

Altruism in the Sino-African Relationship

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Africa's economy changed forever when they were colonized by the Europeans. Specifically, the Atlantic slave trade caused Africans to view their own economy as lesser, leading them to replace their locally made goods with European made goods. Because of this drastic change, other countries viewed them as a "source of raw material, ... labor, and as only a consumer of goods" (Settles 1996, 4). Although this sentiment is not necessarily held anymore, the effect that era of colonialism had is still visible in Africa's economy today. This can be seen through their heavy reliance on imported foods (Prati 2022). China hopes to aid Africa out of their economic struggles because, as China claims, there are similarities between their economic upcoming and Africa's future development (Samy 2010, 75-90). However, it is speculated, by the United States (US) and some populations in Africa, that China may not be truly altruistic with their aid. This essay will explore the Sino-African foreign aid relationship and discuss if the values of ethicality and altruism matter in foreign aid.

Many people believe that China and Africa's relations started at the 2006 the Beijing Summit, but it started when the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) developed in 1949. China supported Africa's struggle for independence as it aligned with China's antagonistic beliefs towards colonialism and imperialism. This led China to turn to Africa when they wanted to cut ties with the Soviet Union and wanted more political power to ensure Taiwan would not be viewed as a country (Samy 2010, 75-90). China was once very integrated with the Soviet Union as they had similar ideologies regarding communism. However, later China viewed the Soviet Union as "perverters" of their beliefs and stopped the alliance in the early 1960s (Scalapino 1964, 640-654). China further developed aid relations with Africa knowing that the Soviet Union was trying to do so as well. This signified that China was not only no longer aligned with the Soviet Union, but against (Warwick 2021). The support of African countries gained China support from African leaders. Since China's aid of Africa was so strong, many African countries voted for China to join the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 1971. The acceptance of China onto the UNSC implied that the UN accepted that Taiwan was not a country. The votes supporting China were overwhelmingly African and there's a chance the China wouldn't have gotten seats without them (Samy 2010, 75-90).

After the vote, there was a period where China focused inwards, on their domestic market and economy (Academic). China loosened their ties with Africa to focus on Japanese and American relations (Samy 2010, 75-90). In 1979, the US granted China "full diplomatic recognition" and, despite there being a loophole in the One-China policy allowing Taiwan to strengthen its US ties, the Beijing-Washington relations improved (CFR). This was perfected for the Chinese government as their alliance choices, from this time and onward, seem to be derived from economic pragmatism, unlike their previous years which considered ideological pragmatism (Samy 2010, 75-90). Looking at Africa around this time, eight of the thirty-five African countries had an economic recession in the 1980s. This was part on fault of two oil shocks (Samy 2010, 75-90), but also due to African countries' terms of trades. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Africa's exporting terms of trade were the worst in 1982, including the terms during the Great depression and the Second World War. The IMF and World Bank set up structural adjustment policies at the time, but they weren't properly acquainted with countries that were "smaller, poorer, more trade-dependent, less urbanized, and less socially stratified" in comparison to their other partners (AF 80). These multilateral companies'

adjustments caused slower GDP growth, an increase in poverty, lower incomes, lower Human Development Indicators, and a lot more issues that Africa is still recovering from (improv).

At the end of the 1980s, China's aid flow to Africa increased and developed by broadening the ability of the aid programme. China's policies added in "preferential loans, co-operatives and joint ventures, and investments" with the goal of making Africa more self-reliant through economic and trade relations. It's important to note that China's increased support to Africa followed the Tiananmen Square Protests (Samy 2010, 75-90), which was essentially a massacre of peaceful protestors in China (amnesty). China needed the sympathy from African leaders to ensure they would not be alone when called out by other countries. It's important to note Africa has had "accusations of human rights abuses and non-democratic means of seizing power in their own countries" (Samy 2010, 75-90). This almost inhumane support is one of the reasons the leaders can work so well together. Their ideologies seem to stem further than just political ones, but ethical ones too.

This brings us to the most recent aid policy between African governments and China: the Beijing Consensus. In 2006 at the Beijing Summit, the Chinese government released its 5 billion USD official development assistance for Africa. China proposed building infrastructure, providing training and expertise, and even providing African students government scholarships to help develop Africa (Samy 2010, 75-90). Notice, in these propositions how it requires Chinese representatives to be physically in China. This is important as it will tie into how China is able to implement soft power. Alongside those proposals, China promised to encourage Chinese investments in Africa by removing tariffs on 440 goods exported from Africa and help establish trade and economic co-operation zones. China hasn't stated what their intentions are, but they doubled its assistance to Africa in 2009 and cancelled interest free loans owed by indebted African countries, so it is assumed it is going according to China's plan. The actual data regarding Sino-African aid is not released to the public. According to China doesn't release any aid numbers as it could anger recipients of Chinese aid because they are not receiving the same amount of assistance. All members on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) release their data, so China is out of the deviant in this situation. Though, the DAC members don't have the same poverty China has. It is speculated that China's government is worried about its own population would react seeing the amount of money going out of country instead of helping the poverty within the country (Samy 2010, 75-90). China ignoring their civil society in poverty is quite telling of why the relationship between African Countries and China works so well, as mentioned above, because both groups have been called out for human rights violations, labour laws, and environmental sustainability and none have changed their ways (Samy 2010, 75-90). The main reason China has been able to develop so much infrastructure and provide labour in Africa is because of poor work conditions. Africa doesn't want to be preached to about good governance by westerners because they want to follow China's path of rapid economic development (Hanauer and Lyle 2014).

According to the Research and Development Corporation (Hanauer and Lyle 2014), an educated guess is that China's goals are global political legitimacy, more access to oil and gas, bigger market for exporting Chinese goods, and to be an integral role in the stability of the African region to allow mitigation of "security-related threats to China's economic interests" (Hanauer and Lyle 2014). China essentially sees Africa as another way to gain more global power and African political leaders don't mind; however, some of the civil society does. To African leaders, China has less to gain than the more Westernized Corporations (Hanauer and Lyle 2014). African leaders appreciate the political recognition, economic development, and infrastructure developments (i.e. bridges, railways) China has provided as they truly see China's support as altruistic. African civil society would argue otherwise. Labour unions dislike how the

Chinese government, as mentioned above, have poor labour conditions and on top of that: unsustainable environmental practices and job displacements (Hanauer and Lyle 2014). Government watchdogs, a group of people that watches the intricacies of the government's actions to catch illegal acts or problems, warn that China's negotiations are unfair and exploit Africa. Once China heard that the civilians were displeased, they "rebalanced" the policies by focusing on the sustainability of Africa's economy and trade relationship. This was essentially just a façade because despite the words in the policy being different there's still a Chinese "soft power veil" atop Africa because of how intertwined China is into their Countries (Hanauer and Lyle 2014).

China's foreign aid program for Africa is completely decentralized. It has people out on the field helping, so there are cultural engagements, people-to-people exchanges, and a "promotion of Chinese soft power" (Hanauer and Lyle 2014). On one hand, sending representatives to develop and economic and trade systems alongside people of the African continents seems like the most efficient way to help the continents get on their feet. On the other hand, these closer cultural ties and in-person outreach fosters a type of African support for China that wouldn't be present in a more classical approach of aid. This blatantly looks like a way to slowly gain soft power, mentioned earlier, over the African continent. Dr. Mehari Taddele Maru, one of the few denying the idea of Chinese soft power, says despite what China is doing it is up to the African governments to ensure they are not exploited. He says that Africans are aware of the short comings of China's assistance, but the support without any strings is to Africa's advantage. He also explains that this thought process seems to be rooted in Sinophobia (dr. man). There are aspects of the soft power critique that are probably derived from Sinophobia, but even if the African governments realize China's attempts to gain soft power in their continent, they aren't doing anything to stop it. The only way to get the amount of development China is providing is by having Chinese representatives on sight and that comes at the cost of these representative possibly pushing Chinese ideologies on the Africans working with them. The leaders might recognize the cultural push, but it's hard to ensure that their civil society does too.

Dr. Mehari Tadele's main argument is that Africa was not being colonized. No sources used for this paper directly stated China is colonizing Africa, but many of them seem to imply it.

"The aim of colonialism is to exploit the physical, human, and economic resources of an area to benefit the colonizing nation" (Settles 1996, 3)

Using this definition, you could argue China is trying to colonize Africa. They are training African society to be able to develop a system to export oil, gas, and other natural resources, so China themselves can buy them. However, this argument falters when it comes to the word exploiting. Since we do not know a lot behind China's intentions, we can't say for certain they are truly altruistic with their actions and that would be how one defines if their actions are exploitative or not. One could argue, since China is not respecting labour laws, and therefore human rights, they are exploiting African continents because they're using unethical methods – this essay will assume violation of human rights is unethical. The unfortunate truth is that, as mentioned earlier, African leaders also don't seem to care about labour laws, meaning they probably understand how their people are being treated, so it's not exploitative of China but exploitative of the African leaders themselves. Therefore, it can't be called colonialism because it's Africa exploiting their own people. Dr. Mehari Tadele, is right in saying it is not technically colonization, but his article falls short of recognizing the unethical methods both groups of leaders use to gain economic power.

Despite the unethicity the Sino-African relation creates, other African aid donors can't do much due to the non-interference policy China. The policy's idea is to respect the power of

other countries (Brown 2013), so to interfere with Sino-African relation would be disrespecting all the countries in that relation because it's almost saying they aren't capable. The western donors of Africa have felt undermined by the policy since their aid hasn't had much of an impact on development in comparison to China's aid (SAMY 2010, 75-90). One of the sources used for this article concluded that if the western donors and China collaborated, then the aid would be able to develop a lot more and both Africa and China could hold more representation in global politics (SAMY 2010, 75-90). This seems a little naïve given that the reason western aid is disliked in Africa is because of the differing opinion of "good governance." While researching this article, it was brought to light that good governance extends further than how policies are run but down to how humans are treated. These group leaders will just not be able to work together because the reason Chinese aid is so efficient and effective is so heavily reliant on their ability to ignore human rights. America has considered working with Africa in a closer relation, but not regarding aid. Obama, when in office, hoped to develop multiple trade and infrastructure infrastructures with Africa to benefit America's interests (Hanauer and Lyle 2014). Essentially, Africa receiving China's aid made Africa a desirable country to trade with because of their natural resources. Supporting the natural resources exported from Africa also supports the unethical methods they are taking to export the natural resources. America won't work with China to aid Africa, despite having similar goals economically (Hanauer and Lyle 2014), because of Chinese and African leader's disregard for human rights, but will support them once Africa is exporting natural resources for a good price. This seems a little unethical.

Ethicality throughout the entire Sino-African relationship is a little suspicious as it's rooted in human right violations. However, since the governments involved both have the same views regarding human rights the alliance itself isn't actual unethical unless China's motives are completely not altruistic. It's important to note that this point only matters if they have significantly altruistic intentions than altruistic ones because almost all foreign aid has an aspect of non-altruism. China's gain in natural resources from this relationship is a plus one but shouldn't be their main goal as they are technically supposed to give aid to the country does not use it as income – if they want to do that, they should just say it. Looking at the history of the relationship, it's noticeable how the original sentiments behind China's aid seemed truly altruistic as they were just supporting Africa in the fight for their independence. However, after China came back for Africa's sympathy after Tiananmen Square their actions seem to become less altruistic as time progressed.

It could be said altruism in aid doesn't matter if the donor country is giving a form of aid. However, looking at the case study of the Sino-African relation, if there is no altruism in China's actions, they are exploiting Africa. Both countries are exploiting African civilization as they don't care for human rights, but China can't exploit African civilization if their governments already exploit them. Altruism only matters because if the donor country is only interested in themselves the aid they are giving could be coming from a place of malice. Ethics matters because most countries want their values to be respected in agreements and politics. If Africa didn't agree with China's ethics and China was completely self-interested when giving aid, their powerhouse alliance would not work. If Africa aligned closely with America's ideologies around ethics, they might have set up a bilateral aid program like Chinas. The most upsetting part of the Sino-African relationship is that it only works because it's extremely unethical and China probably has a lot to gain from the alliance. It's doubtful that China would send so many representatives to another country if there was nothing to gain. If human rights were properly respected, it's unclear if Africa's development could really be turned around as quickly.

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