

The Impact of Rise of China on Neocolonialism in Africa: Contemporary Perspective

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Abstract:

China's presence in Africa during past several decades has created a noticeable reaction from the international community. The majority of those reactions embedded criticism due to the fact that Sino-African relations have greatly been based on ignorance towards corruption, human rights violations, and poverty within the jurisdictions of both cooperating parties. The cooperation between China and Africa has been founded on mutual understanding. Yet, the narrative of this relationship entails that the soundness and mutual agreements on economic investments was driven by the fact that most African partners of China willingly accepted "no strings attached" method of cooperation. The scholarly community is divided on the opinion whether or not the Sino-African relations are equally beneficial for both sides. Some of the scholars believe that China has incentivized infrastructural changes within poor African communities. Others claim that China's presence in Africa has further enhanced the destabilization of the government system by encouraging more corruption. This paper will attempt to explain whether the levels of freedom in certain African countries have any correlation with how China selects its partners in the continent. The bivariate analysis between levels of freedom based on the data from Freedom House database, and China's firms and various projects in Africa reveals that there is no correlation between levels of freedom in African states and for China's selection of its partners.

"Politics is abstract: what is the use of voting if you are dying of hunger?" – Sartre

Introduction

Among the global rising powers, China is the biggest investor in the African continent. Some scholars argue that China's investments have a short life in the African continent (Huiping, 2013), whereas, others claim that China envisions a far-reaching investment in Africa which will have a long lasting impact on all parties involved - China, Africa, and the international community (Large, 2008). China's rise in recent decades, coupled with the ideology of realism that states will attempt to maximize their relative power by turning defensive foreign policy into offensive, creates significant concerns for the Western world (Mearsheimer, 2013). Some scholars also argue that China's engagement with Africa for extraction of natural resources and acquisitions of lands for expansion agribusiness presents a new concern in the narrative of rise of China (Kofigah, 2014; Ross, 2012). The United States and Western Europe are alarmed with land acquisition because the popular perception is that China might use those lands for establishment of military bases in Africa (Brautigam, 2015). Additionally, the political and economic instability, corruption and dictatorial regimes in many African countries and China's own human rights violations, all add more weight to the argument that China is the latest "colonial" power that makes Africa dependent on its financial assistance (Chen et al, 2015).

The objective of this paper is to investigate the Sino-African relations through the lenses of Neocolonialism, and explain who the real beneficiaries are in this relation. The core of China-Africa relations is based on economic partnership that has increased exponentially in past two decades. There are several reasons that explain the growth of that development. First, the economic and political disengagement of the West from the African region paved a way for "the entrance of the dragon," China, into a new terrain, Africa (Edoho, 2011). China realizes its potentials and does not miss on opportunities where other international actors show reluctance to

be involved with in Africa. Second, Africa willingly accepts no-strings-attached relations, which consequently make China's influence there stronger and enduring (Meidan, 2006).

Paper Structure

This paper will attempt to explain whether the levels of freedom in certain African countries have any correlation with how China selects its partners there. This explanation will be important for examining whether or not China marches towards neocolonialism in Africa. The review of alternative literature will discuss arguments and interpretations about origins of neocolonialism in general, and Africa in particular, provide background on Sino-African relations, elaborate on incentives for economic partnership, explain the no-strings attached Sino-African cooperation policy, the role of the soft-power, and finally present alternate views which shed more positive light on China and Africa ties. Next, the theoretical framework will expand the discussion on the topic of China's rise as interpreted through the Realist school of thought. The theory section will also clarify the implications of that rise on Sino-African partnership by ultimately creating a hypothesis. The data and methods section will identify the independent and dependent variables, as well as, explain the sources of the data and methods used for testing the main hypothesis. The results and discussion section will elucidate the outcomes of bivariate relationship between the independent and dependent variables by interpreting whether those results correlate with arguments and findings of other scholars. The conclusion section will discuss the implication of results on the main hypothesis and objective of the paper, and identify the limitations of the study and how the future research can expand on those shortcomings.

Neocolonialism in Africa

One of the earliest cultivators of the idea of neocolonialism was French political activist and philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre. He developed the notion of neocolonialism relying on the

post-colonial legacy of Africa, and old colonial powers' influence over African countries. Neocolonialism entails that great powers that formerly colonized a country or a region will attempt extending their political and economic control over that country by using non-military means (Sartre, 1964). What makes neocolonialism different from traditional colonialism is the concept by which greater powers operate in weaker states. Unlike former colonizers, the neocolonialists intervene in sovereignty of a weaker state to use economic capitalism, globalization and cultural imperialism instead of direct military colonization in order to increase their control. Nonetheless, the neocolonialists can also increase their military influences in the weaker state by establishing army bases.

In the post-colonial and post-independence era nearly all African states faced enormous destabilizations within economic, political, and social spheres. Those instabilities were triggered by two main factors: 1) the emergence of "Big Man" rule that generated a number of de-facto authoritarian states, and 2) the ignorance of international community towards Africa (Hyden, 2005). Within this narrative, Sartre argues that the hindered decolonization of Africa led to dispersion of political and economic problems around the continent. As an example, Sartre discusses the case of post-colonial intervention of Belgium in Congo. Based on this interpretation, the colonial administration of Belgium convinced leaders of its government to formally agree with Congolese' independence demands in order to replace the colonialism with neocolonialism (Sartre, 1964). The agenda worked for Belgians as the educational and labor reforms provided for Congolese population simply served the interests of colonial administration.

In his renowned essay, *Neocolonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*, the first prime minister and president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, articulates that contemporary neocolonialism

is the biggest threat to Africa's development. Nkrumah argues that those African states that have been decolonized in the mid-20th century could not deliver their own economic and political sustainability. Therefore, Africans, as a whole, accepted neocolonialism as the alternative to old-colonialism (Nkrumah, 1965). The acceptance was more popular for the "Big Men" governments rather than within the ethnic populations.

Nkrumah also insists that neocolonialism mystifies the independence of a state by imposing measures that undermine the state-development opportunities for the host country, and maximize the profits of intruder neocolonialists. Consequently, the neocolonialist states become obligated to 1) accepting investment of its imperialist vendor, and declining investment opportunities from elsewhere if those opportunities are offered by competitors of its colonialist partner (Nkrumah, 1965). The neocolonialists use not only economic power but also cultural, religious, ideological and political means to deceive developing Third-World countries into believing in the myth of their own independence and national sovereignty. The imperialist powers such as United States and strong European countries emphasize on "dictating" the state-building process deriving from their own historical development. However, the Western model of state-building is not necessarily the ideal model for Africa (Hyden, 2006). The relationship between European Union member states and Africa makes the negative consequences of neocolonialism more vivid as slow infrastructural developments speak for the bilateral profitability on behalf of the European Union (Campbell, 2008).

The discussion on origins of neocolonialism in Africa beckons to ask the following questions: what are the driving forces for China's strong relations with Africa, and can that relationship be interpreted as leading towards neocolonialism? To answer the first question, it will be necessary to revisit the background of Sino-African affairs. The answer to the second

question will require a more widespread analysis of factors that impact China's selective investment process in the African continent.

Early Stages of Sino-African Relations

The relations between Chinese and Africans stretch back in time through history to when Emperor Wuti of Han Dynasty (2nd century B.C.) established contact by sending delegations to the West in an attempt of finding new allies (Alden & Alves, 2008). These attempts were not fruitful since Emperor Wuti has not targeted any African state as its future partner as the delegations did not advance further than Egypt. However, China's awareness of African continent continued to grow and more positive efforts were made from 7th to 14th centuries during the reign of Tang, Sung and Yuan dynasties (Alden & Alves, 2008). More contemporary Sino-African relations began in mid 20th century after the Second World War (Fifiield, 1958).

Circumstances were ideal for the emergence of those relations for both People's Republic of China and post-independence Africa. As one of the victors in the aftermath of the World War II, China strived to establish wide-ranging relationship that would help stimulate its identity on international level and strengthen its foreign policy (Hsiung, 1993). African states also endeavored towards creating relations with the World during mid 1950s; however, the focal point on their agenda was the West, rather than China (Alden & Alves, 2008). It was only after the introduction of "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" in 1949 that allowed China to appeal diplomatically to newly independent African countries (Fifiield, 1958). In essence, these principles called for respect and recognition of mutual rights for non-interference in domestic affairs, territory, and integrity for human rights.

Several years later, Beijing had a real opportunity to negotiate and collaborate with newly independent African states during the Bandung Conference in 1955 (Appadorai, 1955). This

conference served as the stepping-stone for China in paving a way for what the future course of history would show a very rewarding and profitable relation with African states. Despite pro-Western sentiments among most African states, in 1956 Egypt became the first African country to step forward in formally launching diplomatic relations with Beijing (China-Egypt Relations, 2004). In order to acquire more allies across the African continent, China needed the recognition and reception from newly emerging African states to advance its international influence. In their turn, African states seek acceptance and partnership with rising powers. As a result, by 1970s fourteen African states recognized People's Republic of China by establishing diplomatic connections with Beijing (Alden & Alves, 2008).

Economic Incentives in Contemporary Relations

In more recent decades, United States and European countries gradually became disinterested and disengaged with activities of African continent (Campbell, 2008). Some argue that the reason behind disengagement is that US and European great powers view Africa as a charity ground rather than a promising economic advancement arena (Michel, 2008). The political corruption and institutional instability of most African states (that are rich with natural resources in-demand by many foreign investors) create real obstacles for Americans and Europeans. Nevertheless, China was not immune to those challenges encountered by Western powers since China also faced difficulties in terms of insuring the longevity of its investment in African areas under a siege (Kofigah, 2014). China's growing ties with Africa are extensively questioned by the Western powers that stamped China's emerging superpower image and foreign policy status with negative labels (Alden and Alves, 2008). In other words, the West viewed China's economic expansion in Africa as a threat and betrayal of ideals accepted by the peaceful majority of international community. Another complication that the Sino-African relations created for the

Western powers was the uncertainty of who controls Africa now - European Union, United States, or China (Campbell, 2008).

Despite the significant challenges faced by China for maintaining its offshore influence, its relations with Africa have only stabilized over the years. One of the strongest evidences for tight Sino-African relations is the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), a summit between People's Republic of China and various African states lasting almost a week. This summit was first held in 2000, and occurs every three years where both African and Chinese representatives collaborate on advancement of mutually beneficial economic investment plans (Naidu, 2007). The FOCAC meetings proved their worth very early on as during the 2006 Summit in Beijing, China's former President, Hu Jintao, declared the establishment of China-Africa Development Fund (CAD) - a massive \$1 billion dollar investment in Africa that was expected to stretch to \$5 billion within few years (Yan, 2010). With this program the Chinese investors are targeting a double or maybe triple return of profits after concentrating on agricultural, manufacturing, and infrastructure construction in electricity industry (Yan, 2010).

China's economic bonds with Africa became even more high profile between 2008 and 2013. In the span of five years, China's investment in African countries increased from \$7 billion to \$26 billion (Hruby et al., 2016). The 2015 annual FOCAC Summit between 50 African countries and Chinese delegates was more promising for China's African partners as President Xi Jinping pledged an astronomical \$60 billion dollar investment (Robertson and Benabdallah, 2016). Interestingly enough, even though this investment carries the mission of development assistance; however, only \$5 billion from the \$60 billion will be dedicated to improvements of social infrastructure, whereas the rest of \$55 billion is provisioned for dispersion between the economic and investment sectors in form of export credits and loans for Africans. The multilateral Sino-

African trade has increased from \$10.8 billion in 2000 reaching \$150.3 billion in 2011 (Gamache et al., 2013,) and \$170 Billion in 2013 (Pigato and Tang, 2015).

Treating the African continent as a single unit of analysis to examine the trade and investment of Chinese firms would not do justice to the research purpose of this paper. Therefore, it is important to identify specific African countries where China's presence is more prevalent than in others. As the latest statistics show, 70% of all Chinese imports are conducted with both North and South African countries including - Angola, South Africa, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan, and Zambia (Romel, 2015).

Next, it will be relevant to discuss the most popular types of investments and businesses between African countries and China. First, it is important to note, as of 2012 it is estimated that there are around two thousand Chinese private firms operating in nearly 50 African countries (Chen et al., 2015). Second, those countries have natural resources such as copper, gas, iron, oil, coffee, cocoa, etc., which are highly demanded by many global superpowers looking for expansion of their international status, and fulfillment of domestic economic, social and political demands. After the Middle East, Africa is the second largest provider of oil for China. In 2011, China spent \$49.6 billion to import oil from African continent, 90% of which came from Angola, Algeria, Congo, Libya, and Nigeria (Gamache et al., 2013). China has also engaged in extensive export deals in Africa within past 20 years. As calculated by the China-Africa Research Initiative of Johns Hopkins University, China's export commodity grew from \$1.23 billion in 1992 to \$103.19 billion in 2015 (CARI, 2015).

The Role of Soft-Power in Sino-African Relations

Some scholars argue for the symmetrical nature of relations between China and Africa (Bodomo, 2009; Hruby et al., 2016; Wenping, 2007); whereas, others claim that China's main

incentive of engagement with Africa is fulfillment of its domestic industrialization demands and exploitation of inexpensive goods offered by African partners (Meidan, 2006; Sautman and Hairong, 2009). The China-Africa cooperation has long been perceived as a bilateral movement led by China in the quest of finding more raw materials in Africa. Although undermined, Africa's presence in the Far East has also led scholars of comparative politics to reconsider Africa-China connection on symmetrical grounds. Bodomo (2009) asserts that by using soft-power to introduce national culture to foreign publics, both Africa and China have an opportunity to balance their cooperation. In order to divert international attention away from economic focus of Sino-African relations, China plans to establish nearly twenty *Confucius Institutes* throughout African countries to promote Chinese language and culture intended to strengthen the socialization between members of both societies (Wenping, 2007).

Additionally, there is a popular misconception about the scope of China-Africa cooperation. Within this context, Wenjie Chen suggests two lines of arguments to explain that misconception (Hruby et al., 2016). First, China is not only involved with resource rich countries such as Nigeria and South Africa, but Chinese government officials undertake vastly incentivized programs to provide infrastructural rebuilding opportunities for weaker countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. Second, Chinese investors provide only 5% of foreign direct investment (FDI) received by Sub-Saharan Africa. By further investigations, Aubrey Hruby (2016) demonstrates that Chinese investors regularly conduct explorations for possible destinations in Africa to invest in railways and road reconstruction industries. This practice will benefit the Chinese investors in the first place, however, it will also fix many of the trade transportation problems for African populations. Based on Hruby's analysis, African host countries are relatively more welcoming of Chinese representatives than for example American trade dealers

because as African government officials claim, Americans take longer time to study the feasibility of future projects, whereas, the Chinese act more rapidly. This idea efficiently leads to the next point of discussion, which will examine the basis of decision-making processes that drive Chinese entrepreneurs in choosing their partners in Africa. The discussion in following section will explain what ideologies support the Sino-African connection.

“No-Strings Attached” Ideology for Cooperation

A large volume of scholarly research finds that China’s engagement in Africa demands no preconditions for cooperation from institutionally unstable African countries (Meidan, 2006; Sautman and Hairong, 2009; Chen et al., 2015; Huiping, 2013; Edoho, 2011). Simply put, there are no strings attached to China when entering a negotiation with African officials. In his prominent essay, *Dragon in the Bush: Peking’s Presence in Africa*, George Yu (1968) theorized that China’s Africa policy has three distinguishable attributes that explain the process of selecting partners in Africa. Yu defined the first attribute as the China Model. Based on this model, China uses traditionalism, self-reliance for economic achievements, and spirit for political and social mobilization to appear as the ideal ally for Third World developing countries. Yu finds that African governments are attracted to the China Model because it enables Africans to learn organizational techniques necessary for governing in a volatile and unpredictable environment. Similarly, Edoho (2011) asserts that since African elites are success oriented, and have narrowly defined experiences in using institutional frameworks for establishing diplomatic relations with global superpowers, therefore, with ever increasing global influence, for many African nations China presents a shortcut in the quest for recognition and cooperation.

The second attribute in China’s selectivity process is persuasion through economic means. China has successfully attracted many influential African states such as Kenya, Tanzania,

Congo, and Uganda based on two general factors of economic influence: foreign aid and trade (Yu, 1968). The Chinese foreign aid to Africa in early 1960s experienced a significant prosperity. China focused its economic presence in Africa not only by advocating advancement of self-interests, but also responding to variety of domestic issues within the territory of its African partners. For instance, China's aid supported domestic projects in Africa ranging from - developing and reforming of energy plants, building and equipping hospitals, police academies, and social services institutions – to constructing the Tam-Zam railroad connecting Tanzania and Zambia (Yu, 1968). In the trade partnership, China offered better deals than most other Western business sectors, thus, was able to advocate affordability of Chinese goods and products for the Third-World African populations (Campbell, 2008). It is important to mention that China created both the foreign aid and trade interactions with Africans by largely ignoring its political and social corruptions.

Finally, the third attribute in reinforcement of China-Africa connection is the implementation of informal instruments into foreign policy. These instruments include the media such as radio broadcasts, printed reading materials, newspapers and books, and person-to-person interactions (Yu, 1968; Wenping, 2007). China has successfully integrated these instruments in its foreign policy agenda with Africa by introducing lengthy hours of radio broadcasts advocating positive sides of Chinese economic presence in Africa. Chinese literature and newspapers translated into English and domestic dialects have also found their reputation among African populace (Wenping, 2007). Africans have viewed the reinforcement of relations through educational means as a positive sign since many of the Chinese reading materials teach socialism intending to benefit people and create equality (Yu, 1968). China's informal policy setting in Africa also emphasizes on social interaction between Africans and Chinese visitors. This is an

important attribute because social interaction creates an exchange of cultural, moral, and ethical information among distinct ethnic groups. Thus, it also enables the public favoritism towards the national profile of Chinese among Africans. As displayed in the Figure 1, based on the latest Afrobarometer dispatch, 63% of African population perceives that China's presence on their soil has a "somewhat" or "very" positive influence, while only 15% believe that it has negative influence (Lekrowe et al., 2016). The highest scores for positive presence were recorded in Mali (92%), Niger (84%) and Liberia (81%).

Unlike Yu, who compared the process of researching China's engagement in Africa to "seeking dragon in a dense bush," Daniel Large (2008) claims that the contemporary study of this topic presents a more comprehensive understanding. Large believes that modern Sino-African interconnection has a better-defined set of objectives and future projects between both actors, than it did during the 1950s and 1960s. The reasons for this claim are the undeniable growth of aid and trade programs, China's economic independence from the West, and Africa's realization for the power of its resources. Since both China and Africa cooperate towards a long lasting relationship, the "dragon is no longer lost in the jungle" but makes a noticeable influence.

Scholarly consensus agrees that the ideologies influencing the decision-making process in China's domestic affairs are the same ideologies that motivate its foreign policy agenda with Africa (Kidane, 2013; Strauss & Saavedra, 2009). In other words, China replicates its domestic ideological infrastructure methods and processes, and applies those methods to interactions with African partners. As reflected in the Western media, this notion stirred a great deal of concern (Large, 2008; Edoho, 2011). For many decades, until recently, China's own human rights violations have been at the forefront of most criticized issues during international summits of United Nations and European Union (Kent, 1999). African workers in Zambia and Tanzania

have reported on brutal conditions and casualties encountered at the Chinese oil mining sectors (Baah and Jauch, 2009). Similar unethical and immoral practices are applied in domestic labor sectors of China.

Chinese investment firms, large entrepreneurs and industrial magnates operate in Africa while closing an eye on the corruption and many human rights violations of African governments towards their populations (Edoho, 2011). While China strongly prohibits any interference in its domestic affairs by international human rights protection agencies, it ignores the sovereignty of African states such as Darfur, Chad, and Sudan. For instance, when the global community scrutinized the internal conflicts in Darfur and its confrontation with Chad, as well as the dictatorial regime of Sudan, China remained supportive of emerging Sudanese authoritarian government in order to protect its investments and industrial sectors (Large, 2009). However, Chinese governmental involvement in African business sectors is not to be misinterpreted with the involvement of its migrant units. As Gregor Dobler (2009) demonstrates, the Chinese individuals migrate to African countries for the search of better economic opportunities. The family businesses of those immigrants in Africa receive no funding or any kind of support from the Chinese government. Nevertheless, those family shops and markets serve as primary sectors of cultural interaction between Chinese and Africans.

Alternate Views: Sustainable Developmental Opportunities for Africa

Conversely, some scholars insist that, even though China has adapted measurements to protect its foreign investment in Africa by developing bilateral investment treaties (BITs), China's partnership with Africa is peaceful (Kidane, 2013). The BITs are a type of foreign direct investment where essentially the creditor state (China) dictates the terms and policy of economic partnership with the receiver state(s) (Africa). The implication of Chinese BITs in Africa has

grabbed the attention of international community since those deals are perceived to have negative influence on economic development of Africa (Huiping, 2013). Some research demonstrates that BITs comprise of a very small proportion (only 4.9%) of China's overall FDI to Africa. Moreover, Chinese investors have been modernizing the terms and clause of the BITs with Africa to use them with more caution and ensuring the protection of human rights, territorial integrity and national identity (Huiping, 2013).

The protection of offshore investments is a primary concern for all heavyweights of global politics (Snyder, 2002). Therefore, the implementation of BITs into direct foreign trade agenda is not a unique method of investment that applies only to China. Nonetheless, the international community is on the edge not as much for China's implementation of BITs in Africa, but rather for China's current relations with African states that will lead the general scope of its growth. Another concern is whether or not the economic growth stimulated by China's relations with Africa will lead to expansion of China's offshore military power bases (Zakaria, 2008).

In a very influential book that articulates the Sino-African agricultural cooperation, *Will Africa Feed China?*, Deborah Brautigam (2015) sheds light on some of the most popular alarms appearing in Western world about China's growing presence in Africa. After investigating the data available at the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and interviewing Chinese government officials and investment business leaders in Africa, Brautigam and her research associates reached the conclusion that the fear of China's rise is largely based on unreliable rumors that became facts through false Western media propaganda. First, the results of this research demonstrate that increasing Chinese investments in Africa's agricultural industry do not entail substantial land acquisition as portrayed from the perspective of many West-European countries. Additionally, the observation of Schoeman (2008) show that the Western powers including

dominant European countries and the United States argued that China runs on all cylinders to take over the African agricultural sector in order to acquire more land. According to this interpretation, China has a bigger plan to use the acquired land to build greater military force to achieve absolute hegemonic status. However, Brautigam finds that most of the incidents of land acquisitions that were reported in the Western media have been based on inaccurate data and myths.

Second, Brautigam shows that not every single Chinese investment in Africa, or elsewhere, can justifiably be associated with China's grand plan of becoming regional superpower. As the research reveals, the Chinese government does not moderate all large-scale agribusiness deals established with their partners in Africa. The reason is that there are number of Chinese agribusiness entrepreneurs who do not have affiliations with the Chinese government and operate based on privately moderated business plans. Therefore it is risky, and often times inaccurate to insist that Sino-African cooperation has a sub-contextual hidden message signifying China's "secret agenda" in the continent. Schoeman (2008) also suggests that in the current age of globalization the Sino-African relations can become significantly important for the sustainable development of Africa.

Even though a number of former European colonial countries argue that the current China-Africa ties lead to long term destabilization of the continent, Schoeman (2008) demonstrated that the economic relations between China and Africa thus far have only improved African economic growth. Whether through private investments, or developmental aid provided by the Chinese government, over the years both China and Africa were able to create very powerful and interdependent connections. Schoeman provides evidence for the harmonious import-export economic interconnection between the two countries. For instance, the balance is

illustrated in the Sub-Saharan Africa-China trade data, which shows that in 2006 Sub-Saharan Africa had \$28.8 billion exports to China, and \$26.7 billion imports from China (Schoeman, 2008: 406).

Theoretical Framework

The Realist school of thought validates China's expansion in Africa based on the idea that every rising power will attempt to maximize its profits and security, thus create incentives for becoming a global hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2013; Snyder, 2002). In this narrative, China's Africa policy is a perfect representation for fulfillment of "realist" agenda. John Mearsheimer articulates that China's economic growth will eventually become a challenge for the global balance of power. The current concern among the Western powers is the uncertainty that surrounds China's goals on the global arena (Snyder, 2002). The West is alarmed with the idea that China will not cooperate with the international society once there are greater motivations not to do so, and that it can convert its economic power into military force (Yang, 2013).

Unlike the Western powers, China does not demonstrate political bias or discrimination between good and bad governments (Chen et al., 2015). A large body of prior research finds that this idea holds true for China's foreign policy agenda with various African countries (Alden and Alves, 2008; Campbell, 2008; Bodomo, 2009; Sautman & Hairong, 2009; Zafar, 2007). African countries have resources such as oil, metal, wood, stone plaster, and cement, which China is not indifferent about. Therefore, China takes necessary precautions and makes commitments to ensure acquisitions of those resources before its international competitors. A large number of prior research demonstrate that the natural resources of many African countries become a "curse" for them (Ross, 2004; Watts, 2004). This notion entails that those countries that largely base their economic growth on exportation of natural resources become exposed to issues such as

authoritarian governance, increasing corruption and poverty levels (Ross, 2012). The elites within those unstable African states compete with each other for obtaining profit from vending the natural resources. As a result of that competition the depravity and corruption within the government downgrades the life quality of the population (Watts, 2004).

Capitalizing on the idea of resource curse, Kofigah (2014) suggests that China engages with Africa facing a “*reverse resource curse*” – an idea entailing that China is bound to dealing with dictatorial and corrupt government officials while extracting benefits from natural resources. Nonetheless, Kofigah argues, to make claims that China has an imperialist agenda in Africa will be controversial because African government representatives are the ones who ultimately dictate the rules of the game. Consequently, one interpretation that can derive from this idea is that in Sino-African relations’ model, both beneficiaries and violators of norms for cooperation are fraudulent African governments and their representatives. The reason is that those states use the “resource curse” for their own advantage and show no willingness to dedicate efforts for institutional development and reformation of social capital.

Although China enters Africa with carefully designed and strong diplomacy by offering its African partners great prospects for economic expansion, nevertheless, China conducts that diplomacy in poorly governed countries where the rule of law benefits the elites (Chen et al., 2015; Zafar, 2007). Unlike the United States and Western European powers, in recent decades China has approached Africa with a minimal consideration for holding African government elites accountable to abiding standards of international regulations (Maiden, 2007). Even though, when communicating with African partners China broadcasts messages that encourage reformation of domestic infrastructures; however, Chinese representatives never risk their strong relations with

Africa when African elites do not abide to those “preconditions” for cooperation (Edoho, 2011).

By relying on these theories I propose the following hypothesis:

H₁: China’s investments will be largest in the African states that have lower levels of freedom.

H₀: The level of freedom in African states will be unrelated to the number of investments initiated by China.

Data and Methods

In order to test for this hypothesis, I will conduct a preliminary cross sectional analysis to examine the correlation between the freedom levels in African countries and the number of firms and projects established by China. Deriving from the basis of this hypothesis, the main expectation will be that those countries that have low levels of freedom will emerge as China’s top partners. Chen et al. (2015) investigate the correlation between China’s foreign direct investment and the poor governance of African countries in terms of political performance. However, in this study I am concerned with the level of freedoms enjoyed by the individuals. In order to examine the statistical significance between levels of freedom in African countries and China’s engagement, I rely on the following three variables.

The independent variable in this analysis will be the **level of freedom in African countries**, and for dependent variables, I will account for **the number of Chinese projects** and **the number of Chinese firms in African countries**. Therefore, the objective of this cross sectional study will be to examine the bivariate relationship between the independent and dependent variables. In other words, the results are expected to reveal whether the levels of freedom in African countries have any correlation on how China selects its partners in Africa. Next, it will be important to elaborate on the explanation of independent and dependent variables by identifying the year and the sources of data used for this preliminary observation.

Independent Variable: The **level of freedom in African countries** variable is measured by observing the 2016 reports found in *the Freedom House* database. To estimate the freedom levels in various societies of the world this database employs specific sets of sources such as survey questions, news articles, and reports from nongovernmental organizations that are analyzed by groups of analysts and advisers from think tanks, human rights organizations and various academic settings. These sources, then, are reviewed and implemented into a rating system. This system consists of three major tiers: scores, ratings for political rights and civil liberties, and freedom status. The **scores** are determined by the following method: each country is assigned a set of points ranging from 0 to 4 for each of 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators, which take the form of questions¹; a score of 0 represents the smallest degree of freedom and 4 the greatest degree of freedom (Freedom House, 2016).

The total scores of questions determine the ratings for both political rights and civil liberties. A country is assigned two **ratings** ranging from 7 to 1 - for the political rights and civil liberties indicators. Each rating of 1 through 7, with 1 representing the greatest degree of freedom and 7 the smallest degree of freedom corresponds to a specific range of total scores (Freedom House, 2016). The relationship between the ratings and scores is illustrated in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 in the Appendix.

Finally, the **freedom status** is evaluated based on the freedom ratings. The freedom ratings are measured by averaging the ratings for the political rights and civil liberties. The freedom status has three possible values: “Free,” “Partly Free,” and “Not Free.” If the average ratings of political rights and civil liberties fall between 1.0 and 2.5 then the country is labeled “Free,” if the average is between 3.0 and 5.0 then the country is “Partly Free,” and if the average

¹ For the full summary of the methodology applied in the Freedom of House Analysis visit here, <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2016/methodology>>

is between 5.5 and 7.0 the country is “Not Free.” This categorization is also demonstrated in Table 1.3 available in the Appendix.

Dependent variables: The dependent variables used in this analysis are the **number of Chinese projects** and **number of Chinese firms in Africa**. The data for these variables is retrieved from Chen et al. (2015) article that looks at the African countries where China has initiated the largest number of projects or established largest number of firms. The Table 1.4 in the Appendix replicates the data implemented by Chen and colleagues. This table identifies the top 20 countries where China has organized business projects and established industries. Chen et al. (2015) summarize China’s top twenty partners in Africa based on the reports from China’s Ministry of Commerce database. As the table shows, Nigeria holds the highest number of both Chinese projects and firms with 404 and 240, respectively. The second and third largest African partners of China are South Africa and Zambia. Among these 20 countries those that are least attractive for Chinese investors Namibia, Mauritius, and Cameroon, are ranked as 18, 19, and 20, correspondingly.

The table 1.4 also shows that some African states have more projects but less firms, and vice-versa. For example, Zimbabwe has 167 projects and 68 firms. Tanzania has fewer projects and therefore is ranked lower than Zimbabwe because this table categorizes countries based on the number of projects; however, China has established 80 firms in Tanzania, which is more than the firms established in Zimbabwe. This difference signifies that the number of projects does not have any positive impact on the increase of Chinese firms in a given state.

Next, it is important to highlight specific details about the dependent variables that will help to explain the nature of the Chinese projects in Africa, and articulate on the limitations of this variable. The research identifies three popular sectors where China’s projects are involved

among top twenty African destinations: manufacturing sector, service sector, and mining sector (Chen et al., 2015). The data estimates that about 60% of all projects are conducted within the service sector. The rest of the 40% of the projects are equally dispersed between the manufacturing (20%) and mining sectors (20%). Chen and company report that contrary to the conventional wisdom that China only concentrates its efforts on countries with rich natural resources, the data from China's Ministry of Commerce proves that the bulk of Chinese projects appear within the service sector. For instance, even though Nigeria is one of China wealthiest partners in natural resources such as oil, nevertheless two-thirds of Chinese projects are dedicated to service sector in the territory of this country.

One of the limitations with using these variables is that the data accounts only for top twenty countries. First, the twenty countries identified in the Table 1.4 belong to both Sub-Saharan and Northern Africa, which prohibits a more specified analysis based on these regions separately. Second, the data in Table 1.4 does not specify particular types of projects *per se* for each country. Third, the size and importance of the country in terms of its economic potential, population, GDP, and political stability or instability also are not identified in this table. It would be important to include all these aforementioned details and additional information about both the African countries and the Chinese projects/firms. It would allow a more comprehensive examination of other factors that can impact China's decision-making process.

Methods: With that mentioned, this study will be limited to conducting a preliminary analysis by leaving more in depth examination of this topic for the future projects. Nonetheless, it is important to explain the methods that are implemented in testing the hypothesis of this paper. Since the implementation of multivariate analysis will not fall within the purpose or the scope of this paper, I will apply a bivariate Pearson correlation analysis. In order to harvest the

results of this relationship between the independent and dependent variables, I will synthesize the data within the variables through SPSS statistical analysis software.

Results and Discussion

To analyze the data in this paper, I conducted a bivariate Pearson correlation test using SPSS. This correlation test outputs a correlation coefficient known as r , which measures the strength of linear relationships between the continuous variables (number of firms, number of projects, and freedom score) and the direction of the linear relationship (increasing or decreasing). The bivariate Pearson correlation also tests whether there is a statistically significant linear relationship. In order to find some preliminary results, I referred to the Freedom House database to identify the level of freedom for the top twenty Chinese projects/firms destinations. The findings are summarized in Table 2.1 that illustrates the freedom status, freedom score, and the freedom ratings, which are based on the average ratings of both political rights and civil liberties.

The percentage distribution of these results in Table 2.2 shows that among 20 countries, 4 (or 20%) are free, 7 countries (35%) are partly free, and 9 countries (45%) are not free. Table 2.3 shows that the average number of firms in the data set of 20 countries is 79.85. The average freedom score is 45.35. Both variables have high standard deviations, which implies that the data points are spread out over a wider range of values. This is evident by observing the data in Table 2.3.

As shown in Table 2.4, Pearson's r for the correlation between freedom score and number of firms variable is .049. Pearson's r is close to zero, meaning that there is a **weak** relationship between freedom score and number of firms. Additionally, this also means that changes in one variable are not correlated with changes in the second variable, thus there is no noticeably

increasing or decreasing linear relationship. The variables freedom score and number of firms are not strongly correlated.

Also in Table 2.4, the significance level for the correlation can be determined by looking at sig. (2-tailed), the p-value is .838, which is greater than an alpha of .05 (the cutoff for significance). It can be concluded that there is **no statistically significant correlation** between freedom score and number of firms. In other words, increases or decreases in one variable do not significantly relate to increases or decreases in the second variable. If the freedom score increases or decreases, it does not necessarily mean that the number of firms increases or decreases as well.

Table 2.5 demonstrates that the average number of projects in the data set of 20 countries is 161.00. The average freedom score is 45.35. Both variables have a high standard deviation, which indicates that the data points are spread out over a wider range of values.

In Table 2.6, Pearson's r for the correlation between freedom score and number of projects variables is $-.022$, indicating a **negative correlation**. An r of -1 would mean that all the data points are included on the "line of best fit." Although a negative Pearson's r means that as one variable increases in value, the second variable decreases in value, looking at the sig. (2-tailed), the p value is .925, which is greater than an alpha .05. It can also be concluded that there is **no statistically significant correlation** between freedom score and number of projects. In other words, increases or decreases in the freedom score do not **significantly** relate to increases or decreases in the number of projects.

Table 2.7 accurately summarizes the findings of bivariate analysis between both the freedom scores in top 20 Chinese destinations in Africa and the number of Chinese firms, as well as, the freedom score and the number of projects. The results show that there is a weak or no

significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. In other words, the level of freedom (based on the freedom score) has weak impact on how China selects its partners in Africa. In other words, the level of freedom (based on the freedom score) has weak impact on how China selects its partners in Africa. Thus, I accept the null hypothesis that the level of freedom in African states is unrelated to the number of investments initiated by China.

The results of this preliminary analysis go contrary to findings in Chen et al., (2015) article as they demonstrate that China follows the pattern of seeking profits in politically unstable environments. The preliminary results are limited only to observations of China's top twenty destinations in Africa and do no account for more robust factors involved with how China selected those specific destinations.

Conclusion and Future Research

The decades long cooperation between the Chinese and African governments has mainly been driven by the mutual-respect, peaceful-coexistence, and multilateral decision-making process. All of these factors signal that China attempts to create a bigger role on the international arena as an advocate of a soft power, cooperation and mutual development. Despite of China's attempt for peaceful rise, rapid economic growth transmits different signals to the international community. The large majority of that community believes that China's presence in Africa resembles Neocolonialism (Alden and Alves, 2008; Sautman & Hairong, 2009; Zafar, 2007, Kofigah, 201). This paper attempted to examine Sino-African relationship and its implications on the idea of Neocolonialism by focusing on correlation between the Chinese projects and firms in top twenty African destinations, and the level of freedom in those destinations. Based on the results of bivariate analysis, the examination of this paper rested on the conclusion that the level of freedom in China's top twenty partners in Africa has weak or no significant impact on how

China selected that specific destination. Thus, relying on the preliminary and very narrow results this paper will reject the claim that China is becoming the next neocolonial power in Africa.

The future research on this topic can improve by investigating a multivariate relationship between not only the level of freedom and top investment destinations of China, but other factors such as the level of natural resources, economic capacity, and most popular business sectors in all of China's African partner states. The scope of this paper allowed room for analyzing the impact of level of freedom only within twenty African countries (a larger sample size might have yielded different results); however, China conducts extensive economic activities in more countries than presented in Table 1.4. In order to overcome the limitations of this paper, I myself, as well as future researchers may elaborate on various factors impacting China's engagement with Africa in order to clarify a more comprehensive evaluation that will enable reaching broader conclusions, and add more weight to the general arsenal of research on China's role in Africa.

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Appendix

Figure: 1

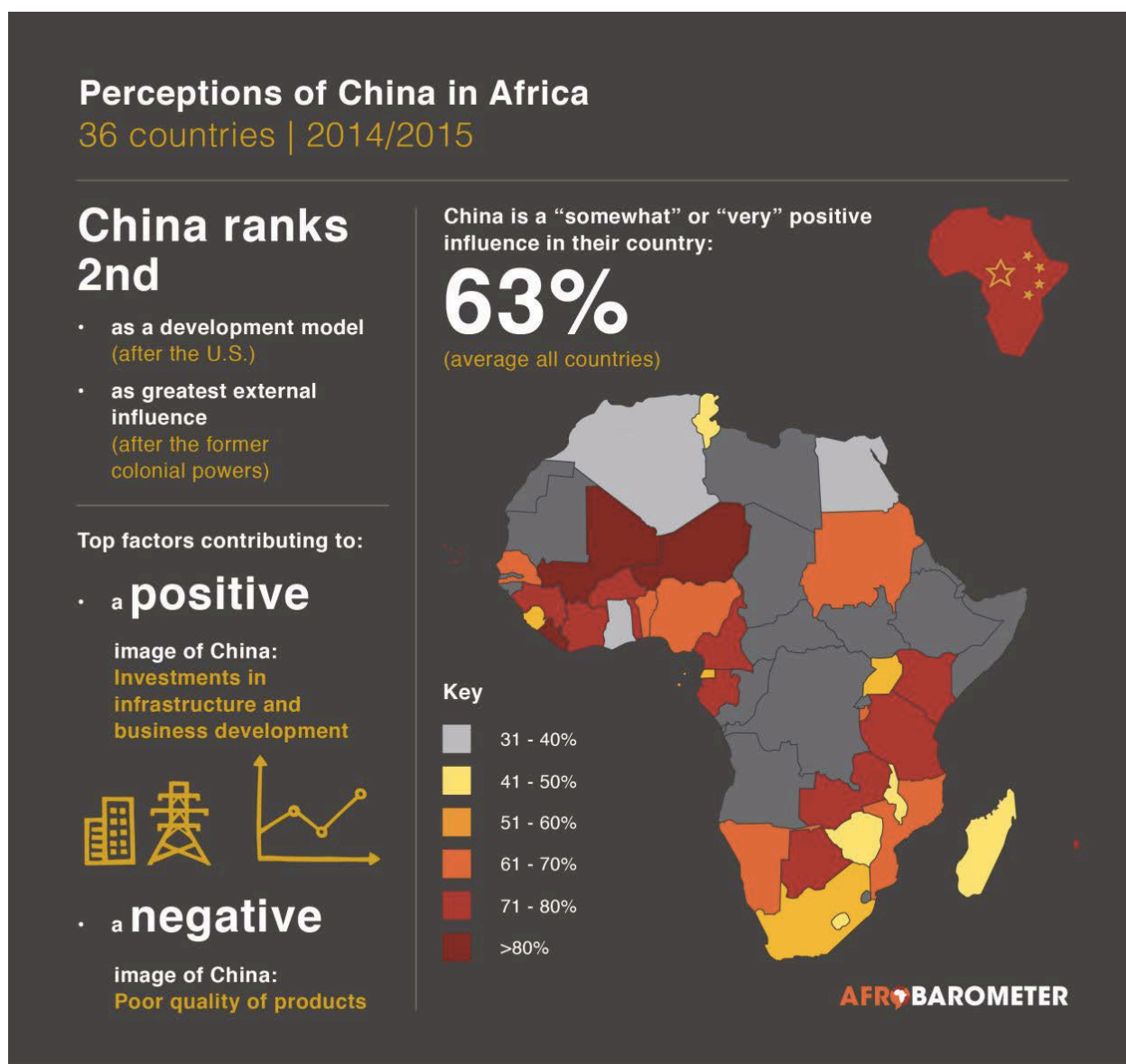


Table 1.1	
Political Rights (PR)	
Total Scores	PR Rating
36-40	1
30-25	2
24-29	3
18-23	4
12-17	5
6-11	6
0-5* ²	7

Table 1.2	
Civil Liberties (CL)	
Total Scores	CL Rating
53-60	1
44-52	2
35-43	3
26-34	4
17-25	5
8-6	6
0-7	7

Table 1.3	
Freedom Ratings (Combined Average of the PR and CL Ratings)	Freedom Status
1.0 to 2.5	Free
3.0 to 5.0	Partly Free
5.5 to 7.0	Not Free

² Note retrieved from the Freedom of House, Methodology: Freedom in the World 2016: “*It is possible for a country’s or territory’s total political rights score to be less than zero (between -1 and -4) if it receives mostly or all zeros for each of the 10 political rights questions and it receives a sufficiently negative score for political rights discretionary question B. In such a case, it would still receive a final political rights rating of 7.”

Table 1.4: China's Top 20 Partners in Africa

County	Number of Projects	Number of Firms
Nigeria	404	240
South Africa	280	152
Zambia	273	125
Ethiopia	255	114
Egypt	197	99
Congo (DRC)	193	80
Ghana	192	90
Angola	189	80
Zimbabwe	167	68
Tanzania	149	85
Sudan	148	78
Kenya	137	71
Algeria	123	75
Mozambique	94	41
Uganda	89	45
Gabon	71	23
Mali	68	33
Namibia	66	30
Mauritius	65	40
Cameroon	60	28

Table 2.1: The Level of Freedom in Top 20 Chinese Destinations in Africa

Country	Freedom Status	Freedom Score	Political Rights	Civil Liberties	Freedom Rating
Nigeria	Partly Free	48	4	5	4.5
South Africa	Free	79	2	2	2
Zambia	Partly Free	60	3	4	3.5
Ethiopia	Not Free	15	7	6	6.5
Egypt	Not Free	27	6	5	5.5
Congo (DRC)	Not Free	25	6	6	6
Ghana	Free	83	1	2	1.5
Angola	Not Free	24	6	6	6
Zimbabwe	Partly Free	32	5	5	5
Tanzania	Partly Free	60	3	4	3.5
Sudan	Not Free	6	7	7	7
Kenya	Partly Free	51	4	4	4
Algeria	Not Free	35	6	5	5.5
Mozambique	Partly Free	56	4	4	4
Uganda	Not Free	36	6	5	5.5
Gabon	Not Free	34	6	5	5.5
Mali	Partly Free	45	5	4	4.5
Namibia	Free	77	2	2	2
Mauritius	Free	90	1	2	1.5
Cameroon	Not Free	24	6	6	6
		<i>0=Worst, 100=Best</i>	<i>1= Most free 7= Least free</i>	<i>1= Most free 7= Least free</i>	<i>1= Most free 7= Least free</i>

Table 2.2: Percentage Distribution for Level of Freedom

Freedom Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
<i>Valid</i> Free	4	20.0
Partly free	7	35.0
Not free	9	45.0
Total	20	100.0

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Number of firms	79.85	51.151	20
Freedom score	45.35	23.798	20

		Freedom Score	Number of firms
Freedom Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.838
	N	20	20
Number of firms	Pearson Correlation	.049	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.838	
	N	20	20

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Number of Projects	161.00	90.579	20
Freedom Score	45.35	23.798	20

		Freedom Score	Number of Projects
Freedom Score	Pearson Correlation	1	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.925
	N	20	20
Number of Projects	Pearson Correlation	-.022	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.925	
	N	20	20

Table 2.7: Summary of Correlation Results					
	Variables	Pearson r	Sig. (2 tailed)	Strength and Direction	
Correlation	Freedom of Score and Number of Firms	.049	.838	Weak; No noticeable direction	Not statistically significant
Correlation	Freedom of Score and Number of Projects	-.022	.925	Negative correlation; Variation on “line of best fit”	Not statistically significant