

# China in the Eyes of Africa

A textual analysis of the Nigerian and South African blogosphere regarding China's activity on the African continent

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# Abstract

An analytical reading of the Nigerian and South African online debate regarding China's engagement in Africa is here presented, with the purpose to contribute with knowledge from an African perspective. This thesis is a qualitative textual analysis of ideas where I have classified arguments from blogs and articles into different categories, compiled by Chris Alden, to view China in Africa as a developing partner (positive approach), a competitor (skeptical approach) or a colonizer (negative approach). I have used these categories as an analytic framework with theories of structuralism and South-South cooperation, Internationalism/liberal interdependence logic and imperialistic thoughts and characterized the bloggers argumentation. I found that the China in Africa discourse has been given rather slender attention in the Nigerian and South African online debate during 2009. However, when the topic is discussed the debate is variegated, but skeptical arguments are dominating for both countries. Nigerians are focusing on the problems with cheap Chinese products and labour migration, while South Africans are more concerned with moral values. Nigerians are however much more critical to the Western way of judging the Chinese engagement and still see possible opportunities in the cooperation if the own government takes its responsibility.

*Key words:* blogosphere, "China in Africa", Nigeria, South Africa, textual analysis of ideas

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# 1 Introduction

China's remarkable speed of engagement on the African continent has gained a lot of publicity during the last few years. Just a decade ago, the cooperation between Asia's growing superpower and African countries was rather unknown to the general public, and the evidence of China in Africa was limited. Today, there are Chinese investments in almost every country with hundreds of major Chinese businesses and hundreds of thousands of Chinese workers spread all over the continent. However, the reactions in focus mainly come from the Western part of the world. Sometimes we hear the Chinese angle of approach and from time to time African leaders state their view of the discussion. "There is urgent needs to listen to what Africans themselves are saying about China's influence in Africa" stated Giles Mohan and Marcus Power in *Review of African Political Economy* (2008:26). This is what I am going to do in my thesis.

## 1.1 Purpose and research question

The purpose is to contribute with knowledge of African opinions about the Chinese activities on the continent, and doing so by analyzing parts of the African blogosphere and other online media such as: newspapers, online magazines, and community sites. This empirical selection of material has a purpose in itself since it will not only provide information on African opinion making, but also give a hint of what role online media and web communication have in these two powerful African countries today in terms of civil participation in important debates in the society. My research question will be:

*What opinions characterize the Nigerian and South African online debate regarding China's activity in Africa?*

Since the question has a high level of abstraction I will tighten up the thesis by using a framework of already existing ways of describing China in Africa. This will be further presented in the coming segments.

## 1.2 Theoretical base

How can we understand China's activity in Africa? Is it just the colonizing mission of the 21<sup>st</sup> century or is it an example of classical interdependence logic

where countries in the South are finding new ways out of their marginalisation? The China in Africa discourse is huge and so is the amount of perspectives one can choose to analyze the debate from, perhaps as a geo-economic struggle between the East and the West (Carmody – Owusu 2007) or as a Neo-liberalisation of Africa (Satgar 2009)? Is China's engagement in Africa about imperialism, investments or development? In this wide field of research the South African Institute of foreign affairs has established a research project called China in Africa Project to investigate the emerging relationship between China and African countries. Chris Alden, head of the project, has written several books on the issue and in his book from 2007 *China in Africa*, he has summarized the reactions around the world on the topic into three different categories of thoughts; China as 'developing partner', China as 'economic competitor', and China as 'colonizer' (2007:5).

I claim that these three categories can be understood in terms of structural theory with focus on South-South cooperation, Internationalism and liberal interdependence logic, and neo-colonial/imperialistic thoughts. These can also be said to represent the different rhetoric from China, African leaders and the Western world. China has gained a lot of ground among many African leaders with its focus on South-South cooperation, mutual benefits and win-win situations. The media in the West on the other hand, has a tendency to focus on China's negative impacts on the continent with the stereotype picture of African weakness, Western trusteeship and Chinese ruthlessness (Mawdsley 2008). China as a competitor is somewhat in the middle with a sceptical touch but also an open question; what's in it for Africa? For my theoretical discussion I will borrow Alden's categories to structure the different thoughts on the China in Africa discourse, therefore my thesis will have the characteristics of a theory consuming study where centre of attention is the case and not the theory (Esaiasson 2007:42). Focus will be laid on the online discussion in Nigeria and South Africa, with the theoretical categories as a framework, to see if the discussion in the African blogosphere is following the same pattern as Chris Alden has outlined on China in Africa or if there are other ideas to discover.

### 1.3 Method and Material

The method for the study is a qualitative textual analysis with the purpose to clarify the line of thoughts in the Nigerian and South African blogosphere regarding China's activities on the continent. When making a textual analysis there are several different directions to choose from, where the common ground is to discern and investigate different parts of the text and assorted phenomenon that relate to varying text aspects (Bergström – Boréus 2005: 18). One methodological way could be to approach the African blogosphere with a pure discourse analysis with an agenda of constructivism. Another way could be a content analysis where the counting of words would be my tool to characterize ideas. The method I will use is focused on the aspect of signification of the text, where one wants to do an in-

investigation of certain ideas or ideologies in texts or in an important debate in the society (2005:19). The choice to do a textual analysis of ideas is based on my prejudice of the China in Africa discourse, as Aldens' three categories define. I will first compile the arguments used in the discussion, a method with similar characteristics as for an argumentation analysis. This will be my tool to discover common ideas among the debaters. The purpose is to say something about the text through the analytical reading that is not obvious from first sight (Beckman 2005:49). When doing a textual analysis of ideas, one can have an open approach to the material where the answers to the questions determines what one will find in the research material or one can work with predefined categories (Esaiasson 2005:245). Since I have already presented three categories for my theoretical framework I will also use them in my empirical analysis to keep the line of argument through the thesis. However, the categories are not to be seen as narrow ideal-types which is a commonly used tool in textual analysis (Bergström – Boréus 2000:157). Instead they will be used as an open framework to classify parts of the discussion where a positive (South-South -partner), negative (colonizer) or sceptical (competitor) approach to China in Africa will be investigated.

The material I have found for my analysis is collected from well used sources but when doing a manual search the reliability could suffer (Bergström & Boreus 2005:86). It is me as the researcher, who has chosen the material and another researcher might have chosen differently, but since I don't have the intention of doing a quantitative content analysis with generalizing ambition, the reliability will not create a major problem for my analysis. Another important factor to keep in mind when doing a textual analysis is the interpretation aspect. It could be argued that a researcher from the Western world will have prejudices that could affect the reading of African blogs since the distance between the interpreter and the text is wide. The problem with the researchers previous experiences is however not unique for qualitative textual analysis, but for all social sciences. One way to handle the problem is to keep an open argumentation and be aware of the risks (Esaiasson 2005:250).

My study cases, Nigeria and South Africa, are not to be seen as representative for the entire African blogosphere. Their feature of regional powers where South Africa is the continent's largest economy and Nigeria it's largest consumer market (Daniel – Bhengu 2009:145) make them interesting to study in relation to the China in Africa discourse; both one by one but also with some comparative aspects. I have chosen, however, not to do an absolute comparative study of the countries since my main interest is to study what the blogs say about China's activities and not to investigate the differences between the two countries. Therefore, I will look upon them as two separate cases, both with great influence on African politics and economics.

### 1.3.1 The African blogosphere

The African blogosphere is organized through communities and blog aggregators where contributors can sign up from every African country and from abroad. There are also country-specific communities and aggregators for Nigeria and South Africa, but it is a divergence between how the blogs are organized in the two countries. In South Africa, the media has a very strong influence on the civil society and the blogs are a common element in the newspapers as a natural part of daily news. Every day one can find the most popular blogs in the main newspapers and a few times a week there are reviews made on blogs in the African blogosphere. In other words, the blogosphere is a prominent part of everyday journalism. The Nigerian blogosphere on the other hand, is much more isolated from the traditional news magazines on the internet. Instead there are communities for the Nigerian blogosphere where blogs and articles are collected from both national and international sources on the web.

In my study of the online debate about China in Africa, I have both searched through communities for the whole African blogosphere and in country-specific ones; I have scanned through the main newspapers in Nigeria and South Africa and online magazines for articles and columns touching upon the subject.<sup>1</sup> I have used “google advanced search” and “google blog search” where I can choose region, site code<sup>2</sup>, and words that I want to include in the text, for example; China, Chinese, investment, economy, aid, resources and “China in Africa”. This wide principle of selection could create a bigger uncertainty but also opens up for more interesting findings (Esaiasson 2005:249).

Given that my study cases are Nigeria and South Africa, I have focused on blogs, articles and columns where the author is writing in a Nigerian/South African context. For my analysis, I have picked ten writers in each country, who are active bloggers or columnists and charted their arguments and following commentator’s arguments on China in Africa issues. I have chosen the authors with regard to how popular their blogs are and how much discussion their blog posts generate. For a more detailed review of the search procedure see appendix 2.

Since the online debate is a constantly moving source of material I have focused my analysis on the recent debate to investigate what aspects are gaining attention right now. The blogs I have studied date from January the 1<sup>st</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup> 2009.

## 1.4 Delimitation

The number of Internet users has grown strongly in Africa during the last decade, even though the access rate still remains low. In the end of year 2000 the region had 3 million Internet users; by the end of 2008 the number was 32 million. The annual growth on both Internet users and mobile cellular subscribers in Africa has

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 for presentation of the used news sources and community sites

<sup>2</sup> (za = South Africa and ng = Nigeria)

been twice the growth of the world (Maniewicz et al. 2009:1). The increase in Internet users was led by Nigeria which alone added 10.9 million new Internet users from 2000 to 2008 (2009:5). According to a recent report from ITU (International Telecommunication Union), the country had 7.3 users per 100 inhabitants in 2008. The number for South Africa was 8.6 users per 100 inhabitants.

The segregation between the users, where an overwhelming majority of the users are going to be the well-educated middle class in the cities, will affect the perspectives of my study. It will inevitably be a study of the opinions among the elite.

## 2 The research perspective on China in Africa

As stated above the Chinese engagement has gained different reactions from around the world and in this section I will shed some light on the different approaches of the research on China in Africa. The purpose is not to cover the whole China in Africa research debate but to give an illustration of the ongoing discussion on the topic with help from Chris Alden's categories; 'developing partner', 'competitor' and 'colonizer'.

### 2.1 China as developing partner – South-South cooperation

Alden's *first* category of thought, China as developing partner, states that "China's involvement in Africa is part of a long-term strategic commitment to the continent, one that is driven by its own economic needs, a commitment to transmit its development experience to the continent and a desire to build effective cooperative partnerships across the developing world" (2007:5).

The cooperation between African countries and China has without any exaggeration completely exploded the last decade; however, the relation is not a new phenomenon. Connections can be traced back centuries but the more important diplomatic relations were made during the 1950<sup>s</sup> and the anti-colonial struggles for independence (Taylor 2006, Le Pere – Shelton 2007, Large 2008, Lagerkvist 2008a). During this time the South-South concept got an upsurge by the new established relation where the focus was mutual economic assistance between 'poor friends' (Mohan – Power 2008). This was also the time when China proclaimed its principals for international partnership through Zhou Enlai, who served as the first Premier of PRC side by side with Chairman Mao. This principles consist of mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence (Talor 2006:18), principles that China still hold on to very tightly in international politics (Lagerkvist 2008b).

That the rise of China's involvement in Africa today is about South to South cooperation is often proclaimed both by Chinese and African elites. This is a position the Western world never can compete with and during the 2003 trade summit, China and leaders from African countries agreed to build political and economical ties to improve the position of poor countries in the world as a response to the

Western dominance (Carmody – Owusu 2007:509). From a structuralistic point of view South-South trade is one of the most important policy changes for developing countries to gain some economic progress. It would generate possibilities for developing countries to develop technologies that are suitable for the South, to counter the advantage of Northern Multi National Companies and to create competitiveness for the business in the South (Spero – Hart 2003:178).

Broadman asserts that South-South cooperation has reached new unpredictable levels with the explosion of commerce between African countries and China and that this increase in exchange in the developing world is “one of the most significant features of the current global economy” (Broadman 2008:87). According to Le Pere and Shelton this increasing cooperation is playing a key role in reshaping global trade that could benefit even the poorest of the developing countries. In their book *China, Africa and South Africa, South-South co-operation in a global era* they emphasize that both China and South Africa have become important players in the international community in finding new South strategies (2007:85).

In the interpretation of a long-term relation between China and Africa there is a focus on the growing trade in both directions. Even if it so far largely has been based on China’s demands for natural resources and its advantage of manufactured products, Broadman asserts that there is evidence of an increasing import in China of resource-based, manufactured products from Africa (2008:106). IMF reported, before the global economic meltdown in 2008, an increasing growth rate in Africa for several years in a row (IMF 2007), Le Pere and Shelton stress that this is partly due to increased commodity demands from China. They also point to the fact that the West’s many years of aid and advice only has contributed to a rather limited improvement on African countries economic development and that the Chinese engagement offers new possibilities for development (2007:136).

“South-South economic cooperation is not only desirable, it is logical”, Anver Versi stressed in *African business* (2008:15). The idea that the Chinese example of development suits the African context better than the examples from the West, is spreading among the African elites (Alden 2007:59). China is, unlike Western Europe and the US, a developing country which has made great progress against poverty in the last 25 years (Ravallion 2008:303), and furthermore, China shows rather few characteristics of a Western liberal democracy and instead advocates other possible ways to development. One of the most famous international Chinese researchers He Wenping states that there is not always a correlation between democracy and political development and that democracy both can promote and hinder the political development of Africa (He 2008:32-33). As in the discussion about what comes first; the egg or the hen, is development vs. democracy discussed in Democratization theory. According to Lipset’s well-known Modernisation Theory there has to be a certain level of modernisation for countries that are struggling for democracy (Linde – Ekman 2006:76). Manji and Marks emphasize that many Africans are exhausted, both physically and intellectually, by decades of economic reform ruled by Western governments, donors and IFIs. China comes as an eagerly awaited saviour who “represents hope that another world is possible in which bread comes before the freedom to vote” (2007:38), ideas that suits the South-South rhetoric well.

## 2.2 China as economic competitor – a short-termed engagement

The *second* interpretation explained by Alder, China as economic competitor, is focused on the Chinese needs for resources, such as oil, gas and minerals and their competitiveness in manufactured goods and trade. The engagement is seen to be short-termed with little consideration shown to the local needs and concerns with a challenge to the African development gains (Alden 2007:5). The question from this approach is “what is in it for Africa?”

One of the arguments from this point of view is that the triumph for Chinese manufactured goods on the African domestic market as well as on the global market is an impediment for the African industrial development. Raphael Kaplinsky has concluded this as two major threats. The first is that the Western agenda of trade liberalism and the undermining of developing states have made it easy for the Chinese to bring their goods to the African market. China competes directly with labour-intensive and low-technology industrial sectors which have had a huge impact on the African domestic markets. The second threat is to be seen also on a global scale in shrinking demands for African clothing, textile, furniture and footwear in both US and EU markets which means difficulties for the Sub-Sahara African export-oriented industrialization. Only the clothing and textiles alone correspond to more than half of all manufactured exports from the region. (Kaplinsky 2008:20).

However, from a neo-liberal perspective China’s trade with Africa follows the correct pattern. China is using its national comparative advantage of labour-intensiveness and African countries have the world’s largest resource base in exchange, all in line with the liberal interdependence logic. Specialization in sectors where national comparative advantages are being used increases income levels in all countries according to the liberals (Spero – Hart 2003:175). With low tariffs and ongoing discussions about FTA between China and African countries, liberal analysts should be happy as free trade is seen to be the engine of growth (ibid). But the followers of this second interpretation of China in Africa stress that without a well-functioning production market, African countries will not gain from the agreements and just become victims of the *resource curse*<sup>3</sup> once again. For Nigeria the *resource curse* has been an explanation for the lack of development for a long time. According to Paul Collier, (*The bottom billion*), a low-income country like Nigeria with abundant natural resources will have major difficulties in breaking into the markets of labour-intensive manufactures and services, like the one China exports, because what they generate in foreign exchange is not sufficiently valuable in the society (Collier 2007:40).

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<sup>3</sup> The resource curse thesis seeks explanation for the paradox that some of the least developed and troubled countries are the one with the highest level of natural resource wealth (Obi 2009, Ross 2001).

Other concerns, often showed in Western media, is that the Chinese shows little, or none, interest in support for local needs with respect for human rights or for the environment. Western non-governmental organisations have accused China for supporting some of the most abusive, corrupt and violent governments in the world and Sudan has often been the case of heated discussions (Lee – Shalmon 2007:109). A Western idea of organizing societies implies that the world can unite under a higher legal order and be tied together to a common law based on universal agreements of rights and obligations (Navari 2000:361). The followers of the so called Internationalism claims that with international law and organization as well as economic exchange and communication, the dependence on each other will make war between states an increasingly unlikely occasion (Goldman 1994, Goldman-Hannerz 2000, Hammarlund 2005). However, there is a conflict between how to keep the territorially sovereign states intact and at the same time organizing an international system where higher forms of governance will rule. Navari alleges that the demands of internationalism, including the claim that universal human rights should stand over all other claims, have created a strong resistance declaring that states have rights of their own (Navari 2000:356). Chinese rhetoric with focus on non-interference policy is an evident example of that resistance. The philosophy behind this policy is called *tian xia* or “under the same sky” which generally speaking means that if we want to live in a global world of peace there has to be an acceptance for different world views among states and statesmen (Sisci 2009:75).

African leaders all over the continent has opened up their markets for the Chinese investments and Carmody and Owusu explains in their article that the “African states are attracted to Chinese investment because they can offer a ‘complete package’ of state oil and infrastructure that the Americans cannot” (2007:512). The remarkable speed of the Chinese development has hit the Western world by surprise and suddenly there is no time for sitting down at the negotiation table. “They just come and do it. We don’t hold meetings on environmental-impact assessment, human rights, bad governance and good governance. I’m not saying it is right. I’m just saying that the Chinese investment is succeeding because they don’t set high benchmarks.” (Quoted by Sahr Johnny, the Sierra Leonean ambassador in Beijing, Bosshard 2008:6)

The Chinese aid is said to be without any conditionalities which has had great impact on the African leader’s choice of who they do business with. However, Johan Lagerkvist holds that the Chinese do have demands for their aid. For instance, to do business with China there must be no sympathies shown for Taiwan, there has to be an acceptance of the use of Chinese workforce for the accomplishment of projects and that infrastructural aid will not be located to where the need is most urgent (2008a:29). There have been complaints about how the newly built infrastructure is located only to facilitate the Chinese investments which again lead to the question what the Africans gain from the cooperation. Anxiety from the African perspective is often shown through the commonly used phrase; “China has an Africa policy. Africa doesn’t have a China policy”. Professor Machiko Nissanke from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, claims that now it is up to Africa (Nissanke, interview 2009-09-17). She

emphasises the importance of African states finding their own way for development, neither a European nor an American nor an Asian model, but an African model. The Western aid she calls an Extern Medicine Agent with a top-down management, which explains the lack of responsibility taken by the African leaders. Africans have to find a way to use this opportunity for their own profit to no longer be in the hands of donors (ibid).

## 2.3 China as colonizer – the underlying agenda

The *third* interpretation, the Chinese as colonizers, is perhaps the one of the three interpretations that has gained most ground in Western media but is more questioned within the Academia. It holds that the Chinese engagement has more of an underlying agenda which will result in some form of political control over African territories. It has a long-term strategy with the purpose to take over after the former colonial powers and by doing so making friends with the African elite under the flag of South solidarity. (Alden 2007:5-6).

The Chinese presence in Africa has been described in many different ways; a ‘scramble’, a ‘mad dash’, a ‘resource grab’ and even a ‘rape’ and the criticism is focused on a hidden agenda where ‘camouflage tactics’ has been used to disguise its private interest (Mohan – Power 2009:24-27). Princeton N. Lyman (2005) has pointed out that China’s earlier days of involvement in Africa only had diplomatic intentions, with the purpose to find support for the One-China policy. Today there are other factors behind as well. China’s huge need for resources, especially in the energy sector, is not a secret.

There has been no shortage of declarations about the “new scramble” for Africa, also including India and the Western world with US in the front who suddenly has been threatened by the Asian upsurge. With the speed China is crossing the continent and buying oil blocks in country after country, Henning Melber’s description of China as “The New Kids On the Block” (Melber 2009) seems fitting. But is China the new Colonizer? According to Margret Lee one can state that China is the new Imperialistic power as the country is not only committed to “pillaging and investing in ways that would benefit China, but also perpetuating Africa’s instability by exporting Chinese armaments to Africa and by building armament factories on the continent” (Lee 2006:325). Colonialism though has other significations as well.

Stephanie Rupp (2008) discusses the comparison between China’s scramble for Africa of today and the European colonial powers of the nineteenth and twentieth century in Robert I. Rotberg’s book *China into Africa, Trade, Aid and Influence*. She asserts that in a basic analysis, several macroeconomic and geopolitical factors are to be found in both cases. The goal of external powers in Africa has been to gain economic and political advantage for interventionist power and two central factors have been in focus, both during the last decade as well as during the last century, namely “surging demand for natural resources and international competition to secure monopolistic access to these resources” (2008:67). Other

similarities are the manufactured goods that China today is trying to find markets for in Africa, as did the colonial powers (2008:68).

Rupp is also pointing at several differences where the use of labour or the colonial powers civilizing mission are some areas where the Chinese engagement has nothing in common with its predecessors. The Chinese authorities have no interest in transforming the Africans into “Chinamen” (2008:77). There is also a huge difference in how the Chinese workers live within the African society, compared to how the Westerners organized their way of living during the colonial period. The Chinese workers live in the same conditions as the Africans, but still separated and without taking part of African culture or social life. This affects the way of judging “the Other”, to use a classical post-colonial term framed by Edward Said, which in this situation could be in favour for the Chinese. Said’s well known work *Orientalism* explains an important element in the European culture to hold on to the idea that the European identity is superior all other non-European people and cultures (Said 1978:9). The superior way of thinking is also to be found in the Chinese context<sup>4</sup> but with the different conclusion that there is no need to impose their way of living on anyone else.

Rupp concludes in her study that China has no interest in seeking political or economic hegemony over African nations, and that the Chinese policy of non-interference and respect for national sovereignty still is one of the most important cornerstones. She describes the relationship as postcolonial interdependence where Africa needs the Chinese investment for their long-term growth and eventual self-sufficiency, however she also states, so far the collaboration is not equal (2008:83). Also Johan Lagerkvist stresses that to dismiss the Chinese engagement in Africa as a neo-colonial plunder of the continent is an exaggeration (2008a:53). The Africans actually have the opportunity, as sovereign states in the 21th century, to say no to China, but as for today’s offer, the Africans can not resist the given opportunities (ibid).

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit (2004) *Occidentalism, The West in the eyes of its enemies*.

## 3 The cases in focus

Nigeria and South Africa have similar characteristics due to their status as regional superpowers with important political influence on the continent and where China has enormous interests. However they are also two very different countries in terms of history, economic development, political environment, and civil society. When following the debate in the blogosphere it is important to have knowledge about the cooperation and trade agreements between China and the countries in focus. I will therefore in this section shortly describe the Nigerian and South African connection with China in terms of trade, political influence and socio-cultural aspects.

### 3.1 Nigeria and China

China's relation with Nigeria has a rather long commercial history and today around 50 000 Chinese citizens live and work in Nigeria. There has been an enormous expansion in trade growth in Nigeria the last decade – rising from US\$384 million in 1998 to over US\$3 billion by 2006 and China is a major contributor. Over 30 Chinese companies have established factories in Nigeria (Wong 2009:10). The country has the largest population in Africa, over 150 million, and is an emerging strategic partner of China and a key market for Chinese cheap goods. Areas of close cooperation between Nigeria and China has been in gas exploitation, power generation, railway development and modernization, agriculture, communications, manufacturing, tourism, military and defence, increased trade and investments etc (Obiorah et.al. 2008:276), and Nigeria's triumph is oil.

Nigeria is one of the leading oil producers in Africa and the 11<sup>th</sup> biggest producer in the world, which makes the country extremely important to China as an energy provider. The well known project between China and many oil-rich countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is 'Oil for Infrastructure' where the Chinese are investing in infrastructure in exchange for oil. In Nigeria a deal was signed in 2006 where China was promised 4 blocks of oil for investing in, among other things, the construction of a Lagos-Kano railway (Wong 2009:14). But according to a report from Chatham house not a single barrel of oil has been produced and no railway is yet to be seen in Nigeria (Wong 2009:28). The critique of the project has been discussed in terms of a weak African state being exploited by a resource-hungry Asian tiger, but according to the Chatham house report the failure was more a result of a corrupt political class in Nigeria who thought they could profit from the Asians desire for oil (Vines et. al 2009:3).

The troublesome political environment in Nigeria is well known to foreign investors. The Corruption Perception Index presented by Transparency International in 2008 clearly shows the picture of the political climate in the country, where Nigeria is listed as 121 amongst 180 countries (Transparency 2009). However, China with its non-interference policy and lack of concern for democratic means has entered the Nigerian market with no hesitation and the problems that occurred with the oil-for-infrastructure project do not seem to have frightened China. The Financial Times reported in September 2009 that CNOOC, one of China's three energy majors, are in talks with Nigeria to buy large stakes in some of the world's richest oil blocks (Burgis 2009-09-28).

Even if Nigeria is trying to consolidate democracy in the country with its first election in 1999, the political disorder is also reflected in the society and especially the Niger Delta is a very sensitive area with a violent history. Problems have occurred with direct connection to the extraction of oil in the southern Delta Region. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is a militant local resistant group whose aim is to preserve the Nigerian oil for the Nigerians. In 2006, a car bomb exploded close to an oil refinery and Chinese workers were kidnapped at the same time as the Chinese president Hu Jintao came to visit Nigeria. However, according to Cyril I Obi the attack was not only an effect of the Chinese presence. He states that "the MEND phenomenon is the culmination of decades of neglect, militarism and injustice in the Niger Delta, and the subversion of democracy in the region by local elites linked to the hegemonic federal ruling bloc, since Nigeria's return to elected civilian rule in May 1999" (2008:423).

The job losses in the Nigerian industrial sector is another difficult matter linked to the Chinese involvement and Taylor states that in Nigeria the mass importation of textiles, mostly from China, has led to the closing down of 65 Nigerian textile mills and over 150 000 textile workers have lost their jobs in ten years (2007:634).

## 3.2 South Africa and China

Relations between South Africa and China were established already during the Qing dynasty in 1905 (Taylor 2006:127), but diplomatic relations on the consular level first in 1960<sup>th</sup> (le Pere – Shelton 2007:160). Despite this early connection, trade relations did not advance until the 1990s. During apartheid the Chinese had a very restricted relationship with South Africa but when the country had reached some progress in the anti-apartheid struggle, the two-way trade increased rather fast. South African exports to China mainly consist of raw materials such as iron ore, aluminum, nickel, manganese, granite, platinum, and gold etc, while the Chinese exports primarily are manufactured goods including footwear, textiles, plastic products, and electrical appliance (le Pere – Shelton 2007:28).

In 2002, South Africa's Thabo Mbeki and China's Jiang Zemin signed an agreement called the *Pretoria Declaration* that committed both countries to a

‘spirit of partnership and constructive dialogue’ (le Pere – Shelton 2007:165), which led to several agreements between the countries in different sectors; civil air transport, establishment of a joint economic and trade commission, scientific and technological cooperation, police cooperation, public health and medical science, etc (2007:168).

In the first half of 2009, China passed the US as South Africa’s top trading partner and despite the global recession South Africa’s foreign trade with Asia remains robust (SouthAfrica.info 2009-09-29). Chinese banks are entering South Africa’s economy, which is an important step for the countries’ relations. Access to international financial resources gives opportunities for developing countries in finding ways to finance investment in the country (M. Bertollo et al 2009:418)

In contrast to Nigeria’s political wildlife South Africa is a rather stable country with a relatively functioning democracy since the elections in 1994. The political bond between China and South Africa is different from other African countries diplomatic relations with China, since South Africa also is an important player at the international scene. South Africa’s decision to cut its diplomatic relations with Taiwan in mid-90<sup>th</sup> was a strong indication for the Chinese government that South Africa now accepted their rule of the game (Taylor 2006:148).

China bringing its own labour force has been in focus of criticism but in South Africa there are examples of cooperation projects where the locals has been included in the working process. One of them is the Tembisa Friendship Town Project which was initiated in 1998 with the goal to build 664 units of low-cost housing in a community with high unemployment and socio-cultural difficulties. This was the first Chinese government grant project in South Africa and also the first project implemented and delivered by a Chinese state-owned enterprise (Alden – Jing-Chen 2009:12). In a report from the South African Institute of International Affairs the project is described as a success and one of the main reasons for that was the involvement of the community with a majority of local workers instead of imported Chinese workers. Alden and Jing-Chen states in the report that the Tembisa project showed a constructive way for a positive engagement with China where both sides benefited, however because of the non-interest of evaluation or review by the government parties involved it will be difficult to repeat the success (2009:13). The lack of transparency within the Chinese investments is yet a problem for successful cooperation according to the report.

## 4 Opinions from Africa

Before analyzing the opinions flourishing in the South African and Nigerian blogosphere I will introduce some statistics at hand. The Pew Research Center, is studying attitudes toward politics, the press and public policy issues and they have investigated general attitudes towards China in several countries. On the Pew Global Database one can follow the development in the shifting approaches towards China during the last few years. In Nigeria the positive view for 2008 and 2009 were 79 percent and 85 percent respectively. For South Africa surveys were only made in 2008 when 37 percent had a favourable view of China (pewglobal.org). The question asked in the survey was “Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of China?” The answers do not give a nuanced picture of the Nigerians and South Africans opinions of the Chinese engagement in Africa, but a hint of the overall attitudes towards the Chinese. Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong published an article in *China Quarterly* recently where they focused particularly on African views on the China in Africa discourse. They have used random samples and university-based surveys in several African countries for their investigation and according to their findings African opinions are variegated and complex, but overall more positive than what is accentuated in the West. “[...] if they are basically positive about China - Africa links they still recognize areas of tension; if they are basically negative they regard some aspects as beneficial” (2009:729) For Nigeria and South Africa separately there is a tendency of more optimism among the Nigerians than among South Africans (Sautman – Hairong 2009), results that are following the same pattern as for the surveys made by the Pew Research Center. So, what is the blogosphere saying?

### 4.1 The blogosphere talking

The China in Africa discourse is definitely debated in the global blogosphere. There are a few blogs focused solitarily on that topic. However they are all written by Westerners<sup>5</sup>. When it comes to Africans blogging on the topic the selection of blog post from the last year is rather poor. As I described in the introduction I have made a very wide search on the web and even though I do not claim to have scanned through the whole African blogosphere in my study, I still got a vast picture of how commonly discussed the topic is online today. It turned out be rather

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<sup>5</sup> See for example: [www.chinainafrica.com](http://www.chinainafrica.com), [www.aleksandragadzala.blogspot.com](http://www.aleksandragadzala.blogspot.com), <http://www.african-politics.com>, <http://jenbrea.typepad.com/africabeat/>

difficult to find Nigerians blogging on the topic from a domestic ground and I had to widen my search for material to an international scene. Among the ten writers I found only one is permanently living in Nigeria. In the South African case it has sometimes been difficult to completely determine the author's origin and the same goes for the commentators in the following discussions. Nevertheless, when the debate is held in a Nigerian/South African context it is still valuable for the analysis to see what direction the discussion is taken. For a more detailed presentation of the Nigerian and South African bloggers see appendix 3.

#### 4.1.1 Nigerian bloggers

It is obvious that there is no unitary point of view from the Nigerian blogosphere. Arguments from the three categories that I presented in my theoretical framework can all be found in the debate but also other standpoints that reflect upon the complex nature of the issue. Arguments that support the developing partner-category is following the pattern of the Chinese rhetoric with South-South cooperation to contend the Western dominance, where China is seen as a new trading partner but also as a role model for development and where the non-interference policy is to be seen as something positive. However, it appears that whenever coming across a positive description of what China does in Africa it is usually followed by or begin with a strong critic of the West.

[...] this is the sorts of partnership, the sort of friends and robust engagement which have been absence between the West and Africa. [...] When was the last time the United States invited African leaders together to a joint summit or conference on economic, strategic or military cooperation? [...] China has excelled in action and not rhetoric and false promises! (Adujie, ChatAfrikArticles 2009-08-21).

[...] the west needs to stop criticising everything china does in africa like they really give a damn about africa (Anonymous comment in Naijia blog 2009-03-26).

The positive argumentation for the Chinese engagement is almost built up on criticism of the West and a question that comes back is why it is Europe and US that are the most active criticisers on China's forays into Africa, a question also often used in the Chinese popular and academic rhetoric.

It is noticeable that China is seen as a trading partner with a considerable higher degree of respect than the Western counterparts, not only for the African sovereign states but also for the Africans' capability of doing business. Navari's description of how the idea of a higher legal order within the theory of Internationalism has created a strong resistant is apparent in the discussion and that any foreign institution or foreign government should interfere in international affairs of political independent and sovereign nations is questioned. However, the Nigerian bloggers are far from undivided happy about the non-interference policy and some point to the risk that;

“China’s activities and it’s political, economic, and energy interests in Africa undermine long-standing international and domestic efforts to promote regional peace, prosperity and democracy in Africa” (Ori, Afrik.com, 2009-07-29).

The problems with corruption in the Nigerian government do not make the situation easy and the risk that the engagement will gain the elite more than the people is one of the concerns reflected in the Western critic of China (See Lagerkvist 2008a). The business making with doctoral regimes such as Sudan and Zimbabwe has created indignant feelings in the West but also within the Nigerian blogosphere. The neo-colonial argument that China is trying to win political influence in Africa was however easier to find in earlier blog post. Especially in the end of 2006 when the 3<sup>rd</sup> China-Africa Cooperation Summit was held in Beijing, this sort of argumentation won a lot of ground among Nigerian bloggers (Grandiose Parlor 2006), but it is not as prominent today. If this is a result of a change in attitudes or because of the silence in the debate lately is difficult to judge. However, one can still find opinions that are reflecting parts of a neo-colonial or imperialistic thought;

We all know that China is getting its fingers into Africa, not only in trying to get resources but these invaders under the guise of doing business and offering growth are ring-fencing resources by buying stakes, buying land and cavorting with the powers that be (Akin, 2009-08-28).

I was so astounded when I went back home in august and saw how this new form of colonization...what i call a 2nd colonization (Omo Oba, comment on Nigerian Curiosity 2009-10-19).

But even though some of the participants in the discussion are using the term of colonialism the more common approach is to view China as a competitor, both in terms of imported cheap goods and in terms of imported workforce. When these topics are brought up the blogosphere is moving and the debate becomes lively. Arguments to be found are that Africa is a “dumping ground” (Yommi, comment on Salisu Suleiman 2009-07-24), that China send in “beautiful nonsense and sponge us off” (Omotaylor, comment on Grandiose Parlor, 2009-08-13), that the cheap products “crippling local development markets” (Ori, Konye Obaji, Afrik.com, 2009-08-25). The imported Chinese workforce is also seen as problematic for the local people who are being crowded out by the fast working Chinese.

Nigerians themselves are not only quite capable of working in their national mines, they are also in need of steady employment, something that the mining sector can provide (Nigerian Curiosity, 2009-10-19).

The positive answers from the surveys within Nigeria are not as salient in the blogosphere. That the discussion in the blogosphere shows more scepticism might be a result of the blog forums that opens up for a debate which the surveys do not, but the different reactions could to also be explained by the bloggers location. One

should keep in mind that Nigeria still is considered as a *partly free* country, according to Freedom House and it has declined in political rights from 4 to 5<sup>6</sup> due to the ruling party's increasing consolidation of power and marginalization of the opposition (Freedom House 2009), which could affect the possibilities of having a critical view within the country. On the other hand it could also be argued that since most of the Nigerian bloggers and columnists who are discussing the topic are living abroad the debate are affected by the surrounding ideas and opinions, and that their ideas has become "westernized". However since the opinions seems to vary all the way from developing partner to colonizer among the bloggers, regardless of where they live, it would be misleading to say that there is one general attitude within the country and another abroad, and that sort of generalization has not been the purpose of my study.

The view that China is gaining more from the deals than Nigeria does is quite wide spread in the online debate, but what also has a very prominent occurrence is the view that the one to blame for this is not the Chinese but the Nigerian government for signing these deals. The critique of the own government is to be found in both positive and negative argumentations about China's presence in Africa, where one common ground seem to be that if something good shall come out of this cooperation, the Nigerian government has to take its responsibility (Nigerian Curiosity 2009, Grandiose Parlor 2009, Ori 2009). This lack of confidence for the leadership also reflects the concern African researchers have put forward in the debate. The common ground for both optimists and pessimists seems to be viewing the troublesome political climate as the major problem in Nigeria and that it is up to President Obasanjo and his crew if China is going to be the developing partner, the competitor or the colonizer.

#### 4.1.2 South Africans bloggers

In the South African case the survey by Sautman and Hairong showed a rather skeptical attitude towards the Chinese and this skeptical line of thoughts are also present in the South African blogosphere. Yet the skeptic arguments can not solitarily be placed in the categories of colonizer and competitor, even though arguments that support these views can be found in the discussion. Instead a more prominent argument is that South Africa should be careful when doing business with China because of the country's record of human right abuses and SA has to think of its reputation.

China has one of the worst human rights records in the world. SA is still recovering from the hurt of the apartheid and colonial eras. It does not need to befriend a country with an even worse record (Gavin Taylor, comment on Dispatch Now, 2009-11-03).

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<sup>6</sup> Explanation of scale: 1 = Free, 7 = Not Free

The debate is quite often taking the turn with the question if it is morally right to engage with the Chinese in business making with an underlying sense of Internationalism where a moral higher ground is reign. The Western rhetoric of exploitation of poor African countries is present but more from an outside/Western perspective. The South African bloggers that I have followed gives a picture of a country with a high degree of self-confidence; these bloggers do not see their country being exploited by an Asian superpower. This reflects on the different position South Africa has for its trade agreements with China, and also emphasizes the fact that the country is a consolidated democracy.

South Africa has a bigger responsibility to the African continent and is best suited to positively influence the Chinese-African relationship. (Randeree, 2009-10-05)

We must take an unwavering stance against all human-rights violations, persecution and oppression of people by democratic and undemocratic states, regardless of the promises of trade and investment. Our soul is not for sale! (Diakanyo 2009-04-01)

The decision made by the SA government in the spring of 2009 to deny Dalai Lama visa to attend a peace conference in Johannesburg organized together with the Soccer World Cup 2010, created a heated debate in the blogosphere and a lot of critique were directed to the leaders of the country for obeying the demands from China. The critique of the country's own leadership is just like in the Nigerian blogosphere present on several different levels, but when the Nigerian blogosphere is focused on the home public, it is in South Africa more about not "loosing face" (to use a Chinese expression) in front of the rest of the world.

South Africa is known around the world for the peaceful transition from apartheid to a democratic government. [...] I find it deeply troubling that the South African government has denied a visa to the Dalai Lama due to what seems to be political pressure from abroad (A. Zachas, comment on Minor Matters, 2009-03-23)

The discussion on the Dalai Lama topic reflected an overall rather negative approach to China and South Africa's trade relations with the country. However, when the discussion is approaching the China in Africa discourse the prevailing opinions are a bit more varied. Even though the Chinese rhetoric of South-South cooperation has a very modest occurrence, one can still find arguments reflecting the long tradition of cooperation where China is seen as a trustworthy friend. Expression of admiration of the Chinese economic miracle and industrial effectiveness are part of the more positive argumentation on the China in Africa discourse.

When the Chinese government decides to do something - it happens (Cliff, 2009-10-16).

Since when did black South African people begin abusing the long term friendship between China and this country, which has been built on unconditioned mutual respect and understanding, as well as long-lasting unselfish and brave moral and economic supports of China to this country which was once an atrocious hell on the planet earth? (Joe, comment on Traps 2009-03-25)

One observation worthy to point out is that the sort of aggressive Western criticism that was found in the Nigerian blogosphere is not as prominent in South African blogs, but the comparison between East and West of who's more effective in developing Africa is present. The argumentation is following what many African leaders have pointed out; that the Chinese business deals are much more effective than Western aid. Amongst others; Paul Kagame, Raila Odinga and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf were part of the heated debate during the autumn of 2009 when proclaiming that the US/European aid does not help to develop African countries in the same successful way as the Chinese (Africa Loft 2009-10-12, Sjökvist 2009-10-23). The book *Dead Aid* by Dambisa Moyo, that was released in 2009 has, as the title reveals, the same topic in focus and is also well discussed in the blogosphere. But even if some of the bloggers and commentator do agree with the content of the book, that aid is inefficient, the scepticism towards China is still there.

Her words make sense, trade is far better than aid, it doesn't take a boffin to realise that. But is China really the right partner? Is China really the friend we're looking for? (Smith, 2009-10-04)

The debate in the South African blogosphere reflects on a divided discussion just like in Nigeria, but to view China as a competitor does not seem to be the main threat. Even though one can find complaints concerning cheap Chinese products flooding the South African market, the topic that seems to wake the debate is China's lack of human rights and business deals with African dictators. The exploitation of weak African states is part of the argumentation but not so often with the colonizing idea of an underlying agenda. The sceptic view is more focused on how Africa will benefit from the cooperation, and once again the weak leadership is brought up as problematic, but as stated earlier, more from a big brother perspective than South Africa being the victim.

## 4.2 The blogging Africa

Both Nigerian and South African bloggers and columnists show a very wide spectrum of opinions in the debate about Chinas' activity on the African continent; when it is up for discussion. The perhaps even more interesting finding for my study was the lack of discussion within the African context. Since the South African and Nigerian blogosphere is part of an overall African blogosphere through common blog communities and African news magazines I have inevitably got an insight into the general online discussion in Africa. The blogosphere is reacting fast on evolvments in society and is also sensitive to what is up for discussion and right now the China in Africa discourse does not seem to be a priority-one discussion in the African blogosphere.

As mentioned earlier going back in time to the year of 2006, a slightly different picture turns up. The reason for a more active debate in the blogosphere seems to be the 3rd China-Africa Cooperation Summit that was held in Beijing in No-

November that year. At that time a project between African and Chinese bloggers took its beginning. The project was called the Hibiscus Project which was described as “a multi-faceted blogging-information sharing, advocacy project on China and Africa” (Grandiose Parlor 2006-12-19). The idea was to create a platform and a medium to discuss implications that China’s trade policies could have in Africa regarding political, economic and socio-cultural issues. A Google Group was created but according to Chippla Vandu, a Nigerian blogger who was a member of the group, it has been inactive for over a year now<sup>7</sup>.

In November 2009 the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference was held in Sharm al Sheik, where the Chinese premier Wen Jiabao pledged \$10bn loan to Africa; rather big occasion which one could assume would be debated online. This has however not been the case and one could ask the question why the topic has fallen off the agenda of discussion? Has the Chinese presence become normalized and not an area of tension anymore or is this just a time when other things are in focus of political discussion? Perhaps it was the charm of novelty that created the debate that time? But even if it was a more active debate three years ago, it would be wrong to state that the subject has shaking the blogosphere at any time so far.

There is hardly any way one can escape hearing about China these days. I have not written anything about Sino-African relations simply because I was not willing to take a side in the debate on whether the effects of Chinese interests in Africa are positive or not (Loomnie 2007-10-29).

The quoted passage is two years old and perhaps it can explain some of the quietness. China could be a new opportunity as well as a new exploiter and to make a too fast judgement might be risky for the Africans. Yet there are still results to wait for. Chippla Vandu, describes his mindset as “My views gradually evolved from outright scepticism to cautious optimism”<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps there is a process of change of ideas which also contributes to a debate on hold? Or perhaps the feeling of powerlessness is stopping the discussion, as Loomnie points out; “Well, let’s see how things turn out in the next couple of years. Not like we have much choice anyway.” (Loomnie 2007-11-17)

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<sup>7</sup> Mail correspondence October 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Mail correspondence October 2009

## 5 Concluding discussion

My study of African blogs and online media had as purpose to chart opinions about China in Africa to contribute with knowledge from an African perspective. It turned out to be a subject that was shown rather slender attention, which is an important finding in its own. However, to summarize the discussions I followed, the skeptical approach or to use the category “China as competitor” gained most ground in both the Nigerian and South African blogosphere, even though from different angles of arrival. Nigerian skepticism concerned Chinese cheap products and Chinese labour migration, in line with the problems of neo-liberalization in the global world order. The logic of interdependence is not in balance when Nigeria is hindered from using its national advantage of labour-intensiveness and low-technology skills. South African skepticism was more about the moral values where Chinas’ lack of democracy and human right abuses created heated debates. The idea of Internationalism with a higher legal moral order was prominent in this discussion. Nigerians still showed more optimism than South Africans who seem to be worried of loosing what they have fought for in decades, where the Nigerians still are fighting and looking for possible opportunities to develop faster. This was also reflected in the different approaches to the Western world and its involvement in the debate, where the Nigerians had much more critical attitude than the South African towards the West.

Blogging is still a phenomenon that is exclusive for the elite who is setting the agenda for discussion. However, when searching for Nigerian bloggers I found an overwhelming majority that had signed up during 2008 and 2009. The fast growth of internet users in the country will affect this process during the coming years. Within the theory of global civil society there is a discussion going on about how internet activism and the transformation of communication technology has created new opportunities for the civil society (De Jong et.al 2005:2). Mary Kaldor argues that today we can only understand the civil society in the context of the global and it provides a way to supplement traditional democracy where individuals can participate in the global public debates, particularly it gives a possibility for the victims of globalization to be heard (2003:142, 148). I would say that the blogging Africa is on the way of using the new social media in this direction, and one example is the community site [www.maeno.org](http://www.maeno.org) where one can find blogs, microblogs, articles, news etc in several African languages and it is conformal to slow connections. However, there is still a long way to go before this means of communication will be a tool for the real victims. So far the majority of the bloggers, the twitters, the flickrs, are all well educated urban-living young people. They are the elite of the third world, but still, is there someone listening to what they say?

It is obvious that it is not the Africans themselves that are the most eager debaters on the China in Africa discourse of today; it is Westerners, also in the Afri-

can context. African blogging is still in its cradle and perhaps it will be different in a couple of years, and perhaps the discussion has a more prominent presence on the streets of Lagos and Johannesburg, but the Western superior way of knowing what is best for Africa makes me wonder if the civilizing mission is finished. The hard criticism from the Western world is that the Chinese are the new colonizers, but has the old ones really left the continent yet? Stuart Hall emphasizes that to understand the traumatic character of “the colonial experience” one has to consider both the history and the future (2005:233) and the West is still setting the agenda for discussion. The civilized, enlightened conqueror only exist in relation to the barbaric, unenlightened, colonized Other (Eriksson et.al. 2005:34) and with the power of setting the agenda, the West continues to enlighten the unenlightened, which lead to the question of who is colonizing who?

Some people claim that the world stands in front of a hegemonic change; that US are going down and that China is the rising sun, taking back its position as the number one economy of the world. The South African blogosphere reacted hard on President Jacob Zuma’s decision not to welcome Dalia Lama to the peace conference in Johannesburg in the spring of 2009. During the autumn President Obama denied the Lama a visit to the White House with the explanation that he wanted to meet with President Hu Jintao first, but the expected critique for his decision did not take place. There is a shift going on in world politics and no one can foresee the result of this change, but it has become clear that if Africa does not act smartly in response to this development, the continent will once again become a brick in a geopolitical game. Now Africa has its chance to play East against the West and lift the continent out of its marginalisation, states Obi (2009:208). China’s non-interference policy could be explained by lack of responsibility and ignorance of local needs or as the view of *tian xia* where we share a common understanding or tolerance for each other’s ideas. Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* (1998) could be the result of a failed *tian xia*; if we are not willing to accept the differences between ideologies in the world, the misunderstandings will lead us to war. A peaceful philosophy for the world but perhaps not as peaceful for each world citizen.

In Emma Mawdsleys’ article about how English news magazines are describing the China in Africa discourse, she states that “a dialogue between China, African and Western nations would more likely have a positive outcome if the West were to take a more critical look at its own record, and cast a more careful eye over some of China’s foreign policy positions, as well as its interactions with African countries” (Mawdsley 2008:525). To just ignore the Chinese involvement in Africa and call it a colonizing mission that the Africans are loosing from, is probably as devastating as saying that the Chinese are Africa’s new saviours who will make Africa blossom. In the best of worlds, cooperation between the West and the East could help the South to find its own way of development, but to get there the first step is to start listening.

This study was made at the earliest possible state, both in terms of internet usage and blogging as a phenomenon in Africa, but also in terms of the topic itself. The African blogosphere will continue to grow as well as the Chinese presence in Africa; therefore this discussion has to be seen in perspective of a move-

ment. It is a process of change and within a couple of years, with the current speed of development; a similar study would probably encounter a much more voluminous African blogosphere and perhaps with new ideas to discover regarding China in Africa. Therefore this is not to be seen as a conclusion but as an introduction to a huge field of possible research opportunities and a glimpse of a development we just have seen the beginning of.

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Nissanke, Machiko 2009-09-17 at The Swedish Insitute of International Affairs

Vandu, Chippla, Mail correspondence 2009-10-18 – 2009-10-27

# Appendix 1

## News sites and communities

### African communities:

The African Loft, [www.africanloft.com](http://www.africanloft.com)  
African Path Village, <http://africanpath.ning.com/>  
The Afrigator, <http://afrigator.com/blogs>  
Allafrica.com: blog Africa, <http://blogafrica.allafrica.com/>  
Maneno, <http://www.maneno.org/>

### African news sites:

Allafrica, <http://allafrica.com/>  
Afolnews, <http://www.afrol.com/>  
Pambazuka News,. <http://pambazuka.org/en/>

## South Africa

### News Sites:

Mail & Guardian Online, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za)  
Times Live, [www.timeslive.co.za](http://www.timeslive.co.za)  
Daily Dispatch Online, <http://www.dispatch.co.za>  
Independent Online IOL, <http://www.iol.co.za>  
Business Day, <http://www.businessday.co.za/>

### Blog agreggators:

Thought Leader, [www.thoughtleader.co.za](http://www.thoughtleader.co.za) (Mail & Guardian Online)  
Times Live Blog, <http://blogs.timeslive.co.za> (Times Live)  
Dispatch Online Blogs, <http://blogs.dispatch.co.za> (Dispatch Daily)

Inside IOL, <http://blogs.iol.co.za/insideiol/> (Independent Online)  
Amatomu, [www.amatomu.com](http://www.amatomu.com)

## Nigeria

### News Sites:

The Guardian, <http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/>  
Nigeria World, <http://www.nigeriaworld.com/>  
This Day Online, <http://www.thisdayonline.com/>  
Nigeria Daily, <http://nigeriadaily.com/>

### Blog aggregators and community sites:

Which Way Nigeria, <http://www.whichwaynigeria.net/>  
Nigerian Village Square, <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/index.php>  
Nigerian Muse, <http://www.nigerianmuse.com/>  
NEXT, <http://234next.com/>  
ChatAfrikatrices, <http://www.chatafrikarticles.com/>

Nigerian Blog Aggregator, [www.nigerianbloggers.com](http://www.nigerianbloggers.com), was a well functioning aggregator for Nigerian blogs that I used in the beginning of my study; however that page was expired in September 2009.

# Appendix 2

## The search procedure

When I searched for blogs, columns and articles in the African blogosphere with the topic China in Africa, I used different ways to be sure that I had scanned through as many sources as possible. On each site I visit, news magazine, community sites, blog forums etc, I used the websites own search engine and search with the words: China, Chinese, investment, economy, aid, resources and “China in Africa”. I also combined the different words if the result was too wide. On the news site I inevitable got several hits with reporting news on the topic, which has not been of interest for my analysis. Only when a personal reflection was to be discovered in the text I would consider its value.

With *Google advanced search* I could specify my search by region, language, domain, and date. By using the land codes for Nigeria (ng) and South Africa (za) I could reach for land specific updates for the topic. This was a good way to find common news magazines online but for blogs the *Google blog search* was a better option at least for South African blogs. I used the same words as before but with the addition of “blog”. If I also added “blogurl:za” I only reach land specific blogs using the words I was looking for. For Nigerian blogs it did not give much result which probably has to do with the underdeveloped internet distribution in the country. Another important issue to regard is that the search engine on Google blog search still is a beta version, according to Google (<http://blogsearch.google.com/> 2010-01-01). This is a process under development which means that within a couple of years there will be new advanced search procedures which can generate results to a wider extent.

# Appendix 3

## Presentation of the bloggers

### South African bloggers

*Bilal Randeree* is from Newcastle, South Africa. He writes for Thought Leader in the South African Newspaper Mail & Guardian Online. He has been living abroad in Europe and Syria, and is now studying towards a postgrad in economic journalism in Grahamstown. His blog is called Rebel Accountant; <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/bilalranderee>

*David J Smith* is originally from Durban, South Africa but is now located in Amsterdam. He is writing his blog “The Other David Smith” for Thought Leader, Mail & Guardian Online. He describe himself as “the ad guy who likes to write” and the total reads at his blog reach to 44 000. <http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/davidjsmith>

*Garath Cliff* is a South African radio profile and currently he hosts the breakfast show on the national youth station, 5FM. He has been working with radio since 1998 and seems to be well-known for his provocative stile. Once he got suspended from his show for two days after an interview he conducted with ‘Jesus’. On his homepage his has a blog called “Chronicles of Cliff”. <http://www.garethcliff.com/chronicles.php>

*Jan Hennop (Dispatch Now)* is the news editor at the South African online newspaper Daily Dispatch Online. He is a senior journalist and also a blogger at “Dispatch Now 24/7”, one of the Dispatch Online blogs. Personal information about him is rather poor but the Daily Dispatch Online was the winner of Best Online Journalism 2008 & 2009. <http://blogs.dispatch.co.za/dispatchnow/>

*Khadija Sharife* is an investigative journalist, researcher with the Tax Justice Network and a visiting scholar at the Center for Civil Society in South Africa. She likes to blog about politics, human rights and the environment in Africa, specifically relating to the nexus between conflict and exploitation of natural resources. Her base is South Africa but describing herself as an ethnic cocktail. She is currently working on a book titled *Africa: Sold -- Policy Profiteering and the Wash-*

*ington Consensus*. Her personal blog is on Thought Leader with over 160 000 total reads. It is called “Anthem - Words to the song of the indigenous ecology”.  
<http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/khadijasharife>

*Michael Trapido (Traps)* was born in Johannesburg and is a specialist criminal attorney, journalist and political commentator. He has written columns for British and South African newspapers and is editor of the Richmark Sentinel which is a South African news aggregator. He has a blog at Thought Leader, Mail & Guardian Online, which is called “Traps, A "gentle" look at politics, sport and humour”.  
<http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/traps>

*Ray Hartley* is the editor of The Times, a daily South African newspaper which was launched in June 2007 under the Sundays Times. He is also the editor of Times LIVE which is a blog community at The Times. He’s blog is called “The Wild Frontier” with focus on Politics, News, New media and Old media.  
<http://blogs.timeslive.co.za/hartley/>

*Sandile Memela* grew up in Soweto a suburb to Johannesburg and the most populous black urban residential area in South Africa. He has worked as an editor, journalist, columnist and advertising strategist. At the moment, he describes himself as a ‘government funk’. He has a blog at Thought Leader, called “Mamelang - Ancestral whisperings”.  
<http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/sandilememela>

*Sentletse Diakanyo* is also on Thought Leader with his blog “Sentletse Diakanyo”. He describe himself as having “a keen interest in everything else that is beyond the realm of his expertise; from world politics, history, economics, philosophy, to motor-racing. He is inquisitive about everything and a master of none. He writes what likes, without fear or favour.” Further personal information was not available.  
<http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/sentletsediakanyo>

*Thorne Godinho (tgodinho)* is a 17 year old Highschool student and founder of the ChirpRoom, a political group blog contributed by young South Africans. The ChirpRoom includes “daily articles about newsworthy topics, political ideology, and issues that the youth care about”, guest bloggers, interviews and book reviews. Thorne Godinho writes for his school paper, is a public speaker and debater, and serves on the Pretoria Junior City Council.  
<http://chirproom.wordpress.com/>

#### Origin uncertain:

*Minor Matters* does not give much of a personal presentation but is writing one of the most popular blogs at Times Live. She describes herself as “a foreign editor, a mother and everything else in between”. She is an editor at the world pages for The Times, South Africa. Since she presents herself as foreign I have not included her in my South African authors, though she usually generates a lot of discussion in the South African context, she is still interesting for the reading.  
<http://blogs.timeslive.co.za/minor/>

## Nigerian bloggers

*Akin Akintayo* describes himself as Anglo/Nigerian, living in the Netherlands. He is working with IT and is blogging about his perspectives on life, politics, social issues, education, religion, trivia and controversy. His blog is called “Akin” and his blog is often linked to from other Nigerian bloggers. He has been blogging since 2003. <http://akin.blog-city.com/>

*Chippa Vandu* is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He is the author of the blog “Chippa’s Weblog – Thoughts on Issues” since 2004. He writes on events and ideas spanning economic, social, political and cultural realms across the globe particularly focusing on Africa. He was a member of the Hibiscus Project in 2006, where African and Chinese bloggers created a platform to discuss China in Africa issues. I had mail correspondence with him in October 2009. <http://chippa.blogspot.com/>

*Chinedu Vincent Akuta* is a Nigerian living in Leicester, UK. He has a master in economics from University of Lagos, Nigeria and another master in International Relations from Loughborough University, UK. He is an activist and political commentator on Nigerian issues, and his articles have been published by Nigerian newspapers and Internet media. I found an article by him on Nigeria General Discussion Blog Website but his personal blog is at Blogger and is called “Briefs from Akuta”. <http://briefsfromakuta.blogspot.com/>

*Imnakoya (Grandiose Parlor)* has been an active blogger since the year of 2005 and his focus is to discuss issues on Nigeria. He now lives in Minnesota, USA. He was one of the creators of the Hibiscus Project and was very active in the China in Africa debate during 2006. During the last year the topic seems to have fallen out of interest, at least he has not brought it up for discussion to the same extent. [www.grandioseparlor.com](http://www.grandioseparlor.com)

*Kanmi Lyanda* is living in London but his hometown is Lagos, Nigeria. He is a consultant, with two no longer active blogs on Blogger. The first one was called “The Campaign Diaries of Barak Obama” 18th May 2008 - 20th Jan 2009, <http://obamadrama.blogspot.com/>. The second one was called “State of Play” 9th of March - 30th of June 2009, <http://kanmiiyanda.blogspot.com/>. This blog is also to be found at AfricanPath Village, <http://africanpath.ning.com/profile/KanmiLyanda>. He also has a blog address for his book “A candle in the Sun”. <http://acandleinthesun.blogspot.com/>

*Konye Obaji Ori* is a Nigerian writer and a youth delegate at United Nations Youth. He has studied at University of Indianapolis, USA and is a published poet, fiction writer and playwright. His is a critical analyst of world issues, politics and policies and his articles and essays have appeared in publications in Africa, Europe and the USA. He is an active contributor to the Nigerian Muse, <http://www.nigerianmuse.com/>, and to Afric.com, <http://en.afrik.com/>.

*Olumide Abimbola (Loomnie)* has a BA in Communication from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and an MA in Development Studies from Uppsala University, Sweden. He is currently finishing his PhD dissertation in Anthropology at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany. He is writing a column for Nigeria's Business Day newspaper, <http://businessdayonline.com/> and has a blog since 2005. "Loomnie – Experiences, Thoughts, Opinions, Ideas". <http://loomnie.com/>

*Solomon Sydelle (Nigerian Curoosity)* won the Naija Bloggers Award 2009 as Best Political Blogger for her blog "Nigerian Curoosity" <http://www.nigeriancuroosity.com/>. She lives in the US and describes herself as "an inquisitive mind hoping to absorb as much knowledge and information as possible about everything and nothing at all." She is also writing the blog "It was so much easier when I only had one..." <http://www.solomonsydelle.com/> where she focus on the family life as a mother of three kids.

*Paul I. Adujie* is a Nigerian lawyer, public commentator and writer, who lives in New York. According to the information at hand he has appeared on radio and television shows and his articles and commentaries have been featured in major newspapers and magazines. He is an active writer at African community sites like ChatAfrikArticles, <http://www.chatafrikarticles.com/> and Nigerian Village Square, <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com>. He also collects his writings at two blogs on Blogger. "Paul Adujie Writings", <http://adujie-writings.blogspot.com/> and "Paul I Adujie, In Writing", <http://paul-adujie-in-writing.blogspot.com/>.

*Salisu Suleiman* is a consultant and the only Nigerian blogger that is said to be located in Nigeria, in Abubja. His blog is called "Suleiman's blog", <http://suleimansblog.blogspot.com/> and he singed up in April 2009. But before that he has been an active writer at for example the Nigerian Village Square <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/articles/salisu-suleiman.html>, and *NEXT.com*, <http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Opinion/Columns/SalisuSuleiman/index.csp>

Non-Nigerian author:

*Naijia blog* is very popular blog in the Nigerian blogsphere written by the Englishman Jeremy Weate. He is a philosopher and consultant who has been working in Nigeria for a long time, and his blog is concerning his experiences and reflections from there. He often creates a lot of discussion and is therefore interesting to include in the reading even if he is not Nigerian himself. <http://naijablog.blogspot.com/>