

## LSE Global China PhD Working Group Seminar, 2022

Tuesdays, 5-6:30 pm via Zoom and in-person (CON 7.03)

This seminar is organized by LSE Global China PhD working group. It is for PhD students and early scholars at LSE working on China and global south related studies. It is a forum for discussions and questions on China in development contexts. Researchers from all theoretical backgrounds and methodological traditions are welcome. This seminar will be hosted in hybrid format, via Zoom and in-person at LSE.

If you would like to join the working group and/or attend the seminar, please email Yuezhou Yang ([y.yang91@lse.ac.uk](mailto:y.yang91@lse.ac.uk)). She will send out a Zoom invite link ahead of each session.

This is an open-access research group. Please circulate this flyer in your networks to anyone who may be interested. Please contact us if you would like to present.

### Regular Members

Bruno Binetti (IR) [b.binetti@lse.ac.uk](mailto:b.binetti@lse.ac.uk)  
The Political Economy of Chinese Infrastructure in Latin America

Felix Brender (IR) [f.brender@lse.ac.uk](mailto:f.brender@lse.ac.uk)  
Sima Zhao's Intentions? Chinese Peacekeeping, Private Security Contractors and Securing Interests, Assets and Citizens in the Sudans

Yuezhou Yang (ID) [y.yang91@lse.ac.uk](mailto:y.yang91@lse.ac.uk)  
Property institutions and their explanatory power on Chinese agricultural investment in Tanzania and Zambia

Yunxiong (George) Li (GEOG) [Y.Li181@lse.ac.uk](mailto:Y.Li181@lse.ac.uk)  
Chinese Outward Foreign Direct Investment, One Belt One Road Initiative

### LT 2022

25 Jan 2022 **Yuan Wang**, Fellow at the Columbia-Harvard China and the World Program  
*Presidential Extraversion: Understanding the Politics of Sino-African Mega-Infrastructure Projects*

8 Feb 2022 **Weidi Zheng**, Fellow at Dept. of Digital Humanities, KCL  
*The Silent China: Towards an Anti-Essentialism Approach for South-South Encounters*

8 Mar 2022 **Yuezhou Yang**, PhD candidate at Dept. of International Development, LSE  
*Institution-in-context: Land Rights Regimes in Zambia and How they Shape Chinese Investment in Zambian Agricultural Land*

22 Mar 2022     **Roger Fon**, Fellow at Dept. of Management, LSE  
*Governance, Foreign Aid, and Chinese FDI*

## Abstract

25 Jan 2022     Yuan Wang, Fellow at the Columbia-Harvard China and the World Program

### ***Presidential Extraversion: Understanding the Politics of Sino-African Mega-Infrastructure Projects***

The past two decades have witnessed increasing scholarly analysis of China's growing presence in Africa. Where is African agency within the asymmetric power relations between China and African states? How do African actors use foreign-sponsored projects to achieve domestic objectives? Some analyses take a China-centered perspective, with divergent views about how Chinese economic engagement promotes or inhibits African development. Growingly, scholarly work recognizes the agency of African actors. I advance upon the *African agency* argument by proposing a concept of *presidential extraversion*. I argue that Chinese-sponsored projects in Africa have coincided with the host ruler's strategies for political survival. Internationally, African rulers have strategized among their available choices to ensure that the state received foreign finance and services on the most favorable terms. Domestically, they have instrumentalized Chinese-sponsored projects and loans to demonstrate their performance legitimacy and sustain patronage networks. I process-trace the Kenyan Standard Gauge Railway and Angolan Kilamba Kiaxi housing project, primarily relying on evidence collected in Kenya, Angola, and China from 2017-2019. The findings challenge the neo-dependency argument and show that despite Sino-African power asymmetry, African actors have the agency to shape this relationship to their advantage. The presidential extraversion argument advances upon African extraversion theory by locating the agency within the African political leaders rather than elites broadly.

8 Feb 2022     Weidi Zheng, Fellow at Dept. of Digital Humanities, KCL

### ***The Silent China: Towards an Anti-Essentialism Approach for South-South Encounters***

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has encountered much backlash locally and internationally and heated the contesting narratives of China's globalisation. Whilst China's state-led mass-mediated efforts overseas have attracted much scholarly attention, this article investigates the on-the-ground meaning-making process of China's presence in Africa by using the 2016–2017 Maasai attacks against a Chinese construction site in Kenya, part of a BRI infrastructure project, as an ethnographic case study. It argues that, despite the overarching binaries of 'China-Africa', 'predator-partner', and 'hegemon-subaltern' in media and academic representation, Maasai protestors primarily articulated China's presences into Kenya's dominant discourses (i.e. ethnicity, indigenous rights) and the political-economic complex. Chinese, Kenyan and international media, whether aware of these complicities or not, are each seeking the 'China-Africa' reality within one's own 'regime of truth', which only fosters mutual skepticism. An anti-essentialism approach is also proposed to capture the fluid, uncertain subjective positions and power dynamics within South-South collaborations.

8 Mar 2022 Yuezhou Yang, PhD candidate at Dept. of International Development, LSE

***Institution-in-context: Land Rights Regimes in Zambia and How they Shape Chinese Investment in Zambian Agricultural Land***

The rising anxiety on ‘Chinese scramble’ in Africa is fuelled by the lack of knowledge on two key features of China-Africa engagement: the nature and motives of Chinese economic actors, and the African rural land governance. This paper takes Chinese land-based agricultural investments in Zambia as case study and explores the answers to why patterns of Chinese investment vary across time, subnational space, and forms. It conceptualizes property rights regimes as one key determinant of Chinese land-based agricultural investments. It shows how the investment outcome varies along the line of political salient factors. When the regimes of land rights have unified state control, the investment outcome depends on the freedom of land market regulated by the state. The investment decision follows the market regulatory rules. Whereas in the situations that competing authorities are consolidating each side’s power grip, it opens a unique space for developmental projects on the one hand, and zombie project due to controversial power struggles between central and peripheral on the other hand. Overall, this thesis provides insight into how local conditions -- both formal laws, policies, and regulations and informal practices and local forces -- create opportunities and set constraints on China-Africa investment agendas.

22 Mar 2022 Roger Fon, Fellow at Dept. of Management, LSE

***Governance, Foreign Aid, and Chinese FDI***

This article examines how Chinese foreign aid interacts with the quality of the host country’s governance in shaping Chinese state-owned enterprises’ FDI in Africa. By analyzing the firm-level greenfield FDI data of Chinese state-owned enterprises between 2003 and 2014 and distinguishing between China’s official development assistance and less concessional forms of Chinese foreign aid, we reveal two main findings. First, the quality of the host country’s governance negatively affects Chinese state-owned enterprises’ FDI. Second, other official aid and loans from China negatively moderate the relationship between the quality of the host country’s governance and FDI by Chinese state-owned enterprises. Specifically, the tendency for Chinese state-owned enterprises to invest in locations with weak governance increases when their investments are integrated with less concessional forms of Chinese foreign aid in the form of other official flows and loans. Our results are robust to alternative measures of governance and different methodological approaches. The article challenges the traditional notion of institutional theory which assumes a positive relationship between governance quality and FDI attraction.