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# **Sino-African Relations Neo-colonialism or “South-South” Cooperation?**

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## **Abstract**

Sino-African relations are an increasing trend in international politics. The aim of this thesis is moreover to examine China's political motives in Africa. To break the problem apart, we estimated to possible hypotheses. The first suggests that China tends to have neo-colonial motives and the second suggests that China wishes to build a "strategic partnership" with African countries. In finding our conclusion we have looked on China's foreign policy as well as examples of China in Africa. This paper concludes that China in fact considers African countries to be a strategic partner.

Key Words: Sino-African relations, South-South cooperation, neo-colonialism  
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## **Abbreviations**

CPC: Communist Party of China

FOCAC: Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

MNC: Multinational Corporation

SOE: State-Owned Enterprise

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## 1. Introduction

In an interesting article written by political scientist Gerald Segal published in 1992, entitled “China and Africa”, the following conclusion could be read: “there may be grounds for believing that as China grows strong, it will grow somewhat more important for Africans, but in the Chinese perspective, it seems that while Africa will attract attention from the writers of official policy statements, the continent will remain the least important area for Chinese foreign policy” (Rotham, Segal, 1992, p. 21).

Eight years later, however, on a sunny November morning in Beijing, the Chinese president Hu Jintao greeted leaders from forty-eight African countries at the opening of the first formal China-African top summit, officially known as the Forum on China-Africa cooperation, or simply just FOCAC (Alden, 2007, p. 1-2). Another six years later, the year of 2006 was made China’s “year of Africa” (Gomes, 2008, p. 9)

To contextualize China’s increasing presence in Africa, “South-South” trade is currently growing by 10 % each year. Moreover, 43 percent of the South’s trade is with other developing countries. (Rotberg (Broadman), 2008, p. 97) What this all boils down to is a relative increase in the overall importance of the so called “Global South” within the political system. In particular, China-African relations are an outstanding example of this tendency in international politics.

### Objectives of study and research question

This paper aims to study the increasing importance of Sino-African relations within the context of “South-South” interaction and the driving force behind it. In particular, the main objective of this study is, therefore, to better understand the political and economical multifaceted China-African relations from a Chinese point of view. Thus, we are interested in China’s interaction with African countries; hence we have formulated the following formal research question:

- What are China’s motives in their foreign policy with the African continent?

### The Problem

The purpose of this part is to present the puzzle of this paper, and thus break apart China’s motives in Africa. More specifically, this part aims at deriving two hypotheses as a starting point to understand China’s increasing presence in sub-Saharan Africa. In that way, we believe, it will be easier to understand China’s motivations.

The political context of Sino-African relations should be seen in the light of China’s impressive economic growth since the 1990s. China is rising and to meet its new needs as an increasingly important actor in the political system, the country has adopted a so called “go out” policy. This will obviously have implications for international politics on the whole, not least for African countries.

In a European Parliament report on China's African policy it is stressed that China's main interest in Africa is natural resources, in particular oil (Gomes, 2008 p. 9). The Economist, too, recognize this point saying that "China is building a lot of infrastructure – presumably to help it procure all the natural resources its firms are gobbling up" (The Economist, Oil, politics and corruption 18/9 2008) The European Parliament report also states that as Chinese engagement in Africa intensifies "China may be exporting some of its worst home practises, including corruption, bad lending, lack of labour rights and environmental standards. Nonetheless, Chinese officials emphasize that its relationship with Africa should be of "win-win" nature (Gomes, 2008, p. 9).

China has faced serious accusations for having colonial ambitions in Africa. A German official, for instance, has a straightforward message to the African community; "Our African partners really have to watch out that they will not be facing a new era of colonization"(Troy, 2009, p. 2). Also former South African president Thabo Mbeki have noticed this colonial tendency and criticized China's African policy, saying that Africans need to be cautious in relations with China so it will not develop into a "colonial relationship"(China faces charges of colonialism in Africa, International Herald Tribune, 28/1, 2007).

Even so, China-African trade is growing rapidly. In 2000, multilateral trade accounted for 10 billion US dollar, last year trade reached 200 billion US dollar (Zhong, 2013).

Furthermore, China is one of the most important providers of aid and loans to African countries. For instance, it has been estimated that China's Export Import Bank provided more loans in Africa than the World Bank did. (Brautigham, 2010, p. 2) From these different observations we have been able to draw out to separate characteristics of China's engagement in Africa and thus formulate two hypotheses of Chinese motives.

1. *China is having colonial ambitions in African countries.*
2. *China intends to build a partnership with African countries.*

## **Methodology and Material**

In this paper, we have been using a qualitative method in order to be able to describe China's motives in Africa. As noted in the introductory sentence our research question is of descriptive nature. We believe that this is understood from the use of the word "What". We find the use of a qualitative method appropriate since we have been trying to answer a research question of descriptive method.

Our method has moreover been to formulate two hypotheses that are indeed quite differentiated, which can be seen as a strategy known as "most-different-design" (Metodpraktikan, 2012, p 104-105).

This paper uses a wide range of references, for instance articles from magazines such as The Economist. However the main source of information comes from books related to Chinese-African relations. We have in other words primarily been using so called secondary material. To a certain degree we have also used primary material from the Chinese government.

## **2. Theoretical approaches**

### **2.1. Realism**

Realists generally accept three key elements, namely statism, survival and self help, which are central to various theoretical directions within realism. To begin with, the state is by all means the main actor in the political system, and the concept of sovereignty is the distinguishing feature of the state. Therefore, the international system is understood to be characterized by anarchy, in which “states compete with other states for power and security”. Consequently states need to organize power domestically prior to internationally. This state-centric approach is known as statism. Secondly, survival is a key interest among realists. This means that all states main interest is to survive. In a system characterized by anarchy, self help too is essential. This means that, in the international system there are, conversely to the domestic arena, no higher authority to prevent and counter the use of force meaning that each state needs to rely on itself. (Baylis, 2010, p. 86-97)

### **2.2 Liberalism**

Liberalism see the human being as a rational actor in the sense that it aims to create institutions and trade between countries. Apart from the realistic view it understands the individual as "good" and capable of cooperating. In contrast to the realistic view on the sovereign state and its goals (relative gains and self-help) the liberalists view is that of cooperation and to strive for absolute gains. Absolute gains are received through liberal countries working together in the economic zone to maximize the gains. This is done through the many institutions created by the "liberal" countries to promote an environment of cooperation. The liberal countries seek to expand and strengthen economic zones. These zones are there to protect the involved countries against foreign threats by a "collective security". In order to expand this economic zone liberal countries aim to involve as many foreign countries as possible via diplomatic solutions. Apart from the realistic viewpoint the international system with actors such as the UN, EU etc. are seen as the highest authorities although the liberalist does agree that we live in an anarchic world (Mingst, Toft, 2011, p. 76-81).

### **2.3 Concepts**

In this study the concepts of “South-South” cooperation and “neo-colonialism” is essential and therefore needs a formal definition.



South-South cooperation is in this paper defined as “the process, institutions and arrangements designed to promote political, economic and technical cooperation among developing countries in pursuit of common development goals. It is multidimensional in scope, encompassing cooperation in areas such as trade, finance, investment, as well as the exchange of knowledge, skills and technical expertise between developing countries. Geographically, it covers bilateral, intraregional and interregional cooperation as well as collaboration among developing countries on multilateral issues designed to enhance their participation and integration in the world economy.” (UN, 2010, p. 1)

Neo-colonialism is in this paper defined as “the geopolitical practice using capitalism, business globalization and cultural imperialism to control a country, either of direct military control or indirect political control i.e. imperialism and hegemony. (Wikipedia: neocolonialism)

### **3. Analyses**

#### **3.1 China and Africa: A South-South relation**

How did it come to the point where China is everywhere in Africa? The best way to explain this is to look at the course of events through history. Therefore, this introductory section aims at placing China-African relations in a wider context. More precisely, it explores increasingly important “South-South” relations in international politics.

During the 1950s the world started to "decolonize" and more and more countries in the southern hemisphere became independent. Simultaneously, the “Global South” initiated internal diplomatic links. The first time as Asia-Africa begun to cooperate with each other was in 1955 at a conference in Bandung, Indonesia. The main topic for this conference was how to become independent from the industrialized countries (UN, 2010, p. 7). You could look at it as if the countries wanted to break free from the shackles which make them sell commodities and import manufactures.

Conferences such as the one in Bandung led to the development of more formal guidelines for the “South-South” cooperation. Today the south-south cooperation's main focus lies within the economy. However it has not always been like that. Up until the early 2000s many of the African countries were more involved in political matters and thus the economy came in second hand. Even though the agenda of African countries shifted, their main reason to join the “South-South” cooperation was how it gave power to the region to address certain issues the countries are having. The African countries came to join this "South-South" cooperation because of the impact it has on political, economical and technical areas. Also exchange of knowledge, investments and trade is a big motivator and just like the EU the “South-South” cooperation gives opportunities to regions to better cooperate with one another both inside and outside the regions. The main idea that the African countries had when joining the “South-South” cooperation was to take advantage of the stronger, more developed countries in the cooperation, of which one happened to be China (UN, 2010, p. 1).

For Africa the most important thing is to establish connections with the more powerful states in order to help the regions development via FDI (Foreign Direct Investment). Many of the African countries need this because of their high level of poverty rates, disease rates, brain drain and bad infrastructure, just to mention a few. These issues that the African countries want to raise and put light on via the south-south cooperation are the major obstacles for the countries in order to be able to have a sustainable development (UN, 2010, p. 2).

Another major reason to why the African countries are so open to the "South-South" cooperation is because of the obstacles experienced from the "North-South" relations. Since Africa receive a lot of money via aid funds from the "north" they also have to agree on a set of terms. These terms forms the policy in some countries in a way which the population does not feel is desirable. Instead the countries feel that taking loans from other southern countries are more advantageous, since it gives them more power over their own policymaking. Still, African countries have not experienced as much self-determination, as they expected. But by changing the course from "North-South" relationships to "South-South" relationships they are in more control in terms of decision-making or agendas in the international economy (UN, 2010, p. 2).

However, African countries are still being exploited of their natural resources. This is an issue that clearly highlights the problem which African countries are having when it comes to decision-making in international affairs. One could argue that it is because of the country's fragile system of order (in other words, the level of corruption) that this keeps happening. Given that the countries could be unstable gives an opportunity for investors to exploit resources. A United Nations report on the "South-south" relationship entitled "Economic Development in Africa Report 2010, South-south cooperation" says that the countries could "present challenges for the region" (UN, 2010, p. 3). The report describes it as certain aspects could result in a deterioration in for instance governance and continues saying that it comes down to how well the African countries maximize the benefits whilst reducing the risks (UN, 2010, p. 3).

But how does it come that China has such a strong presence in Africa? To give an explanation you can start to look at one of the theoretical approaches in social science. Namely the theory of social construction. The African countries want to focus on a sustainable development through the south-south cooperation, which gives support and legitimacy for continued cooperation between the parties. African countries have an option to cooperate with China, a country with big assets which also by the cooperation have agreed on a set of terms which northern countries might not be as willing to follow (since they follow a different set of principles from the African countries point of view). Since the south-south cooperation gives a lot of focus to mutual respect and respect to sovereignty this in turn could be a good security precaution (UN, 2010, p. 9).

This gives the African countries a bigger chance to get it their way, something which the north through history might not have been so eager about. However this is just a hypothesis based on the facts of the south-south cooperation and that of African countries beginning to "turn away" more from the northern countries. The whole theory could be wrapped around the south-south cooperation as its core in trying to explain the strong presence of China in Africa. One could say that the south-south cooperation in itself is a phenomenon within social construction where it could be used to explain the Chinese presence in Africa.

Another view as to why China is so active in Africa overall is also the theoretical perspective known as liberalism. The liberalistic perspective could also strengthen the theory of social construction in this matter. Since the liberal perspective explains to why countries cooperate through institutions, the south-south cooperation make a perfect example of such an international institution. It has a set of rules which is followed by the countries involved such as the principles of mutual respect and non-interference. These principles could somehow give an insight to why the African-south cooperation is so much more attractive for the countries in the region as opposed to the north-south cooperation. But whether these statements about why China would be more involved or not has to be proven through more extensive research. Research that shows the benefits of the cooperation with China. As mentioned in this paper the aim is to see if this liberal view could be applied on the Chinese situation in African countries.

In this paper we aim to explore both the pros and cons in this relationship and are therefore aiming to explore this by setting the contrast between realism and liberalism with a set of different scenarios in the African region. Although we do see the cooperation as a social construction, we want to link it directly to the south-south phenomenon rather than having it as a major theory in our exploration of the Chinese effects in the African region.

At the moment a lot of non-African countries have different agendas with the cooperation. For instance, China but also Brazil and India see the region as a really important source of natural resources. China also sees it as a future market for Chinese exports. This region is of major importance for these countries because investments within the region could help the countries domestic economic growth. Turkey's view on the African-south cooperation is to promote Turkish goods on the African market. In short, their view is to create a bigger market for Turkish products. According to the UN report on south-south cooperation, there are three major reasons as to why countries are involved with Africa. The first one is bilateral agreements with developing countries such as China. The second reason are the trilateral cooperation. For instance, South Africa currently have an agreement with India and Brazil called IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa). The third and last reason is the one regarding regional cooperation between countries as mentioned before (UN, 2010, p. 10-11). In short, these reasons with the south-south cooperation could provide good evidence in order to try to explain the Chinese presence in Africa. However this is something we want to explore more thoroughly later in this essay.

But how about the China-Africa cooperation? What does it look like? Now that we know what kind of norms or principles that the institution and its bilateral and trilateral agreements rest on, we must try to pinpoint the reasons behind the African-Chinese cooperation. For many decades Africa has been very important to China in regards of the country's foreign policy. This has led to a lot of financial support from their part to the whole region. One example is the Tazara railroad linking together both Zambia and Tanzania because of copper that needed to be transported from Zambia to Dar es Salaam which is a port in Tanzania.

During the last couple of decades China has been the major financial donor to the region with over 53 percent of the total loans. However, ever since 1978 and the major economic reforms of China, the country have had a different approach to the cooperation. One could simply put it that China begun to shift its focus from foreign to domestic affairs. Therefore less focus was put on the African issues (UN, 2010, p. 13).

### 3.2 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

The previous text was meant to explain more about the increasing trend in international politics of "South-South cooperation" and what it really means. The most obvious example of this in the context of Sino-African relations is definitely the so called Forum on China-African Cooperation, FOCAC. The FOCAC summit was the "fresh start" between China and the African. It was first introduced in the beginning of the new millennia in Beijing. The Chinese delegations came to visit Africa more intensively to discuss matters regarding politics, economic and security questions etc. As FOCAC became the new platform for African-Chinese topics, the involved countries decided to let its ministers to attend it every three years (which was the time frame in between each summit).

At the summit in 2009 the Chinese government promised to double its help and assistance to the region. This involves things such as loans, to strengthen the economic cooperation and trade in certain areas but also to set up an Africa-China fund for development. Other areas such as giving technical support to African countries was meant to give the signal of a China willing to have a long term cooperation (UN, 2010, p. 14-15).

For this long term cooperation to last, China has agreed to a sustainable development. This is supposed to be done through eight different objectives. These objectives are supposed to help African countries to help them improve in areas such as agriculture, schooling and medicine. In the agricultural area the Chinese government is very keen on trying to establish "food security" for the African countries. China has agreed on to educate several thousand teachers, doctors etc. Also, the Chinese government wants a cultural exchange program to be able to understand and cooperate with each other in the future (UN, 2010, p. 15). One could see the FOCAC initiative as Chinas response to the lack of commitment it had in the past (before the FOCAC initiative begun). Because of this the Chinese government is willing to strengthen its cooperation and influence in the area by giving more support than ever.

One important aspect that is really worth mentioning is the one about opening up the trading borders. China wants this to help African countries to be able to sell its goods abroad also on the Chinese market. However, as we mentioned earlier, Africa has a problem whereas the region produces commodities and imports manufactures. In all this "good will" there is something that caught our attention about the trade. We asked ourselves "Why is China willing to help African countries develop high tech manufactures by educating personnel?". But why is this a problem? This is of course good for the countries. However, in the UN study of the south-south cooperation, it was also mentioned that China is Africa's biggest supplier for manufactured goods. This in turn has created a local challenge for the African manufactures and would cause far too great competition in the local market (UN, 2010, p. 41). This makes it harder for local companies to sell its goods when the Chinese manufactures are being sold for a much lower price. This could in turn backfire on the agreed set of terms from the cooperation and is worth giving more thought about how it effects the cooperation. The scenario is something we wish to discuss later on in this paper.

The FOCAC agreement have established that it also will help build infrastructure. About 70 percent of the total costs of the infrastructure have been pumped in to countries such as Ethiopia, Angola and Sudan, Nigeria etc. The majority of these countries has big oil reserves and use it as a payment to the Chinese contributions to the area. In the UN report it is also addressed that there is a growing concern that the southern partners are more after the natural recourses than actually helping to develop a sustainable situation in the region (UN, 2010, p. 69).

### **3.3 China's foreign policy on Africa**

China has carefully laid out its foreign policy towards Africa using “diplomatic instruments, financial incentives in form of investment and development assistance, as well as limited peacekeeping and military cooperation” An Ethiopian diplomat put China's increasing political, economical and cultural presence in Africa this way: “Never in modern history has a nation successfully made such a determined and massive effort as China has in achieving progress within such a short span of time” (Alden, 2007, p. 35).

Nonetheless, Chinese presence in Africa was almost invisible a decade ago. However, this has over the past years rapidly changed. Today, there are about one million Chinese residents in Africa compared to only a few thousand in the beginning of the 2000s, and more are coming. (The Economist, More than minerals, 23/3 2013). The massive Chinese immigration to Africa is results of hundreds of major Chinese businesses having established themselves in China (Alden, 2007, p. 8).

Chinese fascination for Africa is not hard to see. Africa is rich on natural resources such as oil and minerals that are much needed by its industries at home. Not surprisingly then, China has embarked on a global search for untapped resources. Moreover, in 2006, Angola surpassed Saudi Arabia as China's most important oil supplier marking the significance Africa has in keeping the Chinese economy going (Alden, 2007, p. 9).

In terms of foreign policy, the year of 2006 marks an important milestone. The Chinese cabinet of that time signed, an official statement, the so called White Paper on China African Policy regarding development and trade cooperation with the continent. As China now integrates in the global community, the paper China African policy stress, it wants to “work together with other countries to build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity.”(White papers on China's Africa Policy).

First, the following part will thus investigate China's wider context in which its Africa policy has developed. Secondly, it will look at China's domestic policy as an explanatory factor for its international commitments. Finally, it will clarify China's core interests in Africa, namely the access to raw materials and new markets, gaining international political influence and last but not least the diplomatic battle with Taiwan.

### **3.4 China's African policy in context**

We think that in order to understand China's current motives in Africa we also need to understand its history. Most relevant is obviously the contemporary history, which can be divided into three periods: a period of normal development (1949-1977), a transitional period (1978-1994), and a period of rapid development (1995 to present) (Rotberg (Anshan) 2008, p. 22)

Under Mao Zedong's leadership, China proclaimed itself “the leader of the third world”. Over this period of time China strongly opposed western colonial powers. Its foreign policy towards Africa was, moreover, centered on ideological and military support for a few revolutionary regimes. In particular, China offered their support for liberation movements committed to Maoist ideology (Alden, 2007, p. 10).

In the late seventies, during the so called transition period, the Communist Party of China, CPC, started receiving African party delegations to Beijing. In this way CPC came in contact with many non-communist parties. For instance, CPC received more than 230 visits from sub-Saharan party delegations until 1990 in Beijing. Simultaneously, the CPC sent out fifty-six delegations to visit ruling parties of thirty-six Sub-Saharan countries. (Rotberg (Anshan), 2008, p. 23). But it was not until the 1990s, when the party's general secretary, Jiang Zemin, visited China and "set relations on a non-ideological footing". This visit marked an important shift in China's political focus in Africa from emphasize on ideology to resource acquisition (Alden, 2007 p. 17)

In the 1990s, China once again reached out to Africa, when establishing a new partnership based on "sincere friendship, equal treatment, unity and cooperation, common development and embracing the future" (Basic facts about China-Africa ties, 25/3 201)

Already in the 1980s, however, China had established a straightforward Africa Policy. "Emphasis would be on Chinese domestic economy, thereby signaling the calculated transformation of China, and also on an independent foreign policy focused on peace and development" (Anshan, 2012, p. 11) Furthermore, China introduced its four "principals that would underline economic and technological cooperation with Africa: sincerity, equality and mutual benefit, solidarity and common development." (Anshan, 2012, p. 14)

In 2000, Sino-African relations took new ground when the FOCAC, Forum on China-African cooperation, was first held in Beijing. As a consequence, China started to build a clear strategy on its policy towards the African continent. Since the meetings in 2000, yearly meetings are held to promote trade, health, infrastructure, education and agriculture. (Lagerqvist, 2012)

### **3.5 Domestic Chinese politics**

In order to understand China and consequently its international ambitions, it has been suggested that one can turn to the domestic arena. In this section of the study we, therefore, intend to contextualize Beijing's foreign policy.

The post-Mao state and the Communist Party of China's relationship with its own population may in fact be a cornerstone in understanding its African agenda. This relationship can namely be constructed as a social contract. For CPC, the key internal concern is to promote China's economic development while maintaining political and social stability. This can, moreover, be seen as a result of CPC's evolutionary change from a "revolutionary party" to a "ruling party" focusing on "order and security" (Troy, 2009 p. 4).

This essentially means that the "post-Maoist party" has the monopoly on political power as long as economic growth can be sustained. In fact, scholars have understood this as an "unwritten social contract where the people do not compete with the party for political power as long as the party looks after their economic fortunes". More importantly, for this study, however, is that CPC's social contract with the people of China can be used in analyzing the party's international commitments. That is, China's international motives are reflected by this and China is, therefore, committed to a foreign policy "that sustains an international environment supportive of growth and stability". This policy may also be seen in the light of the party's ongoing project of "going global" (zouchuqu) (Troy, 2009, p. 4-5).

In the international political arena, Chinese politicians, repeatedly stress its friendly and non-aggressive ambitions. For instance, Hu Jintao explained CPC's position on bilateral affairs "We respect the right of the people of all countries to independently choose their own development path. We will never interfere in the internal affairs of other countries or impose our own will on them". Or as the Chinese premier Wen Jiabo put it "We do offer our assistance with the deepest sincerity and without any political condition" (Alden, 2007, p. 15).

Interestingly, these statements are closely linked to the so called "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" from 1954 that lays out fundamental guidelines for the Chinese foreign policy. Formally they are based on mutual respect for territorial integrity; nonaggression; reciprocal noninterference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence (Troy, 2009, p. 14)

After two decades of impressive economic growth, it seems that Chinese policymakers have adjusted and accepted its growing political power. The same policymaker's stresses that China will rise peacefully. (Troy, 2009, p. 4).

Overall, CPC is seeking to restore China's "rightful place" in world politics. In doing so China is trying to promote itself as a "responsible power" and the leader of the so called developing world" (Troy, 2009, p 16).

### **3.6 Africa policy**

In 2006, the Chinese government released a particular important strategy, namely the so called White Papers on China's Africa policy which indicates that "China will continue to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with African countries on the international arena, conduct regular exchange of views, coordinate positions on the major international and regional issues and stand for mutual support on major issues concerning state sovereignty, territorial integrity, national dignity and human right" (China's African policy, 2006).

The paper formally presents China's objectives in Africa. It should be understood in the context of previous international commitments and, it moreover states that China's relationship with Africa is based on "friendly relations and cooperation with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence so as to contribute to peace, stability and common prosperity" (China's African policy, 2006)

### **3.7 China's motivations in entering Africa**

We have now established China's historical background in Africa, and drawn up China's general foreign policy and its formal African Policy. In order to further investigate China's motives in Africa, this part looks at the driving forces for entering Africa. A Chatham House summit draws out four core focuses, namely raw materials, access to new markets, political influences and "Taiwan" (Shinn, 2012 p. 2).

The first motivation concerns raw materials, where oil is the center of attention. Today, China roughly imports one third of its oil from the African continent. After a remarkable economic lift, China has evolved to become the second biggest economy in the world, thus becoming an important importer of raw materials. To keep the economy growing China need to have secure sources of energy. As a consequence, China has embarked on a global search for untapped resources. It has therefore been claimed that "energy resources are the most important focus of China's involvement on the continent (Alden, 2007, p 8-13). .

Oil is undoubtedly China's most important area of interest in terms of investment. As already pointed out China's booming economy, desperately needs oil. In the same time, China's own oil findings are limited (Rotberg (Broadman), 2008, p. 110). Consequently, China is growing more dependent on importing foreign oil. The increasing dependence on foreign oil has moreover, raised concerns in Beijing why oil has been a key focus. (Troy, 2007, p. 162)

This can be explained by the fact that CPC's legitimacy is based on growing welfare for the population on the whole. Natural resources, such as oil, are indeed vital to remain the high level of growth pace, which help the party to remain its political power (Shinn, 2012, p 2).

The second motivation concerns access to new markets. Recently there has been a massive increase in trade volume between China and sub-Saharan Africa, which also clearly mirrors the new increasing trend in South-South trade relations in a bigger picture. Moreover, China has become the continents third biggest trading partner by volume after United States and France and an important investor. Nonetheless, trade centers around a few key countries such as Angola and Zambia. (Alden, 2007, p 15)

However, China's commercial interests in Africa go back several decades. China-African trade has, interestingly, increased multiple times during the past few years. Since the year of 2000, China-African investments are flourishing. (Rotberg (Broadman), 2008, p. 87).

It has also been recognized that for China to keep up its industrial production, it is essential for its companies to export to new markets. In this sense, China has realized the tremendous potential in Africa for Chinese products. Or as a French diplomat put it "Thanks to the Chinese we also rediscovered that Africa is not a continent of crises and misery but one of 800 million consumers". Estimates suggests that within 20 years those 800 million consumers will be 1,4 billion (Troy, 2009, p. 177).

Nonetheless, Africa is mostly exporting oil and unrefined natural resources while China is exporting cheap manufactured goods such as clothes and computers (The Economist, A Warm Embrace, 21/6, 2006).

Thirdly, China seeks political influence in the political system. Africa has turned out to be a key in this objective. As a growing political player China seeks recognition and acceptance, in particular in international institutions such as the UN and WTO. As China's leaders increasingly integrate themselves into the global economy and start, however tentatively to play by essentially Western rules – as is exemplified by Beijing's membership in the WTO – they have simultaneously sought to strengthen political ties with various African countries, arguably as a defensive mechanism against Westernization if an when it should threaten influential domestic interests (Troy, 2009, p. 16)

Africa consists of 54 countries. This makes the continent interesting for strategic purposes in for. That is, voting in the UN (Shinn, 2012, p. 2)

This has been stressed by former Chinese president Hu Jintao who meant that "China and Africa should help each other economically and support each other economically and support each other in international and regional affairs" (Rotberg (Anshan), 2008 p. 24)

In correlation to China's aim of gaining political influence, the case of "Taiwan" can be treated as a separate area of interest for Chinese policymakers. China is namely interested in replacing political reorganization of Taiwan in favor of China, thus isolating the island. More specifically, China means that Taiwan is part of China. China accepts its African allies trading with Taiwan but do not accept diplomatic reorganization of Taiwan (Shinn, 2012, p 2)



Historically, Beijing and Taipei have been struggling for international diplomatic acceptance since 1949. Until, the end of the 1990s Taiwan was the leader of this “battle”. As China step by step has been growing stronger, diplomatic acceptance has also been shifting in favor of Beijing. Without the support of the Africa group, China would not be able to take over Taiwan’s seat successfully in the United nations, and be recognized by the international system (Alden, 2007, p. 20-21).

## **4. Examples of China in Africa**

### **4.1 Chinese businesses**

Throughout many of the African countries Chinese corporations tend not to follow the rules or guidelines set by the FOCAC agreement. Zambia is one example of this scenario. A Swedish scientist at "Utrikespolitiska Institutet", Johan Lagerkvist is working with South-South relations. In an article in the Swedish science magazine "Forskning & Framsteg" he gives a dark view of the Chinese companies to describe what is really going on behind the curtains.

He describes how businessmen and local authorities are not pleased with how the Chinese industries seal themselves off from the local population. There is one zone in particular called the "Multi-facility economic zone" where the authorities have no information nor any knowledge about what is happening on the inside. Even worse, they are also denied permission to enter the zone.

Lagerkvist also mentions how many Chinese immigrants tend to take jobs that Africans can do as well because of the increasing flow of both legal as well as illegal immigrants. The effects from this immigration happen to be underemployment within the African population. Lagerkvist explains that actions like these are the reason China is being viewed as a modern colonizer (Lagerkvist, 2012)

### **4.2 The conflict in Darfur, Sudan**

The case of Sudan is unarguably of complex nature were factors such as history, religion, and refugee issues and so on interchangeably affect the conflict. Moreover, China has been accused of taking Sudan under “its wings” (Rotberg (Anshan), 2008, p 38).

Most people know Sudan's conflict as the civil war where South-Sudan broke free from Sudan. However other conflicts have appeared in the country. One of the conflicts is the one in the region of Darfur and have come to involve other neighboring regions as well. This have erupted in a crisis where the "anti-government" militias want autonomy while the Sudanese government wants to end the crisis because of political and humanitarian issues. It has by some been called the worst humanitarian crisis in a very long period of time (Wenping, 2010, p. 156).

But where does China come into the picture? China as we know is involved in a lot of African countries to build up partnerships by trade, investments etc. As we stated before, the Chinese government is building these partnerships upon a set of terms as part of a policy. One of the policies called the "non-intervention" policy states that China will not interfere with the countries internal issues (Wenping, 2010, p. 161). However this policy have during the Darfur conflict backfired. A lot of international complaints regarding Chinas "non-interference" policy have risen and government as well as institutions have forced China to take action.

Chinas involvement in Sudan has from western views only been regarded as an economical interest where the country takes little interest in the humanitarian crisis. This critique is based on China having a market-based system where the key principle is "non-interference". Why all the critique is formed around Chinas interest in the Sudanese economy and not politically is because the country focuses on the energy field. The "energy field" being oil reserves is one major reason behind large Chinese investments (Wenping, 2010, p. 157- 159).

Because of the major influence China has on Sudan a lot of other countries demanded that China should take action and responsibility in the Darfur crisis. However it is clear for all the spectators that Chinas own policy did not support human rights in this regard. Also as an counteract to the critique the Chinese government said that the responsibility to protect was made up by western countries to justify their own interventions (Wenping, 2010, p. 160-161).

The Chinese government was in all fairness quick to deal with the situation and at this moment China have up till now deployed over two thousand peacekeeping troops in Africa. Also China is said to have been utmost pragmatic on how to deal with the crisis. China has for instance accepted the "Annan Plan" to deal with the situation (Wenping, 2010, p. 161 - 162).

However, even if China has been able to deal with situations like these, a lot more is going on in the dark. To really see what is going on we have to take a look at another situation to see how poorly China is doing in certain countries and how Chinas actions could be a paradox and why it links so well with the realistic view that we aim to analyze with.

### **4.3 The economic scenario in Zambia**

The scenario has its roots in a number of different policies that have made it possible for Chinese enterprises to get a firm grip on the local markets. A number of international trade agreements have more or less opened up the market making it possible for foreign companies all around the world to "exploit" the markets in developing countries (Kragelund, 2010, p. 209). This has made it more or less impossible for the African countries to make up their own investment, trade and industrial policies. Although a lot of these agreements and policies have been set by institutions such as WTO (Kragelund, 2010, p. 208), the Chinese are fast to use it to their advantage. Many Chinese companies nowadays produce more than enough goods for the domestic market. This have resulted in China developing the "Go Out Policy", where the Chinese government helps Chinese companies to get stronger in the international arena. Areas in Africa have become new markets for the Chinese companies (Kragelund, 2010, p. 213). Chinese companies therefore has turned the situation against many of the African companies whereas the African companies are forced to live in the old situation which is to buy manufactures and sell commodities because of the inability to compete with Chinese enterprises on the market.

Also there is supposedly a manhunt for natural resources in countries such as Zambia. Chinese companies have invested lots of capital in mining but even more in manufacturing. But the truth is that a lot of the capital that are supposed to be spent in the industry are actually related to the mining industry. Material such as copper smelters and explosives are bought as material for the manufacturing industry when they actually belong in the mining industry for exploiting natural resources. So instead of the mining industry having to do with only a part of the total capital spent from Chinese investors the real story begs to differ. The real truth could be that almost seventy percent of the total investments in Zambia goes toward mining (Kragelund, 2010, p. 212). This somewhat proves the hidden agenda of Chinas hunt for resources.

Even though the problem might seem like a political one where the information does not seem to fit what really is going on there is more happening on the lower levels as well. Many Chinese investors also use Zambian shareowners in companies as front figures to gain influence over the customers when these type of companies foundationally are Chinese. In many cases the largest shareowners are Zambian businessmen but are used for the companies to gain the influence it needs on the market (Kragelund, 2010, p. 213).

#### **4.4 The case of Angola**

Maybe the most clear case of China only wanting the resources on the continent is the Angolan case. Even the president of Angola, Eduardo dos Santos acknowledged that China wanted the natural resources (oil) in the country. "China needs natural resources and Angola wants development" he said (Campos, Vines, 2010, p. 193). The World Bank has called this cooperation between the two countries as "resources for infrastructure". The term is mostly used for countries who are unable to provide money as a payment and instead use the exploitation of natural resources as an alternative method of payment (Campos, Vines, 2010, p. 195, 196). In recent years a staggering 95 percent of all the export goods from Angola was crude oil. Even though the largest buyer of Angolan oil is the US, Chinas imports have increased drastically in the last years (Campos, Vines, 2010, p. 199). This case shun some light on what might be little evidence to Chinas hunt for natural resources. Although this bilateral trade is not only bad but good in many ways it does show where Chinas interests lays. The question to be raised probably is, will China make Angola dependant on its oil reserves as an alternative payment method and what might be the consequences of this?

#### **Realist point of view**

From all the different sources and facts we have provided it would be fairly easy to say that the Chinese way and its policy are nothing more than a paradox. China supports Chinese investors in Africa although many of them are exploiting natural resources. Foreign spectators have called China as a modern colonizer. The major difference is that its riding on the liberal agreements set by international institutions such as the WTO. It is easy to see how China are using these other policies set by others to try to get it their way. This is nothing but a work from a country adapting "realistic ways".

As mentioned by the Swedish scientist Johan Lagerkvist, China is not very open about its affairs on the local level in for instance Zambia. This is a classic example of how Chinese interests are exploiting natural resources without it benefiting the local population in form of new job opportunities. As Lagerkvist also said, "But Chinas economic influence and much clearer footprint in all African countries also raise new questions about sovereignty both as a principle and as a practice" (Lagerkvist, 2012).

Hence there is little reason to root for Chinas "cooperation" when the country is on a manhunt for natural resources with taking much regard to the local population. China in this regard is the autonomous state whom try to exploit other actors in their path to self-help. The self-help could provide an explanation to as why China is only receiving natural resources as payment which it needs for its domestic growth. In the given examples Sudan and Zambia it shows how China gives little regard as to how the situations develop unless it turns out dangerous for the Chinese population in the area. Especially in Sudan where the Chinese were accused of not taking action in the humanitarian crisis with its "non-intervention"-policy.

This creates a rather confusing view on Chinas African policy where in one way China does promote liberal thoughts and actions but does not seem to give it much thought. Especially when it concern economic situations. One could view the policy as a paradox where the Chinese show a different view from the one they are trying to convey.

When talking about China as a modern colonizer, in most cases one cannot help to wonder about the sustained democratic development. A great deal of concern regarding Chinas involvement in both illiberal and liberal countries have been raised. According to Lagerkvist many western countries says that China is a hindrance towards democratic development in African countries (Lagerkvist, 2012). Probably because of Chinas own political structure.

### **A liberal viewpoint**

From the two cases above it is easy to see that although a lot of critique has been directed towards Chinas African policy the intentions of the country do help. Despite the exchange of raw materials for loans in the Angolan trade agreement and how it appears to show Chinas "true face" it really do help the country in a lot of ways.

Since the liberal clings himself by the institutions and the collective he knows that if everyone works together they can create a win-win situation. This definition, also called "absolute gains" could be expressed in the example of Angola. Although we do know that 95 percent or more of the total Angolan exports is crude oil it help the state to rebuild itself and to strengthen the economical foundation as well as reducing poverty. That bilateral trade between Angola and China is a clear example of how countries can create a "win-win" situation.

Also, how China as a diplomatic actor could bring peace to a conflict which caught many people's attention also show how the country is willing to reconsider its politics in favor of more than just economical interests.

## 5. Concluding remarks

### Discussion

The objective of this paper was to study China's political motives in Africa. In order to do so we estimated two hypotheses. First, we understood China's motives in Africa as being of neo-colonial nature. Second, we saw China's involvement in Africa as a way of building a long lasting relationship in correlation with so called South-South cooperation.

The extravagant meetings in Beijing in 2000 undoubtedly drew worldwide political attention to China-African affairs and the increasing importance of South-South relations. In that sense the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation can be seen as the catalyst for modern Sino-African relations

Subsequently, in full retrospect of Gerald Segal's article "China and Africa"; Segal's conclusion that Africa would be the least important region for China could in fact not be more wrong. Today, China and Africa are growing more interconnected and desperately need each other. The Harvard professor, Robert Rotberg, explains that China cannot easily grow without Africa, nor can Africa subsist and prosper without China. (Rotberg, 2008, p 1)

One of the most evident problems in China-African relations is the fact that African countries mainly exports raw materials to China and imports manufactured goods. This together with obvious asymmetries in the Sino-African relations can be seen as the source to the external critique suggesting that China is having colonial motives in Africa.

In reality, however, it is very little that supports this point of view. For instance, China's policy is very clear that will not interfere with a country's internal affairs (see, Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence). Hereby, the Chinese government stress that they will not violate a single country's sovereignty. A more nuanced view would, therefore, be that China is having mercantilist motives and seeking to challenge western historical hegemony in Africa. This cannot be seen as an expression for neo-colonialism, as defined in this paper.

Hu Jintao, the former president of China, has responded to commentators critique on China having colonial ambitions in this way: "China has never imposed its will or unequal practices on other countries and will never do so in the future. It will certainly not do anything harmful to the interests of Africa and its people. China respects the political system and paths to development independently adopted and pursued by the African people that suit their national conditions." (Alden, 2007, p. 120)

A more appealing approach of the Chinese government's motives in Africa is, for that reason, our second hypothesis – that is, Africa as a partner. What supports this course is simply the overall intensifying Sino-African exchange on all levels. To start with, since the first Forum on China Africa Cooperation in 2000, trade flows are rising almost exponentially. This also goes beyond the traditional political elites and has implications for the ordinary people of Africa in China increasing the cultural exchange.

Furthermore, we have established that China's official relations with Africa are based on "political equality, mutual trust economic cooperation and cultural exchange" which gives additional support for this viewpoint. Despite obvious flaws then, China has through its actions shown that they have the political will to establish a long lasting relationship with Africa, or a diplomatic and "strategic partnership".

Overall, it is easy to see that Chinese SOEs and MNCs in some sense are unethical in its affairs in Africa. It is, however, harder to see China's colonial ambitions. Rather the CPC is very pragmatic in its political strategy, realizing that their political survival is based on raising domestic standards of living. As a result African countries are an important partner in China's network, and vital for China's future economic health.

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