renewed interest of China in the continent after a period of focusing on developing the domestic economy(self-isolation). The economic development model of China differs from that of the former colonial powers in a sense that they relied mainly on physical force and military hegemony. However, China's expansion is aimed at penetrating the economic and social spheres of African countries. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the main features of this expansion.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

China's involvement in Africa has led to polarization of opinions among scholars, experts and policy makers on the nature of impact of this relationship on the African continent. In academic research, this polarization was first described and coined by Oshodi[6] as "Sino-optimism" and "Sino-pessimism". Optimists maintain the idea that Chinese intervention in Africa is a "win-win" partnership for both Africa and China, while pessimists consider China's intervention in Africa as invasion, neocolonialism or second scramble.

Antwi-Boateng[7] argues that despite China's involvement in Africa being different from the past European colonization of the continent, it is hard to ignore that former European colonial powers and China have similar motivations when it comes to their engagement with African countries. One of the main arguments of Sino-pessimists is that Chinese interest in Africa is driven by the quest for new sources of raw materials. African natural resources were the main purpose for the Europeans to colonize the continent. Similarly, China being an industrial locomotive has high demand for raw materials and recognizes the increasing need for natural resources, food and new markets for the continuation of the domestic economic growth.

Consequently, in its pursuit of natural resources China has shown signs of neo-colonialism. In 1965, the leader of Ghana Kwama Nkrumah described neo-colonialist agenda as "foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment under neocolonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world."[8]

As Antwi-Boateng goes to argue, another similar characteristic of European and Chinese involvement in Africa can be described as pursuit of international markets. At the height of industrial transformation of Europe, it was necessary to open access to new markets for the ever-increasing production of goods. Similar to that, trade has become a major factor in the Sino-African relations. The volume of China-Africa trade increased from USD 10 billion in 2001 to USD 192

[6] Oshodi, Tobi. "Sino-pessimism versus Sino-optimism: Which way for Chinese Africana?." In 2nd Biennial Kwame Nkrumah International Conference (KNIC2). 2012.

[7] Antwi-Boateng, Osman. "New World Order Neo-Colonialism: A Contextual Comparison of Contemporary China and European Colonization in Africa." Journal of Pan African Studies 10, no. 2 (2017).

[8] Nkrumah, Kwame, and Kwama Nkrumah. "Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism." (1965): 861-878.

billion in 2019[9], while exports from China to Africa trump the imports. The growth of Sino-African trade was accompanied by an infrastructure investment boom which was funded by Chinese low-interest loans. As a result, the necessity to use Chinese labour, technology and materials in these projects ultimately led to a rapid increase of Chinese exports in Africa and increased dependency on goods from China.

When it comes to foreign policy, China places an emphasis on commerce as a method of searching for new markets for its growing manufacturing sector, in the same way that Europeans were drawn to trade their excess capacities with Africa during the Industrial Revolution.

The development of the African continent was first initiated by the European colonizers in the twentieth century, making them the first foreign powers to introduce a development strategy and agenda for Africa.[10] They started building roads, railways, and communication lines. They also sought to educate certain Africans in order to use them as a resource for colonial administration[11]. In contrast to the development mechanisms employed by the European powers, the People's Republic of China has been providing financial support to African governments in a form of concessional loans and increased investments, which are conditioned on the employment of Chinese nationals, as well as technology and natural resources.[12] The first similarity between Chinese and European expansion in Africa lies in their motivations to maximize market access of their domestic economies in Africa, which resulted in the growth of their economies.

At the same time, the Chinese government strives to expand it influence in Africa as part of the "peaceful rise" strategy. While China's declared foreign policy is one of "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development," it has worldwide ambitions to be a powerful great power[13].

In his research, Matthew Edwards identifies a new characteristic of the Sino-Africa relations as debt-trap diplomacy[14]. This term has been used to refer to the situation where a holder of a large amount of country's sovereign debt can exert pressure on the borrowing government in different spheres, including adoption of amendable policies in return for larger and more favorable

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[9] China Africa Research Initiative- Trade Database

[10] Antwi-Boateng, Osman. "New World Order Neo-Colonialism: A Contextual Comparison of Contemporary China and European Colonization in Africa." Journal of Pan African Studies 10, no. 2 (2017).

[11] *IBID - p 182*

[12] *IBID – p 183*

[13] *IBID – p 182*

[14] Edwards, Matthew. "China and African Debt." Courting Africa: Asian Powers and the New Scramble for the Continent: 26.

financial support. In connection to China, the relevance of these arguments was confirmed in 2017, when the government of Sri Lanka was unable to pay off the loan it had received for the construction of a port[15]. As a result, “dept-for-lease” swap took place, handing over the operation of the strategically situated port of Hambantota to China for 99 years. There have been speculations around true intentions of China, including the possibility of establishing a military base.

Both European colonialists and Chinese use similar notions to describe their involvement with Africa in the same altruistic way, but the reality of the economic expansion and unrestrained exploitation of African resources serves as proof of the opposite[16]. European incursions into Africa were driven by a “mission of civilizing" of the African people. In executing their “mission”, the European powers sought to reeducate and free the African people of the alleged ignorance and backwardness.

In an effort to set itself apart from the European participation in Africa, which it regards as discredited, China’s involvement in Africa, on the other hand, is bolstered by the PRC as a tool for developing South-South cooperation in the name of mutual benefit. In order to distinguish itself from the former European practices in the African continent, as well as acquire the status of a great power, Beijing utilizes “soft power” as the main tool for building new alliances.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence[17] that were adopted in 1955 at the Bandung between China and African nations served as a legitimizing framework that reinforced the Chinese claims and interest in continuing the development of the South-South cooperation:

- mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
- mutual non-aggression;
- mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
- equality and mutual benefit; and
- peaceful co-existence.

[15] Abi-Habib, Maria. "How China got Sri Lanka to cough up a port." The New York Times 25, no. 06 (2018).
[16] Antwi-Boateng, Osman. "New World Order Neo-Colonialism: A Contextual Comparison of Contemporary China and European Colonization in Africa." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017).
17 Zong-zhi, X. I. A. O. "The First Leadership of the People's Republic of China and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." Journal of Yiyang Teachers College (2000).

Furthermore, China utilizes carefully picked language like "shared prosperity" to convey a mutually beneficial connection between China and Africa to avoid any possibility of becoming a donor country supporting a helpless continent.[18] As a developing nation, this allows China to promote its "win-win" relationship with Africa under framework of South-South cooperation.[19]

At the same time, advocates of Sino-optimism claim that the contemporary Sino-African relations are not driven by expansion of geopolitical influence in the continent[20]. In their research, Addis and Zuping[21] state that the claims of China taking advantage of and invading Africa are a merely a speculation and fruits of Sino-phobia. They argue that the current Sino-Africa ties significantly differ from previous European colonization of the continent, and this time it is a mutually beneficial relationship. Addis and Zuping claim that China provided Africa with the necessary financial assistance in order to develop the region, while African countries provided strong political support and helped fulfil its domestic development goals.[22]

In the current Master Thesis, arguments from both Sino-optimists and Sino-pessimists will be taken into account. However, the author of this research is siding with the ideas of the latter, as there has been a lot of evidence in academic papers and mass media on the true implications of China's expansion to Africa.

1.2.THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The term neocolonialism first appeared shortly after the Second World War when the world was going through a wave of decolonization following the mass independence movement in former colonies. However, after gaining the independence, it became quite clear that despite the fact that African countries have gained political independence, their economies were too closely tied to those of former colonial powers.

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[18] Antwi-Boateng, Osman. "New World Order Neo-Colonialism: A Contextual Comparison of Contemporary China and European Colonization in Africa." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017).
[19] *IBID*
[20] *IBID*
[21] Addis, Amsalu K., and Zhu Zuping. "Criticism of neo-colonialism: clarification of Sino-African cooperation and its implication to the west." Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies 16, no. 4 (2018): 357-373.
[22] *IBID*

In 1965, the leader of a newly independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah reflected these ideas in his book Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism.[23] There he described what this connection actually implies for the African countries:

"In place of colonialism, as the main instrument of imperialism, we have today neocolonialism… [which] like colonialism, is an attempt to export the social conflicts of the capitalist countries… The result of neocolonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment, under neocolonialism, increases, rather than decreases, the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world. The struggle against neocolonialism is not aimed at excluding the capital of the developed world from operating in less developed countries. It is aimed at preventing the financial power of the developed countries being used in such a way as to impoverish the less developed."

According to Braidotti and Hlavajova[24], neocolonialism can be described as a re-enactment of colonial dynamics, however neocolonialism does not imply physical domination and control over the territory. On the contrary, this type of relationship is linked to less obvious forms of economic, financial, environmental, military, cultural and technological supremacies. At the same time, Lumumba-Kasongo[25] argues that neocolonialism mainly differs from classical colonialism in the sense that it is an ideology that is applied in a different time and space with same or different actors.

Neocolonialism will serve as the main theoretical framework for explaining the current ties between China and Africa. However, it is paramount to identify the similarities and differences in foreign policies of former European colonizers and China. As evidence shows, the Sino-African relations have evolved from basic control over territory to penetration of economic, social and political spheres, creating conditions for dependence on the Chinese economy.

In this regard, another theoretical approach that builds upon neocolonialism and will be used in this research is dependency theory, which states that economic underdevelopment and political instability of developing, and least developed countries is a result of their integration into the global economy and pressure from major actors. The first concept of this theory was first

[23] Nkrumah, Kwame, and Kwama Nkrumah. "Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism." (1965)
[24] Posthuman Glossary Edited by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova Bloomsbury Press, pp. 279-281
[25] Lumumba-Kasongo, Tukumbi. "China-Africa relations: A neo-imperialism or a neo-colonialism? A reflection." African and Asian Studies 10, no. 2-3 (2011): 234-266.

introduced by an Argentine economist Raul Prebisch. According to Prebisch[26], the capitalist world economy is a single whole, quite clearly delimited into a "center," which includes several highly developed industrial powers ("centers"), and a "periphery". According to Prebisch, the discrepancies in economic development between the South and the North are caused by historical development of these center-periphery relations. He argued that in order to solve this problem, dependent countries have to accelerate industrialization and subsidize imports from within, trying to break the old ties. However, the ability to generate added value from natural resources is prerequisite, which many African countries lack. The original version of Prebisch's theory emerged before the collapse of linear concepts of modernization. As a result, new concepts that built upon this theory appeared in the 1960s.

Fernando Cardoso did extensive research on the dependency theory, arguing that the conventional dependency model is obsolete in the wake of transformation of the world and political systems of the second half of 20th century. In his work, Cardoso summarized the following aspects as a foundation for his theory[27]:

- There is a financial and technical infiltration into the nations of the periphery and semi-periphery by the developed capitalist centers of the world;
- This results in an uneven economic structure both inside and between peripheral communities, as well as between them and the centers of power;
- Consequently, self-sustaining growth in the periphery is restricted;
- As a result, certain restrained types of class relations emerge;
- This requires changes in the role of the state to ensure both the smooth operation of the economy and the political articulation of a society that is characterized by structural imbalance.

Cardoso argued that the theoretical frameworks based on the experience of the formation of capitalism in modern developed countries have little use for understanding the situation in developing countries.[28] The difference is not only in the historical moment, but also in the structural conditions of economic and social development.

[26] Prebisch, Raul. "Socio-economic structure and crisis of peripheral capitalism." Cepal Review (1978).
[27] Cardoso, Fernando Henrique, and Enzo Faletto. Dependency and development in Latin America. Univ of California Press, 1979.
[28] *IBID*

In this regard, the current Master Thesis will attempt to discover the specificity of the current Sino-African relations and try to assess whether African countries are indeed trapped in dependence on funds, resources and technology provided by China.

1.3.METHODOLOGY

The research will mostly utilize secondary sources as the backbone of the analysis to be concluded. These sources include academic and research articles by multiple scholars, experts, analysts and policy makers. For economic data the current paper will be utilizing the databases created by the China Africa Research Initiative (CARI) based at the John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. CARI sources include official government documents, contractor websites, fieldwork, interviews, and media sources.[29] The data provided by CARI will serve as evidence for understanding the implication of the Sino-African relationship for China and Africa, as it includes a databases on: Chinese loan commitments to African governments with breakdown by sector; China-Africa trade volumes; Chinese investments in Africa with breakdown by country and sector; Chinese contracts in Africa; data on revenues of Chinese companies from construction projects in Africa; number of Chinese workers on the continent. Furthermore, CARI regularly produces working papers, policy briefs and books on economic research, expertise of which will be implemented in the current paper. At the same time, the World Development Indicators Database and World Integrated Solutions databases by the World Bank will serve as the main sources of data for assessing the overall level of economic and social development of countries used in this research.

It is important to note that the current intensity and depth of involvedness of Sino-Africa relationship is relatively new. Despite a numerous number of investment projects and loans given to the continent, the true impact of the Chinese intervention is yet to be discovered in years to come. Furthermore, China has relations with 53 out of 54 African countries with different levels of economic and industrialization development. The continent is comprised of states with contrasting political, cultural and historical backgrounds. Therefore, this research will be looking at multiple African countries and factors, including resource abundance and political orientation, that could have influenced the unique response of African states to China's intervention. The pool of countries used for analysis in this research will include the top recipients of Chinese loans

[29] China Africa Research Initiative

(Angola – USD 43 billion; Zambia- USD 9.7 billion; Kenya- USD 9 billion), as well as countries that had targeted investments with the purpose of promoting the Chinese development framework in Africa.

The main theories used to assess the current state of Sino-African relations include neocolonialism and dependency theory. The major disciplines to be consulted in this research are international relations, political science, and development economics.

A case-study in the last chapter of the Thesis include an analysis of the three chosen African countries in the context of Chinese investments. Due to the vague nature of Chinese foreign policy, it will be crucial to determine whether the development of the African continent is driven purely by altruistic intentions, or rather it is an attempt to establish a new type of hegemony and dependency in Africa.

2. SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS IN THE 21 CENTURY

The history of China's engagement with the African continent goes back many decades to the early years of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the middle of the 20th century. However, it was only in the beginning of the 2000s that China started to rapidly increase its presence and influence in Africa with the introduction of the "Going Out"[30] (Going Global) strategy that encouraged and supported the national companies to invest and build facilities abroad after two decades of inward focus of development.

The early stages of the Going Global strategy that emerged in 1999 coincided with China's admission to the WTO in 2001, which further facilitated the country's ambitious foreign policy plans.[31] Under the strategy, the government has introduced multiple schemes to assist national companies in developing a global strategy to exploit opportunities in the expanding local and international markets. The goals under the framework include increasing Chinese direct foreign investment, pursue product diversification, improving the level and quality of the projects, expanding financial channels with respect to the national market, and promoting brand recognition of Chinese companies worldwide.

In the twenty years of renewed interest of China in Africa accompanied by unprecedented level of engagement, PRC has become the most important economic partner of the continent. The implementation of the Going Out strategy at the turn of the millennium perpetuated the commercial

[30] Nash, Paul. "China's 'Going Out'Strategy." *Diplomatic Courier* 10 (2012).
[31] Policy, China. "China going global between ambition and capacity." *Beijing: China Policy* (2017): 1-11.

element in China's foreign policy agenda that has characterized the contemporary Sino-African relations.The high economic interest of the PRC in the continent is also pronounced in high-level forums held jointly with the African countries. The first historic Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held in Beijing in October 2000.[32] With participation of 44 African countries, 17 regional and international organizations, as well as representatives of business communities from China and Africa, the conference provided a platform for the development of a new, stable, and long-term partnership emphasizing equality and mutual benefit between China and African countries.[33] Up to this date, FOCAC has been held seven times, which over time has institutionalized and simplified China's efforts towards strengthening economic cooperation, and today FOCAC has become an umbrella institution inclusive of many specialized forum initiatives, such as the China–Africa Agriculture Cooperation Forum[34], the China–Africa Private Sector Forum[35], the China–Africa Developmental Financing Forum[36], and the China–Africa Peace and Security Forum[37], among others.

Starting from 2006, the PRC has been announcing loan pledges as part of the FOCAC summits and ministerial meetings.[38] However, the types of loans and their terms have been changing from forum to forum. In 2006, China announced that the USD 5 billion of support to Africa would consist of USD 3 billion of concessional loans and USD 2 billion of buyer's credit. In 2009, the pledged loan of USD 10 billion consisted entirely out of concessional loans. The trend of doubling of the financial support to Africa continued in 2012, when during the fifth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC China announced an investment and lending credit line of USD 20 billion for the development of infrastructure, agriculture, and manufacturing to support small and medium-sized enterprises in Africa.[39] During the FOCAC Summit in South Africa in 2015, the biggest aid package yet of USD 60 billion, defined as investment, consisted of USD 5 billion of grants and interest-free loans, USD 35 billions of concessional loans and buyer's credit, while the

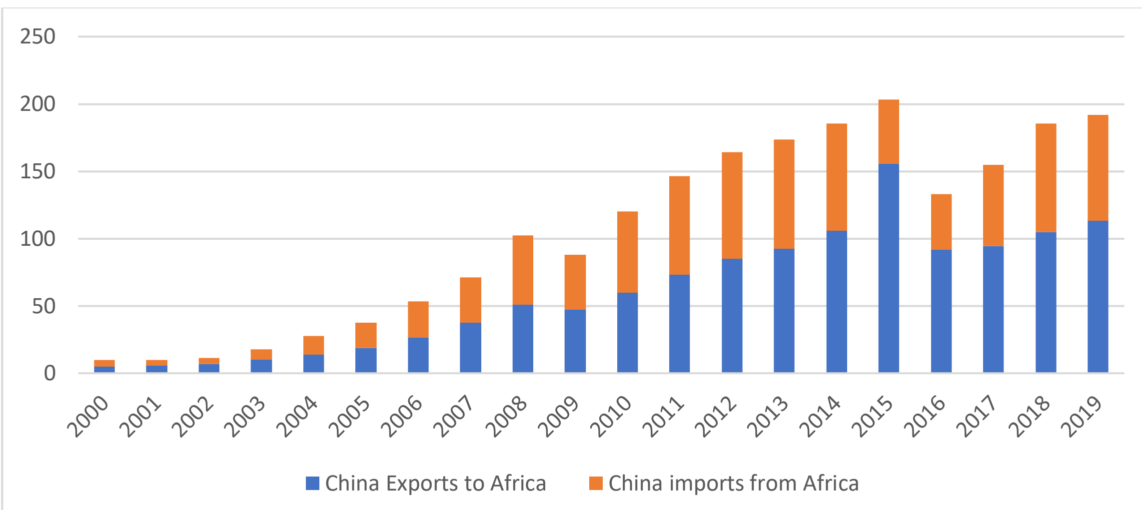
[32] Taylor, Ian. *The forum on China-Africa cooperation (FOCAC)*. Routledge, 2010.
[33] *IBID*
[34] Zambakari, Christopher, Celine Sui, Matthew Edwards, Lina Benabdallah, Ibrahim Magara, Hubert Kinkoh, Daniel N. Mlambo et al. "Courting Africa: Asian Powers and the New Scramble for the Continent." *Zambakari, Christopher, ed* (2020).
[35] *IBID*
[36] *IBID*
[37] Overview of the 1st China-Africa Peace and Security Forum
[38] Sun, Yun, and Africa Growth Initiative. "The sixth forum on China-Africa cooperation: new agenda and new approach?." *Foresight Africa: top priorities for the continent in* 2015 (2015): 10.
[39] *IBID*

rest was aimed at supporting the SME development funds and development of China-Africa production capacity. The traditional pattern of doubling the FOCAC pledges was deviated from in 2018.

This time there has been a noticeable change to the traditional structure of Chinese loans, with the decrease in concessional and zero-interest loans compared to the previous pledge. The total Chinese pledge has remained at USD 60 billion, while the amount of grants and concessional loans has declined from USD 40 billion to USD 35 billion. The Chinese government has been encouraging its domestic companies to contribute to the pledge with their own investment projects.

2.1.CHINA-AFRICA TRADE

Figure 1. CHINA-AFRICA TRADE



Source: China Africa Research Initiative Database

In the face of exploitation by industrialized nations of the Global North, South-South cooperation serves for the African countries as an alternate solution to North-South trading patterns that are skewed in favor of developed countries. African nations specialize in the extraction of natural resources for export, while also importing finished products from industrialized nations, resulting in an unbalanced global division of labour, in which Africa occupies a disadvantageous position.[40] This factor is often used to explain the economic backwardness of the African states.

[40] Asante, Richard. "China and Africa: Model of South-South Cooperation?." China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies 4, no. 02 (2018): 259-279.

Within the last twenty years, Sino-African trade has increased dramatically from almost none to USD 204 billion at its peak in 2018. At the same time, the annual growth trade has also been steadily growing. This means that the African states have embarked on getting closer and more tied to the Chinese economy. In 2008, China surpassed the USA as the main trading partner of the African continent. However, in relative terms, the African continent does not play a significant role in the trade balance of China. The volume of China's trade with Sub-Saharan Africa amount only to 4% of total imports and 3% of total exports.[41] This indicates that despite the immense growth of Sino-African trade in the last 20 years, Africa still plays a relatively insignificant role in PRC's foreign trade. In contrast, China's historic partners, such as the USA, Japan and the Republic of Korea are still dominating the trade with the PRC.

At the same time, the types of goods that are being traded between China and Africa represent the needs of both sides. While the PRC is striving to obtain as many natural resources as possible, African nations are in dire need of technology and goods with high added value.

The rapid growth in China's trade imbalance is owing to a rise in imports from Africa, particularly an increase in the importation of mineral stones and crude oil to fuel the country's economic expansion. Another characteristic of China-African trade ties is that, in recent years, China's largest trading partners in Africa have established themselves as trustworthy trading partners. From 2000 to 2019, Angola, Ethiopia, Zambia, Kenya, and Nigeria were consistently placed among the top five nations on China's trade partners list.

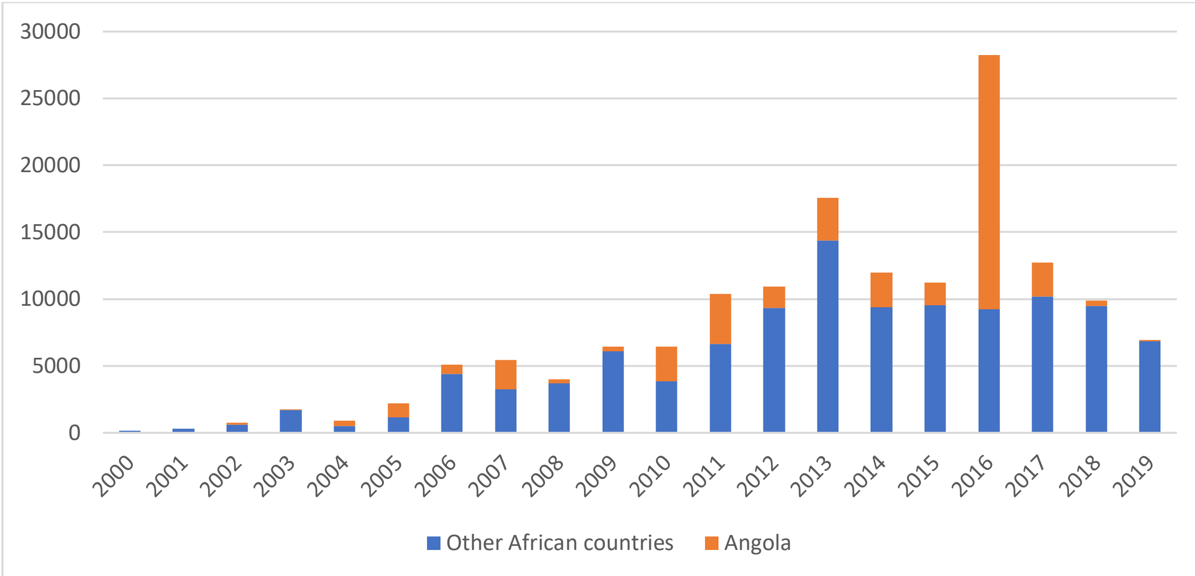
2.2.CHINESE LENDING TO AFRICA

Since the revival of China's interest in Africa in the beginning of the 2000s, the main area of Sino-African relations has been connected to intergovernmental financing, with the provided loans increasing exponentially in the last decades. The rapid increase in the loans over the last 20 years has raised questions about China's true intentions, and whether its holdings of African sovereign debt could be used to enhance its strategic and geopolitical interests.

According to the CARI database on China's lending to Africa, between 2000 and 2019, Chinese financiers have provided USD 153 billion in loans to African governments. More than 80% of these loans were borrowed for the financing of economic and social infrastructure projects, including transport, power, telecommunication, and water.

[41] World Integrated Trade Solutions Database

Figure 2. CHINESE LOANS TO AFRICA (USD MILLION)



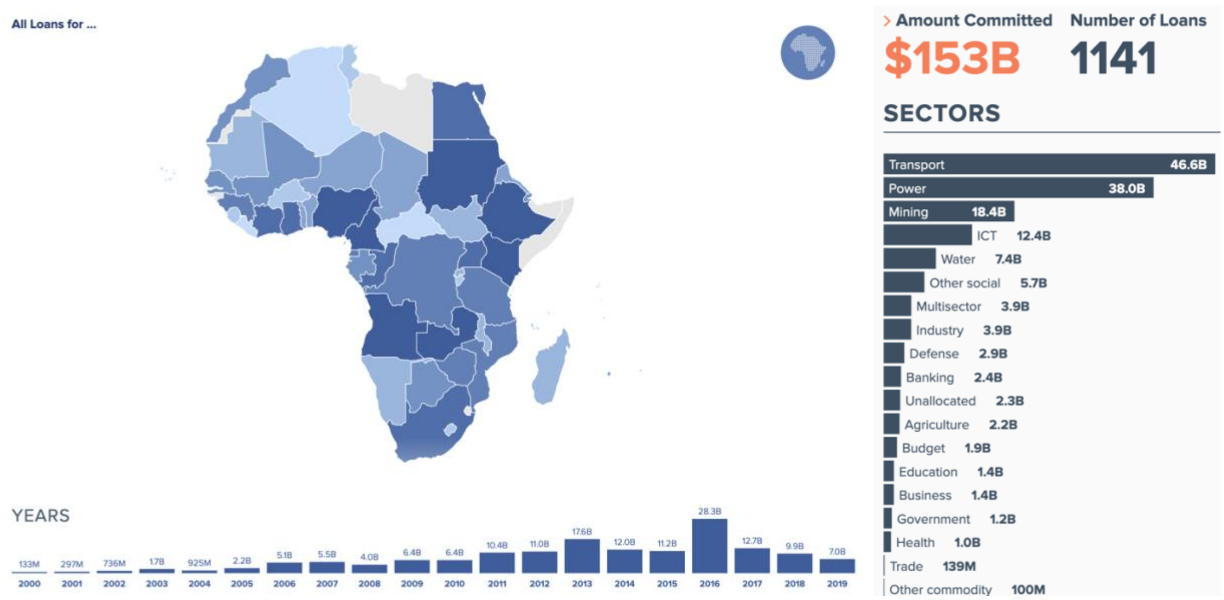
Source: China Africa Research Initiative Database

Since 2000, the annual growth of Chinese lending to African countries has drastically increased and was accompanied by the deepening of Sino-African relations both in trade, as well as in the political arena. The FOCAC summits have boosted the opportunities for China to promote its global infrastructure and trade plans on the African continent.

The loans from China to Africa grew from USD 133 million in 2000 to USD 28.3 billion during the peak in 2016. However, the division of the loans is geographically uneven, with Angola alone accounting for around 30% of all the lending to Africa. With such a significant contribution to the total share of received loans, Angola is a special case of extreme investments from China, which will be further explored in the case-study section of the paper. Excluding Angola, the peak of lending commitments to Africa came in 2013 when China launched its Belt and Road Initiative.

According to the CARI database, over the last two decades, Chinese banks and financial institutions have signed 1,141 loan commitments with African governments and state-owned enterprises. The loans are represented in different forms of official development aid, export credits, supplier's credits, and commercial loans. Angola, Ethiopia, and Zambia were among the top 3 recipients of Chinese government aid from 2000 to 2019. This occurred as official money from industrialized nations of the West dried up, owing to rising unhappiness with its development effects in Africa as well as domestic economic difficulties. China's development money became more accessible at the same time. These three top countries by Chinese investments account for around 43% of total investments in the last twenty years. At the same time, the ten countries with the largest financial contribution from China amount to more than 70% of all provided loans. Eight of these 10 nations are also the major economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for between 75 and 80 percent of the continent's GDP. Development of infrastructure in Africa benefits China directly, as with the spread of the road and port networks it can increase the capacities of other sectors that are beneficial to China.[42]

Figure 3. BREAKDOWN OF CHINESE LOANS BY COUNTRY AND SECTOR



Source: China Africa Research Initiative database

Between 2000 and 2019, the governments of African countries have borrowed more than USD 153 billion from Chinese lenders, while most of the loans were taken for the development of transport infrastructure. Around 30% or USD 46.6 billion of Chinese loans financed the development and upgrading of roads, railways, ports, airports, and harbours. Among the top countries borrowing funds for the development of infrastructure are Angola (USD 6.7 billion), Kenya (USD 6.1 billion), Ethiopia (USD 4.8 billion), and Nigeria (USD 3.9 billion).

Development of power infrastructure is the second most heavily financed sector by the Chinese financiers. The CARI database contains information on 173 loans for construction and development of infrastructure for electric power production and distribution. In the period from

[42] Carneiro & Kouame. "How much should Sub-Saharan African countries adjust to curb the increase in public debt? The World Bank

2000 to 2019, the amount of loans for these purposes amounted to USD 38 billion, while most of the projects were in renewable energy, mainly in hydroelectric power.

At USD 12.4 billion, the information and communication technology sector is the third most financed sector, followed by the development of water infrastructure (USD 7.4 billion) in urban and rural areas.

The governments and entities of Angola and Ethiopia have received USD 42.6 billion and USD 13.7 billion, respectively. Combined, the two African countries account for 36% of total loans provided by China. Other countries in the top of the list of recipients of Chinese loans include Zambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Cameroon, Sudan, and the Republic of Congo. These countries have developed hydrocarbon and other extractive industries, which are of high interest for the Chinese economy.

In the last decades, there have been rising concerns about the possibility of African countries falling into a debt trap. According to the World Bank, from 2000 to 2018, the average public debt of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa has grown from 40% to 59% of GDP, which makes it one of the most fast-growing public debt regions.[43] Among the countries with the highest rates of public debt growth are Angola, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria.

One of the biggest challenges is estimating the concrete effects of the Chinese financing on the development of the continent. From 2000 to 2014, the time of growing economic links with China, African economies grew at their fastest rate ever. At the same time, their growth could have been influenced by a number of external factors, including rising prices for oil and other natural resources, overall global development, especially in the least developed countries, as well as improvement of national economic and social policies.[44]

As a result, it's unclear to which extent the deepening of the Sino-African economic relations has been a major driver of the continent's progress. The lack of statistics has also made it difficult to understand the influence of China's official money on Africa's economy.

With the increasing number of loans taken by African governments over the last few years, the average debt-to-GDP ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa has reached 66% in 2020.[45] As these figures

[43] *IBID*

[44] Gill, Indermit S., and Kenan Karakülah. "Is China Helping Africa." *Growth and Public Debt Effects of the Subcontinent's Biggest Investor* (2019).

[45] IMF. Six Charts Show the Challenges faced by Sub-Saharan Africa

continue to rise, African countries will be compelled to divert more resources away from delivering goods and services to their populations and toward debt repayment.

In nations with relatively high levels of corruption and political instability, there is fear that the financial flows in form of loans will not be used to finance growth-promoting initiatives, but would instead contribute to the existing problems. The political stability ranking by the Global Economy includes a number of countries from Sub-Saharan region with most corrupt governments.[46]

The constant increase of public debt by African countries has a direct effect on the capacity of the governments to provide their citizens with all the necessary goods and services.[47] Furthermore, such destabilizing factors as corruption, illegal money transfers, as well as inefficient taxation are all major contributors to the burdening loans taken by African nations. Because of low income generation in the domestic African economies, debt repayment becomes an even bigger burden, regardless of its origin.[48]

When it comes to Chinese debt in particular, there are worries that the opaque nature of China's loan supply to Africa makes the true efficacy and cost of the loans uncertain. The secrecy surrounding loan agreements between African countries and Chinese organizations contributes to the idea that governments are benefiting themselves at the expense of their populations' financial well-being.[49]

This opacity has prompted concerns in Kenya, namely over the expense of the Chinese-built and funded Standard Gauge Railway and the debt that Kenya has accumulated solely as a result of this project. These talks have been fueled by media rumors that Tanzania is planning to construct an electric railway that will be twice as fast as the Kenyan line but at a quarter of the expense of the Kenyan line. Tanzania will invest $1.92 billion, which is about half of the $3.8 billion Kenya spent to construct the first phase of the railroad from Mombasa to Nairobi. As Africa's debt burden continues to climb, it is likely that Africans will scrutinize loan lines from China with more vigilance. If the lack of transparency around loan agreements between the PRC and Africa persists, it is possible that localized sinophobic narratives would emerge.

2.3.THE NEW ORDER

[46] The Global Economy. Political Stability- Country Rankings
[47] Were, Anzetse. "Debt trap? Chinese loans and Africa's development options." (2018).
[48] *IBID – p 8*
[49] *IBID – p 9*

Unlike the European powers, which were unconstrained in their exploitation of Africa, the People's Republic of China is facing certain restrictions, including the complex legacy of Chinese development, past mistakes and lessons learned from the European powers, as well as domestic political limitations[50].

As Nkrumah wrote in his book "Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism" in 1965, *"Once a territory has become nominally independent it is no longer possible, as it was in the last century, to reverse the process. Existing colonies may linger on, but no new colonies will be created. In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism."* [51]

As a result, the Chinese were forced to engage with the African states in a completely different manner. This means they've had to devise tactics for engaging independent African nations without openly breaking international norms and interfering into the internal affairs of African states as it was done during European colonialism.[52]

While China has been increasing its engagement in Africa backdropped by rapid growth in financial support to the continent, it has been simultaneously promoting and developing the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI), which is a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure investment platform which has great and long-lasting consequences both for Africa and China. Despite the obvious positive economic impact that the BRI has on the continent, there are many political and national security concerns that overshadow the benefits of the project.

China's infrastructure financing in Africa did not start with the BRI, however it has served as a great catalyst for infrastructure development on the continent, which has defined the contemporary Sino-African relationship since Xi Jinping assumed office in 2012. Today, there are 40 Sub-Saharan African countries that are signatories to the Belt and Road Initiative.[53]

For China, the projects under the Belt and Road Initiative serve as a major channel of excess domestic production capacities, industries, and natural resources. In practice this is often

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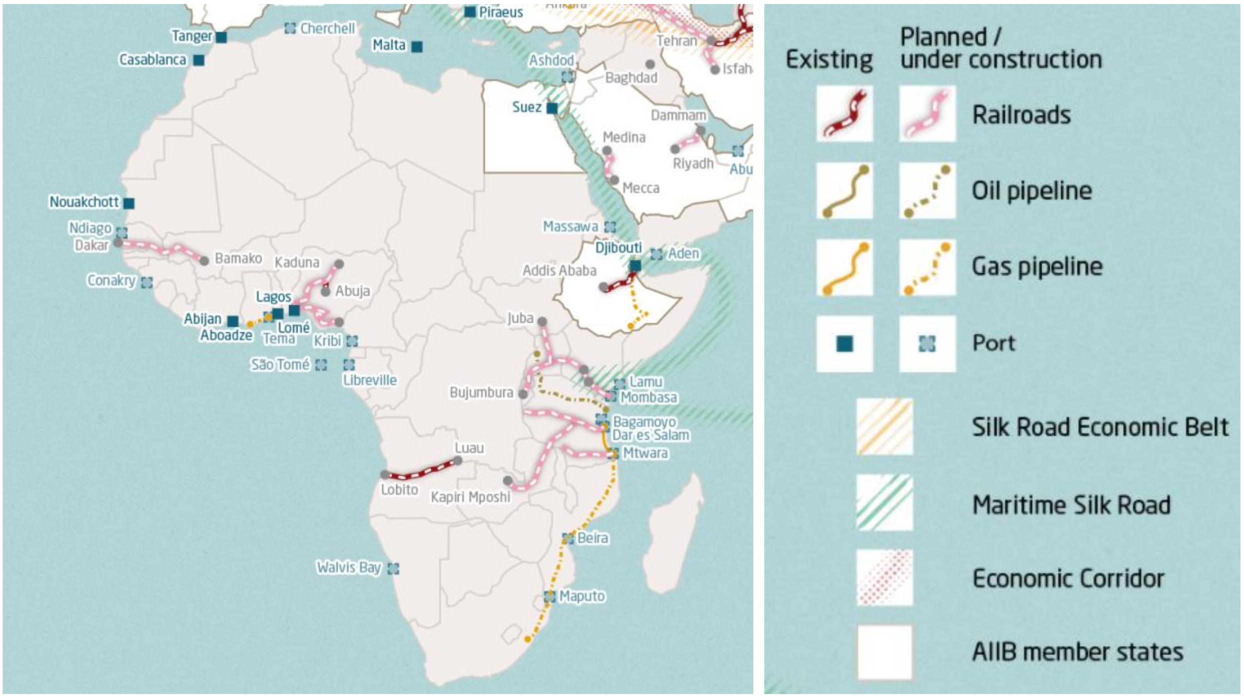
[50] Antwi-Boateng, Osman. "New World Order Neo-Colonialism: A Contextual Comparison of Contemporary China and European Colonization in Africa." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017).
[51] Nkrumah, Kwame, and Kwama Nkrumah. "Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism." (1965): 861-878.
[52] Antwi-Boateng, Osman. "New World Order Neo-Colonialism: A Contextual Comparison of Contemporary China and European Colonization in Africa." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017).
[53] Green Belt and Road Initiative. Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative.

executed by issuing of "tied loans" by China's export-promoting banks, which require a substantial amount of the loans to be linked to the procurement of Chinese goods and services.

Figure 4. AFRICA IN THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE



Source: Mercator Institute for China Studies

For Africa, the Chinese loans are attractive not only due to low interest rates compared to Western development institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but also because China has been following the "no strings attached" policy under the non-interference doctrine set down during the Bandung Peace Conference in 1955.[54]

One of the key motivations for the African countries and their governments to choose Chinese loans over those of Western countries is the "non-interference" policy of the People's Republic of China.[55] This policy has existed for decades, and its foundation can be traced back to the establishment of South-South cooperation and the signing of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence by China and African states.

In contrast, Western colonial actions destabilized and devastated pre-existing African political structures, resulting in far-reaching negative implications for the continent. Long after

[54] Brown, Kerry. "Is China's Non-interference Policy Sustainable?." *BBC News* (2013).
[55] Antwi-Boateng, Osman. "New World Order Neo-Colonialism: A Contextual Comparison of Contemporary China and European Colonization in Africa." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017).

gaining independence, African states are still indirectly influenced by the West, particularly regarding terms and conditions for the economic and social assistance. In comparison, the Chinese “non-interference” policy in its affairs provides the African states with loans that have “no strings attached”.[56].

However, there are hints that China's "non-interference policy" in Africa is strained, as seen by China's growing material interests, which are compelling it to reject the ideal of "non-interference”.[57]

The Chinese expansion is not driven by pursuit of political or administrative control over the African states[58]. The PRC has taken an approach that is based on establishing equality and trust, acknowledging that the sovereign African countries have voting power in the United Nations, where China occupies a permanent seat at the Security Council. China's "peaceful development" as a global economic giant is being thwarted by political and administrative control. China treats African countries as equals on the global arena and maintains its status as a developing country. Diplomacy and soft power are used by the Chinese to obtain influence rather than political control.

In contrast to the intricate political and administrative control of the United Kingdom and France over colonized territories in Africa, China is interested in trade rather than political or administrative control.[59] It does not seek hegemony, but rather strengthened bilateral ties. Aggressive occupation combined with strict political control of the former European colonizers would wreak havoc on the country's economy. As a result, China has developed a reputation as a peaceful growing state. China's soft power foreign policy has given it greater clout than a typical developing state. China, unlike the French, does not consider African countries to be extensions of its homeland.

Contrary the European colonial intent, such as the French, China's "peaceful growth" does not include violence or territorial takeover of the African countries.[60] France’s assimilation agenda with Africa implied that the occupied territories were considered as part of the French mainland. They were able to do so because they controlled the executive and legislative spheres of their African colonies. At the same time, China recognizes African nations' sovereignty, as evidenced

[56] *IBID – p 187*
[57] *IBID – p 186*
[58] *IBID – p 188*
[59] *IBID - p 187*
[60] *IBID- p 182*

by its non-"interference policy," which clearly states that the PRC stays out of domestic affairs of other countries for whatever reason.[61]

2.4.EUROPEAN COLONIALISM VS CHINESE INTEGRATION

The former colonial European expansion into Africa differs drastically from the approach chosen by the Peoples Republic of China. If there was a European development goal in Africa, it was overwhelmingly one-sided in the colonizers' favor. European infrastructure, such as ports and railways, was typically created to aid the exploitation and movement of raw materials from the occupied territories back to the colonizers' domestic economies.[62]

These operations were overseen by the local administration that was directly in charge of implementing the development agenda. China, unlike previous European invaders, has a more interwoven economic relationship with Africa. It has embarked on the path of developing trade relations, increasing FDI, propelling the manufacturing industry, as well as providing financial aid in form of loans.[63] As a result, China has been excessively investing the infrastructure and construction sectors.

Because the sovereignty of African states has been weakened by western financial aid restrictions, the Chinese have found it simpler to implement a policy of "non-interference," which which has proven to be a huge success by increasing the number of countries that are integrated into the Chinese agenda for Africa.[64] European colonialism, on the other hand, prospered unchecked and unfettered by an international system or international organizations until the United Nations was established after World War II in 1945.[65] However, China's engagement in Africa comes at a time when the global spread of democracy has resulted in institutionalization of such concepts as sovereignty and statehood, which allowed Africans states to engage with the PRC on a completely voluntary basis, without any preconditions.[66]

Furthermore, China's domestic limits are related to its history and cultural identity. In this regard, PRC's own experience with the Western imperialism and the legacy of that encounter have directly influenced its contemporary foreign policy. The Chinese encounter with the British

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[61] IBID – p 187
[62] IBID- p 182
[63] IBID -p 187
[64] IBID- p 189
[65] IBID -p 189
[66] IBID p 189

Empire, including the Opium wars, and losing control over Hong Kong for a century have left China with deep resentment towards Western imperialism and its mechanisms.[67]

Despite the fact that China was not colonized by the European powers in the same way as Africa, its experience with annexation of Hong Kong by the British Empire served as a reminder of the dangers of imperialism for the domestic economy.Furthermore, in contrast to the high level of economic development of the European colonizers of the twentieth century, China prefers to refer to itself as a member of the group of developing countries and has been engaged in developing the continent for decades.

In the twentieth century, formal Sino-African ties were molded by mutual distancing from the developed countries of the West, as well as and a shared periphery status in the global balance of power. Because of this shared history, China was able to approach Africa as a partner rather than an imperialist in the twentieth century. Despite the fact that China has made significant economic progress in comparison to Africa, the relationship has transitioned to one based on power dynamics, with China making the calls.[68] As a result, China has successfully separated itself from the existing international order by affiliating with the group of developing countries.

At the same time, when it comes to internal restriction of the external policy of the PRC, the government of China, like other politicians across the world, is motivated by the desire to stay in power. As a result, Chinese foreign policy, like that of many other countries, is molded and limited by internal circumstances. The stakes are far higher for Chinese leaders because, despite the total hegemony of the Communist Party, its very survival is on the line if it makes any wrong decisions in its external affairs. As a result, China's foreign policy toward Africa is no different. If the Chinese Communist Party's engagement in Africa is seen as counterproductive to the economic goals of its populace, as well as a vainglorious empire-building effort by a distant elite, the Chinese Communist Party risks a political revolution. As a result, Chinese officials take great effort to inform their countrymen that the government is pursuing a "win-win" policy in its interactions with Africa. This is backed up by policies that allow the government to fund and employ Chinese businesses and labor in the construction of large infrastructure projects.[69] For the

[67] *IBID- p 190*
[68] *IBID – p 190*
[69] *IBID – p 190*

Communist Party of the PRC, pursuing its existing Sino-Africa policy is one of the most desirable options for achieving the economic development required to keep power.

Furthermore, past experiences of the European colonial powers in Africa have provided China with many precedents, allowing it to shape its own foreign policy for Africa based on the mistakes made by Europeans. The PRC has the same unquenchable thirst for natural resources; however it is wary of the possible backlash and dangers of following the footsteps of Europeans in their quest for Africa's riches. Because China has sponsored various African national anti-colonial movements[70], it is aware of the common anti-colonial sentiment that rules in the continent. Furthermore, it is more financially sensible for China to distance itself from any relation to the uncontrolled colonialism that the Europeans engaged in in Africa, instead opting for mutually advantageous bilateral deals with particular African governments that may achieve the needed economic goals of the Communist Party at a fracture of a cost. “China’s investment in Africa does pay itself back in multiple ways economically: development and exploitation of Africa’s natural resources, access to local markets, employment opportunities for Chinese labors and service contracts for Chinese companies infrastructure projects that China funds”.[71]

Finally, though China is not a classical colonial state, it does have a neocolonial objective in Africa. The development of socio-economic ties with Africa with the main goal of progressing its own domestic economy may be seen as new neo-colonial agenda for the continent. Because China's economy is so reliant on exports and commerce, this is clearly a viable strategy. Through multilateralism and cooperation, China has managed to legitimate neo-colonialism. The reluctance of China to more aggressively pursuit its economic and military goals in Africa comes from the constraints imposed on it by the international framework, as well as China’s own notions of statehood and sovereignty.

3. SINO-COLONIALISM

The unprecedented level of integration of the Chinese economy into the African continent is often compared to neo-colonialism. At the first glance, the People’s Republic of China has always looked at Africa as a vast source of natural resources. However, there are considerable

[70] Van Mead, Nick. "China in Africa: win-win development, or a new colonialism?." *The guardian* 31 (2018).
[71] Sun, Yun. "China’s increasing interest in Africa: Benign but hardly altruistic." *Brookings. URL: https://www. brookings. edu/blog/up-front/2013/04/05/chinas-increasing-interest-inafrica-benign-but-hardly-altruistic* (2013)

differences in the types of goods that African nations are exporting to China and vice versa. While the latter is importing low-value materials and natural resources from Africa, its is exporting its own excess production capacities back to the continent.

The rapid expansion of China's activities in Africa possesses features similar to neo-colonialism.[72] The first similarity comes in the primary aim of China in the continent, which existed before the Belt and Road Initiative was launched, which is the pursuit of natural resources and materials. At the same time, there is a large discrepancy in the types and volumes of goods imported from China to the African countries, which are mainly high-value manufactured goods from the materials initially exported from Africa. The majority of FDI inflow is centered in resource-rich countries, while the same countries become more significant buyers of Chinese goods. This type of engagement has been criticized for seizing natural resources and leaving environmental degradation, fueling corruption, and raising unemployment.

Many Chinese commodities supplied to Africa have a significant competitive advantage over identical African commodities, particularly labor-intensive commodities like textiles, retail, and services. The relatively high quality and inexpensive pricing of Chinese items make them preferable than African items. China has a significant comparative advantage over other developing nations when it comes to the workers' skills and knowledge, as well as strong transportation and other well-functioning infrastructure.

China's main trade and investment ties with Africa appear to be limited to a few nations, sectors, fields, and areas. The creation of so-called "banana republics" in the colonial era stemmed from this form of economic connection, which only exported a few low-value-added items, non-processed agricultural resources, and minerals. China's imports from Africa have primarily consisted of crude and refined oil, minerals, raw chemical ingredients, and foods throughout the last decades.[73]

The economic impact of China's expansion in Africa is continuing to grow, which means that the biggest Chinese government firms operating in the continent have a significant impact on some countries' vital industries. In its turn, the development of these industries is reliant on the constant flow of Chinese loans and investments.

[72] Junbo, Jian, and Donata Frasheri. "Neo-colonialism or De-colonialism? Chinas economic engagement in Africa and the implications for world order." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 8, no. 7 (2014): 185-201.
[73] *IBID*

China's actions have had a number of negative social and political consequences in Africa, including environmental degradation, human rights violations, corruption, a lack of respect for indigenous culture, and self-enclosure among African communities.[74]

The following chapter is devoted to the analysis of three African countries, the economies of which have been deeply penetrated by the Chinese investment machine. The provision of low-interest loans with “no strings attached”, as well as a constant flow of Foreign Direct Investment allowed China to establish itself as an ally and a trustful development partner of Africa. The PRC has employed several strategies and used a number of financial mechanisms which constitute China’s soft power.

3.1. ANGOLA

Over the last decades, one country has been dominating over other African states in terms of engagement and amounts of investments received from the People’s Republic of China – Angola. During the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to Angola in 2006, then the President Jose Eduardo dos Santos described the contemporary Sino-Angolan relationship as “China needs natural resources, and Angola wants development.”[75] This statement still holds strong even almost two decades later.

The contemporary Sino-Angolan credit relations can be traced to 2002, when China’s Export-Import Bank and the China Construction Bank contributed USD 145 million in loans towards the rebuilding of the infrastructure damaged in the Civil War, including reconstruction of the vital railway that connects the seaside capital of Luanda with mainland Angola, as well as expansion of power systems in the main cities of the country.[76]

A crucial event in the relations between the countries was marked in 2004 by a provision of a USD 2 billion oil-backed infrastructure development loan to Angola.[77] In contrast to credits from China, the loans and conditions offered by Western financial institutions, like the International Monetary Fund, required an introduction of a stabilization strategy for the country, increasing transparency, and decreasing inflation, which meant slashing government

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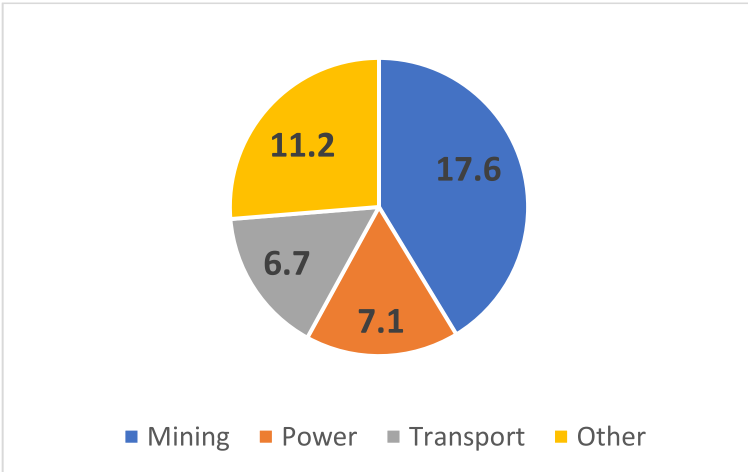
[74] *IBID*
[75] Democracy Speaks- Sino-Angolan Cooperation: Mutually Beneficial or Neo-Colonial? (2019)
[76] Kiala, Carine. "China–Angola aid relations: strategic cooperation for development?." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 17, no. 3 (2010): 313-331.
[77] Konijn, Peter. "Chinese resources-for-infrastructure (R4I) swaps: An escape from the resource curse." (2014).

spending.[78] As a result, the infrastructure recovery coveted by Angola would have to be postponed until the economy gets back on track. Chinese loans with "no strings attached" were preferable to a post-colonial state that wanted to avoid any interference into their domestic policy. However, the peculiarity of this deal and its unprecedented nature lays in the conditions that Angola had to accept – 70% of the infrastructure projects were to be contracted to Chinese companies, while also providing a quota of 10,000 barrels of oil per day to China out of overall export volume.[79]

Figure 5. CHINESE LOANS TO ANGOLA BY SECTOR 2000 – 2019 (USD BILLION).



Source: China Africa Research Initiative Database

Angola's natural resources are of great importance to China, and its strategy of providing large and favorable loans is closely linked to the enhancing the country's advantageous position in exploiting those resources while also boosting its own economic progress, as evidenced by the conditions imposed by China to repay the loans in oil or natural resources. Understanding these characteristics makes it simpler to comprehend the reasons for China's eagerness to lend money to Angola without imposing any constraints.

Oil cooperation plays a key role in the strategic alliance between the Peoples' Republic of China and Angola. In Angola, the production of oil and connected activities contribute significantly to the economy and account for more than 50% of the country's GDP and over 70%

[78] *IBID*

[79] Kiala, Carine. "China–Angola aid relations: strategic cooperation for development?." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 17, no. 3 (2010): 313-331.

of the government revenue.[80] Both nations are fully engaged in sustaining and extending the bilateral relations via growth of trade and increasing investments in such key sectors as industry, infrastructure, development of cities, as well as further development and exploitation of natural resources and energy.[81]

The Angolan government has been enjoying investment financing from China for the last two decades, which has been provided not in direct cash transfers, but rather in allocation of capital for the Chinese state firms in order to construct infrastructure projects in exchange for oil and other natural resources. Despite the immense investment portfolio of China in Angola, this progress has not translated into overall development of the population, which raises questions whether the Chinese debt-trap actually exists. Furthermore, according to Angola's Finance Minister Vera Daves, in 2020, the country's public debt to China was estimated at just over USD 20 billion. This sum was provided for the capitalizing of the Angolan oil company, as well as financing infrastructure projects. All of this puts Angola in situation where while wants to continue the development of its own economy with China-backed loans, it might find itself owing more debt that it can repay.

3.2. ZAMBIA

China's interest in Africa is pronounced in its desire of raw materials. Copper is Zambia's main commodity and represents over 75% of the total exports of the country[82], as well as 70 % of Africa's total copper production. China's growing appetite provided an opportunity for Zambia to embark on strengthening its ties with the PRC.

States that have unstable economies, such as Zambia, are especially eager to accept the unconditional and low interest loans from China.[83] However, after a certain accumulation of debt, the relationship that was promoted as partnership might alter drastically. Instead, it transforms into a creditor-debtor relationship, giving the upper hand to whomever is the debtor in this situation, which is the Chinese government[84]. The power dynamics in the partnership become extremely uneven, and the partnership becomes unbalanced. Since 2019, the country has been under high pressure after it failed to pay for its import and defaulted on some infrastructure

[80] CIA The World Factbook- Angola Profile
[81] Begu, Liviu Stelian, Maria Denisa Vasilescu, Larisa Stanila, and Roxana Clodnitchi. "China-Angola Investment Model." *Sustainability* 10, no. 8 (2018): 2936.
[82] World Integrated Trade Solutions Database
[83] Kaburu, Mercy. "CHINA'S NEO-COLONIZATION OF AFRICA CASE STUDY: ZAMBIA."
[84] *IBID- p 18*

projects. In 2020, Zambia's sovereign debt amounted to 96% of its GDP. And as a major holder of this debt, China has the freedom to employ hard power instead of soft power, which it has been doing since the Zambia's descend into default happened.

China now has a presence in many elements of Zambian government and institutions. For instance, defaulting on these loans has resulted in China owning a controlling stake in a media company (TopStar) and gaining access to Zambia's National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC)[85]. This provides China the ability to influence what Zambians see, hear, and learn from the news. This has an impact on their perceptions of China and its actions in Zambia, as well as the strength of the Zambian government. Zambia's energy company and its international airport in Lusaka are likewise under Chinese authority and ownership.[86]

The increase of the Chinese FDI in Zambia has resulted in the weakening of the country's economic development. The mining industry has historically y been the country's most valuable and highest-earning sector. A large number of Zambian companies have been dependent on the sector for the last hundred years. China's penetration into the mining industry was marked by privatization of the sector in the 1990s[87]. Despite such positive factors of the Chinese intervention, like increased employment, development of infrastructure and overall contribution to the economy, there have been a number of social problems in connection to Chinese domination in the extractive sector. There have been cases of underpaying local workers, forcing to work longer hours, ignoring safety measure, abusing of employees, as well as blocking union activities. [88]

While China's investment has had some positive effects, the negative effects exceed the positive by a wide margin. Even though the PRC has greatly contributed to the creation of jobs, Zambian individuals are often assigned to lower-level positions and are subjected to misconduct and abusive behaviour in their places of employment, while the highest-ranking positions are saved for the citizens of China.[89]

One of the main tools of the Sino-colonial agenda is the weaking and seizing of the Zambian domestic market. China's position in the economy has evolved from providing

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[85] *IBID- p 18*
[86] *IBID – p 18*
[87] *IBID- p 19*
[88] Global Times. "China's influence on African work ethic gives it an edge" (2021)
[89] Kaburu, Mercy. "CHINA'S NEO-COLONIZATION OF AFRICA CASE STUDY: ZAMBIA."

employees to the local firms, to government-owned enterprises holding majority stakes in the country's most important sectors. Zambia's most valuable industry, the mining sector, has found itself in possession by the Chinese state-controlled companies, which means that China has taken charge of this industry. As a result, Chinese citizens constitute the majority of workforce employed in these enterprises. Despite the abundance of labour in Zambia, the PRC motivates its decision by arguing that the domestic labour is too unskilled. In reality, China is preserving its own interest and provides job for its own population.

Learning from the lessons of Zambia, Chinese financiers and lending institutions decided to distant themselves from providing financial assistance to countries that are already deep in debt. The case of Zambia reflects a situation where the Western financial institutions are backing out on providing debt relief to countries that are major borrowers from China, fearing that the provided funding would be used to repay PRC's loans. The Chinese lending strategy in Zambia has created a precedent for possible failures and opens the door for discussion on the true inclinations of China.

3.3. KENYA

Kenya represents another African nation that proved to be of essential significance in China's agenda for the continent, owing to the nation's geographical location, which offers China an important competitive advantage. The Port of Mombasa, Kenya's busiest port, has become one of the main factors driving the country's relevance in the Chinese development strategy.[90]

First of all, the geographic location of Kenya and the Port of Mombasa play a crucial role in developing the Belt and Road Initiative and providing an advantageous entry point into the markets of Eastern and Southern Africa. Furthermore, the position of Mombasa opens a gateway to mainland Kenya and its neighbours, which present a potential to enter the markets of landlocked African countries.[91]

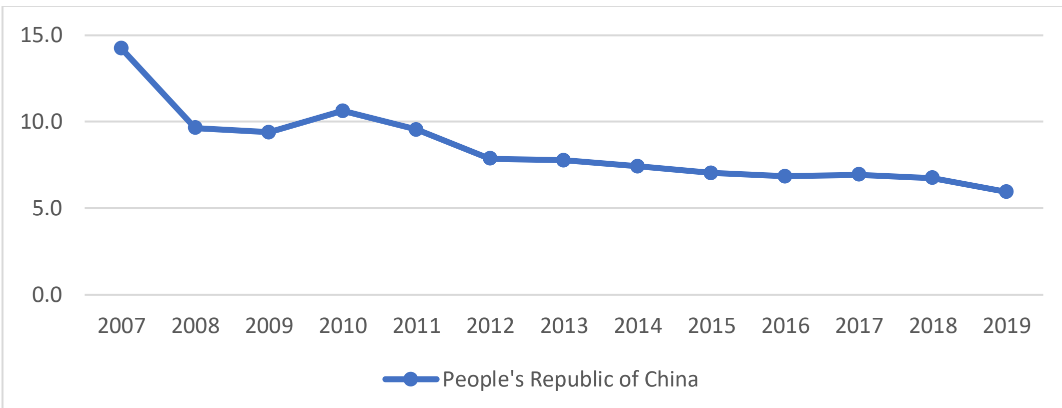
Another crucial factor that adds to China's appeal to invest in Kenya is the country's comparatively low score in the political stability index compared to other African states. In 2019, Kenya was ranked 40th out of a total of 53 countries.[92]Kenya's unstable political climate is beneficial to the PRC, as a poorly managed government is more willing to accept foreign aid from

[90] Beyer, Peter Johan, Niklas Lehrmann Christoffersen, Robin Winther Kock, and Sari Wenzel Selvejer. "Development or Neo-Colonialism: China's Presence and Diplomacy in Kenya."
[91] *IBID – p 12*
[92] The Global Economy. Political Stability- Country Rankings

China. In contrast, countries and governments with stable domestic conditions are more motivated to generate jobs and protect its own citizens.[93]

There are clear signs that Kenya has fallen into an economic dependence from China.[94] Kenya's entire economy demonstrates that the country is far from self-sufficient and that it is dependent on Chinese economic leadership. One of the key factors driving Sino-African relations might be related to the country's openness due to political and economic instability. China's gross domestic product growth rate has been declining in recent years (Figure 6). The annual growth of China's GDP has seen a slowdown since 2007, while the country's economic potential has been characterized as "running out of steam"[95]inside its domestic borders.

Figure 6. CHINA GDP GROWTH (ANNUAL %)



Source: The World Bank Database

This might explain, in part, China's interest in Kenya and Africa Since China is reliant on growth, but it is no longer available inside their own borders in with the same intensity, the Chinese have turned their attention to Africa, which is in need of support and development.[96] As a result, the factor of political stability is important in the context of Sino-colonialism.

One of the most significant aspects of this problem is that China's upper middle class has seen a significant rise in recent years, as large segments of marginalized groups have obtained education, providing them with the possibility to get higher positions.[97] At the same time, the

[93] Beyer, Peter Johan, Niklas Lehrmann Christoffersen, Robin Winther Kock, and Sari Wenzel Selvejer. "Development or Neo-Colonialism: China's Presence and Diplomacy in Kenya
[94] *IBID – p 6*
[95] Fraser Institute. "Warning: the Chinese economy may soon run out of steam" (2018)
[96] Beyer, Peter Johan, Niklas Lehrmann Christoffersen, Robin Winther Kock, and Sari Wenzel Selvejer. "Development or Neo-Colonialism: China's Presence and Diplomacy in Kenya."
[97] *IBID – p 17*

rapid economic development urged the PRC to seek for new sources of cheap and low-skilled labour, which is now less available in mainland China. The Chinese expansion in Kenya has been driven by the necessity to maintain high growth levels of the economy, while the accompanying investments and development of natural resources has served as the main tool driving this growth[98]

A combination of continuous access to education and economic growth has transformed China from a developing to an industrialized country, resulting in Chinese businesses heavily relying on low-cost and low-skill labor, which is now scarcely available within China's borders.

The development of natural resources sectors serves as the necessary fuel in terms of igniting domestic development and stimulating economic expansion.[99]The establishment of a basic infrastructure, however, is required in order to convey those resources to ports and then export them out of port. Infrastructure projects account for a disproportionately large portion of Kenya's economic links with and debt to China, as seen by the country's reliance on Chinese infrastructure. Due to several major infrastructure projects, Kenya has borrowed more than USD 9 billion dollars in the period from 2006 to 2017, resulting in the increase of the sovereign debt of Kenya by 400% since 2013. Kenya's current external debt is more than USD 60 billion, which is around 61% of the GDP. This includes the financing of the construction of the Standard Gauge Railway, a more than $3 billion USD Chinese-funded project that links the Kenyan capital of Nairobi to the seaside city of Mombasa.

However, there has been a lot of debate about the efficacy of the project, as well as the socio-economic restraints that it is imposing on the government of Kenya. For the operation of the railway, Kenya currently pays a monthly fee of USD 1 million to China's Africa Star Railway Operation Company that runs the railway.[100]The large amounts of accumulated debt by the Kenyan government have resulted in the inability even to pay the costs of using the railway in its own country. Dubbed as "the railroad to nowhere", this infrastructure serves an omen for other African nations, depicting a situation where the interests of the domestic economy are being neglected in favor of the neo-colonizing power. As Kenya is trying to negotiate the terms

[98] *IBID – p 17*
[99] *IBID- p 18*
[100] VOA News. "Kenya's Chinese-Built Railway Proves Pricey"

of payment, the PRC has demonstrated its purely pragmatic and economic interest by keeping its stand and exploiting the railway for its own benefit.

CONCLUSION

In the 21st century, China has emerged as a global power, which has led to a fundamental change in the key development players in Africa. Chinese officials, however, have taken a far different strategy to growing their economic and geopolitical influence in the continent, compared to their predecessors, the former European colonizers of the continent. Since the vote on China's sole official representative to the United Nations General Assembly in 1971, the People's Republic of China has been using soft power in the form of investments and loans for socio-economic and infrastructure projects in order to gather as many allies as possible in the polarized world of the time. Five decades later, and the PRC has become one of the most crucial development partners of Africa.

The Chinese development vision for the African states has placed a strong emphasis on “win-win” relationship and South-South cooperation. Nonetheless, the methods and conditions under which China is giving assistance to African nations have been the subject of heated dispute among Sino-optimists and Sino-pessimists. However, although the latter have argued that China's entry into African countries is mutually beneficial, there have been troubling signs that the actual aims of the People's Republic of China are being masked beneath the apparently altruistic and positive development agenda. While the European colonizers relied primarily on physical and military force to maintain their hegemony over the continent, China's expansion into Africa has been multi-faceted and has deeply penetrated the economies and social spheres of the countries that are of the greatest interest to the Communist Party.

The main goal of the current Master Thesis was to try to identify the peculiarity of the Chinese engagement with African countries, while trying to analyze the underlying consequences of the unprecedented level of integration between a country and a continent.

China’s penetration into the socio-economic spheres of the African countries is often compared to neo-colonialism. Like the European colonial powers of the past, the PRC entered the African continent with the same insatiable strive for raw materials to fuel the development of the domestic economy. A constant flow of natural resources paved the way for the so called “China’s economic miracle”, which resulted in a constant increase of domestic production capacities. Consequently, China found itself in an advantageous position, importing raw materials from Africa, processing them domestically, and then exporting back to the continent as finished products.

All of this enabled the PRC to become the most influential partner of Africa. Despite the obvious signs of a fully-fledged neo-colonial relationship between China and the African states, the Chinese have found a way to institutionalize and legitimize this type of hegemony through multilateralism and cooperation.

China's interest in the Africa is not equally represented in all the countries of the continent. Furthermore, the analysis of the loan and Foreign Direct Investment patterns gives a better understanding of PRC's true implications for the development of Africa. The dispersion of financial assistance in the continent has been influenced by the immediate goals of the Chinese Communist Party, which strives to maintain the double-digit growth rates by any means. In this regard, the allocation of funds for development in Africa has been concentrated in a small number of countries and sectors – the top ten recipients of Chinese official finance account for more than 70% of total financing, while development of transport, power and mining infrastructure are the most heavily-invested industries, which are crucial for the further progression of China's Belt and Road Initiative and continuation of positive domestic growth rates.

To identify the peculiarity of the Chinese development agenda for Africa, the current Master Thesis attempted to analyze three countries and their types of engagement with the PRC in more detail. The countries chosen for the case studies (Angola, Kenya, Zambia) represent three different situations and motivations for the Chinese expansion into Africa.

In the last 20 years, Angola has received the largest amount of financial aid among all the African countries, which was perpetuated by the openness of the Angolan government to Chinese investments. By setting a precedent of backing the Chinese loans with oil exports, Angola has put itself in a situation, where it now fully depends on the Chinese investment machine. With the public debt to China well over 50%, Angola is trying exploit the availability of the Chinese loans, while at the same signing itself into a dubious arrangement.

In contrast to Angola, PRC's interest in Kenya is mainly represented by its geographical location. The slowdown of the annual GDP growth forced China to seek for new sources of raw materials more actively. Thanks to its strategic location, Kenya has seen major investments in the development of transport infrastructure, connecting the coastal area of the country with the mainland. At the same time, the country's low performance on the political stability presented China with a perfect opportunity to provide its assistance to the country that has found itself left without aid from Western development institutions. By offering a helping hand to Kenya, the PRC has opened a new market for its excess capacities and state-companies that are hungry for growth. Unlike Angola, which is a large petroleum state, Kenya does not have the option of backing its loans with natural resources. Over the years of accumulating debt, the PRC has taken its lion's share from the economy of Kenya by seizing control of the vital railway, which was meant to progress the development if the country.

Zambia became the first African country to experience the negative consequences of a constant flow of credit from China. Unrestrained borrowing by the government has resulted in accumulation of excessive amount of bilateral debt to the PRC. The unconditionality and low cost of these loans have led to the establishment of creditor-debtor relations between the states. As a result, after being unable to pay its debt, Zambia has given control of the largest state media corporation to China, as well as the ownership to the Zambian electricity corporation and the International Airport in Lusaka.

All these examples are only a drop in all the red-tape and debt-trap diplomacy that China is engaged in in Africa. Countries of the continent that are rich in natural resources have had an upper hand over those that can only offer their land, as they receive more investment from China and can longer sustain the growth of their domestic economies. The PRC is eager to provide its financial and technical assistance to any African country that can serve its cause, implicitly or explicitly, in sustaining the rapid positive growth of the mainland.

However, the last twenty years of Sino-African relations have provided several troubling signs that China has embarked on the path of Sino-colonialism. From seizing of ports and railways, penetrating strategic sectors and industries of the African states, to forcing countries into default by piling them with concessional loans "with no strings attached", the PRC has shown its appetite for the riches of Africa. The desire of cheap loans for the development of their domestic economies puts African nations in a peculiar situation, where they have no other option, but to opt into the Chinese dependency trap.

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