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The People's Republic of China is becoming the largest economic partner for African countries due to many reasons. In this policy paper the author will briefly introduce the changes in China's economic and foreign policy which greatly effect this issue. According to these policy changes and the continuing trend of "opening up", China has experienced massive economic growth and industrialization. The problem however, is that China's resources are not sufficient for sustainable economic and social growth, which explains China's recent dominant presence in Africa.

The fact that China is now present in the African continent concerns not only former colonial powers and EU's member states, but also many African countries. China's presence is no longer solely about resources. China now implements special funds and offers for African students and officials, which alter African demographics and lifestyle. These efforts demonstrate China's attempt to exert international power outside of Chinese territory. Such movements have led China to become much more active in UN peacekeeping and other humanitarian missions than ever before. Now one question remains: How is it that China is now more influential in African affairs than its neighbour, the European Union?

Chinese policy

To describe contemporary China without discussing the country's economic transformation is merely impossible. Since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1950, the country witnessed many economic reforms, both positive and negative. The most significant changes which continue to affect modern-day China date back to 1978, when communist leader Deng XiaoPing controlled China. Deng XiaoPing implemented reforms which slowly transformed China into an authoritarian state with a partial market economy. To achieve this goal, former country leader Deng XiaoPing focused on raising rates of foreign investment and growth. The impact of encouraging foreign investments and trade is still present in China's economy today. Important reforms in the field of innovation and science research invited foreign investors and modernised this crucial sector. This economic growth continued, and in 2001 China joined the World Trade Organization, another step towards further liberalisation of its economy (BBC 2006). In addition, the overall authoritarian style of government proved to benefit China's economic growth, as the leader has the power to rapidly implement any policy changes to alter the direction of economic trends, and ultimately push the economy towards more sustainable growth (Huang 2018).

China's economic reform and process of opening up to the West has influenced other countries as well as the international arena as a whole. China's unparalleled transformation is also marked by its sudden participation in international organizations. In 1977, China was a member of just 21 organizations, however by 2000, China had become a member of 50 international organizations, and 1,275 NGO's. Chinese political influence in the international arena continued to grow in the 1990's as China's previously low-profile policy strategy transformed into an active one. This policy change is illustrated by Chinese involvement in the UN Security Council, and the supporting peacekeeping and humanitarian missions under the head of the UN (Chvátalová 2008: 19).

As changes to China's foreign policy were implemented, the actors of policy began to gain influence and power. Though such decision makers are official members of the government, the president ultimately holds most power. According to constitution the president is required to present foreign interests of the state and to sign treaties (Gan 2018).

Though China has had more than a millennium of experience dealing with foreign states and other affairs, the country and political world itself has massively changed during the 19th and 20th centuries. Oftentimes contemporary foreign policy sounds like "bringing China into the world" (Fairbank 1969). The policy of current Chinese President Xi Jinping leaves an impression of aggressive diplomacy, and a "tough" China. In short, his intentions are to illustrate China's strength through both its diplomatic field and military presence. However, a strong China requires a base of wealth, which is where African resources become relevant (Yuwen, 2017).

Africa and China

In recent years, China's immense economic and social growth have required additional resources. China's government then focused on securing energy supplies for its industrial expansion, and they found this supply in Africa. (Albert 2017).

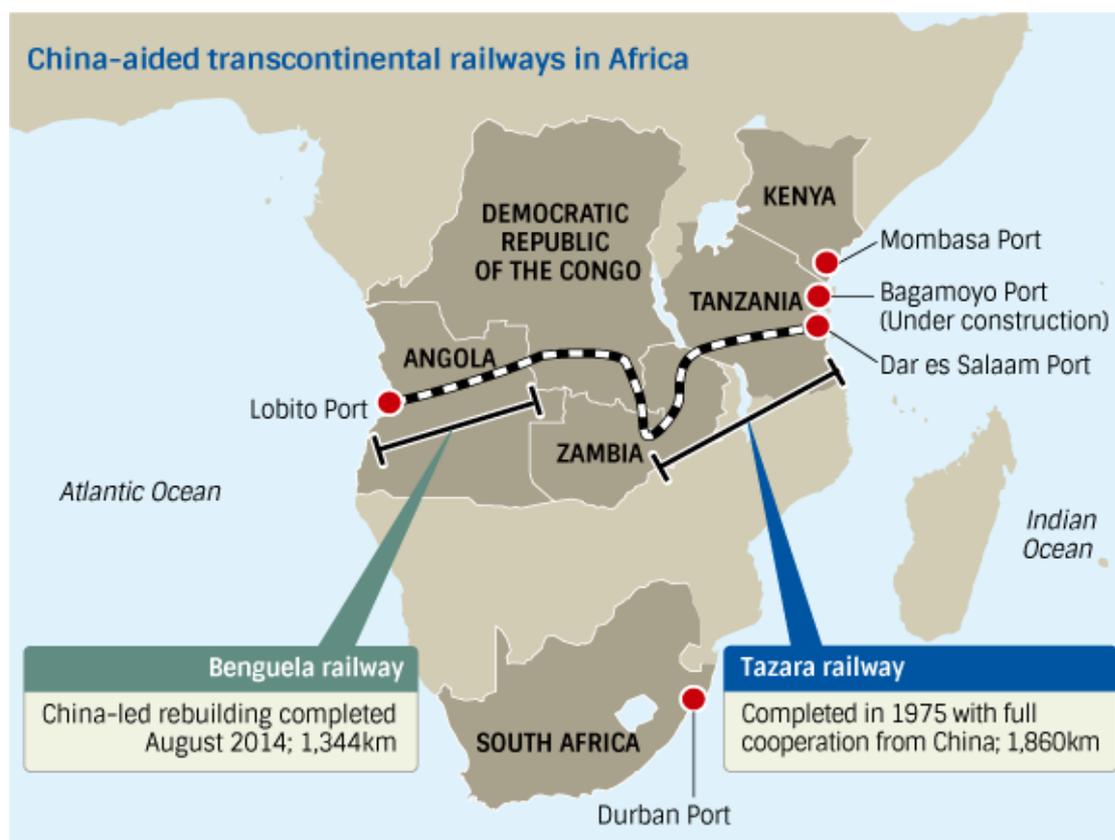
The China's policy towards African countries began to shape in the late 1950's. The first major event forging these relations between China and Africa was the Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955. At this conference, support for Asia-Africa cooperation in the field of economy and culture was agreed upon. Together the countries faced colonialism and neo-colonialism from the U.S. and the USSR. This is when China began to implement projects and aid to develop African countries. The first example of this movement was China's construction of a railway between Tanzania and Zambia.

In the 1950's, China set five principles points dictating its' relations with African countries.

- Mutual recognition of sovereignty and national policies,
- No military actions,
- No interfering with domestic affairs,
- Equal opportunities and mutual benefits flowing from the relationship,
- Peaceful Coexistence (Zbránková 2017: 39).

An example of China's development aid in Africa, when the original 1975 railroad was extended with another, linking two oceans (Asian Survey 2014).

Image 1: China-aided transcontinental railways in Africa



Source: Asian Review, 2014.

The next phase of the Sino-African relationship was between 1960 and 1975. Mutual cooperation consisted mainly of armament imports, aid in the construction of roads in Africa, and medical assistance. China also provided Africa with financial assistance amounting to \$365 million USD. The following period between 1975 and 1986 was defined by China's new policy that marked the end of isolationism towards the West, opening up its market. During this period, China and Africa's relationship weakened. Africa felt strongly about the loss of Chinese development aid, which was reflected in its internal affairs (Chvátalová 2008: 26).

The third and most important stage dates back to the late 1980's when China's investment in Africa grew again. In 1996, Chinese Prime Minister Jiangsu Min introduced other principles for the future of a common relationship at the headquarters of the African Union. Such principles included sincere friendship, mutual respect, benefit, equality, consultation and cooperation in the international field, etc. Since 2000, an annual conference has been held at the level of the ministers. The conferences often conclude with agreements upon new action plans for the coming years, mostly with the setting of new objectives (Zbránková 2017: 40).

Africa is an opportunity for China to become an international power. China is not burdened with the history of colonialism or imperialism and has invested in Africa for more than half a century. China has become Africa's largest trading partner, but China does not view Africa as such. China sees Africa as a source of mineral wealth and a de facto region where it can test new international politics and projects. A major difference in access to Africa and to African countries. While the West is committed to democratic principles through its development aid, China does not value such virtues (Roženková 2015: 43).

Neo-colonialism in Africa?

Now the question of whether such actions exhibit new colonialism or neo-colonialism arises. On a trip to Nigeria, British Secretary of State Jack Straw noted that the current policy of China is very similar to the United Kingdom's foreign policy 150 years ago. In this regard, Straw is not the only one who claims that China behaves as a new colonial power, aiming to exploit Africa's natural resources, especially its mineral wealth, as well as to identify African markets where China can sell its products. Neo-colonialism is a term that follows colonialism and imperialism. This is a discourse which was developed in the 1960s, when the old colonial powers took the opportunity to re-control the newly decolonized countries through capital investment. The difference between colonialism and neo-colonialism is that unlike colonialism, neo-colonialism states are not present in the controlled region, however these countries are still highly dependent on the colonial power, often economically. So far China has bought African resources at fair prices, however it cannot be definitively stated that China will not become a colonial power in the future (Junbo, 2007).

Today, across the African continent you can find expanding Chinese factories, especially in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Senegal, Nigeria and Central Africa. The entire continent is flooded with cheap Chinese electronics, clothing and other products which are compete against African products in local markets. However, as mentioned above, China's actions do not stop at business, but continue into the realm of cultural influence. Thousands of African students receive scholarships each year to study in China. Further, many African officials travel to China annually, where they are guests of the Chinese Communist Party. In addition to these controlled migrations, China has invested in more than 40 language schools or Confucius Institutes where Mandarin and Chinese language and culture are taught. (Kuo, 2018).

Public opinion surveys show that most respondents in African countries consider China to be a positive international influence on the African continent, as China makes a positive contribution to the Africa's development. On average, 63% of Africans are very positive, according to Afrobarometer, which surveyed the situation in 36 African countries. Furthermore, many African leaders often publicly praise the Chinese influence in their countries, especially China's investments, as they contribute to the states' development. Former President of Senegal, Abdoulay Wade once stated that, "The People's Republic of China, which struggled in its own battles to modernize the country, has a much greater personal understanding of the issues of urgent development in Africa than many Western nations" (Albert, 2017).

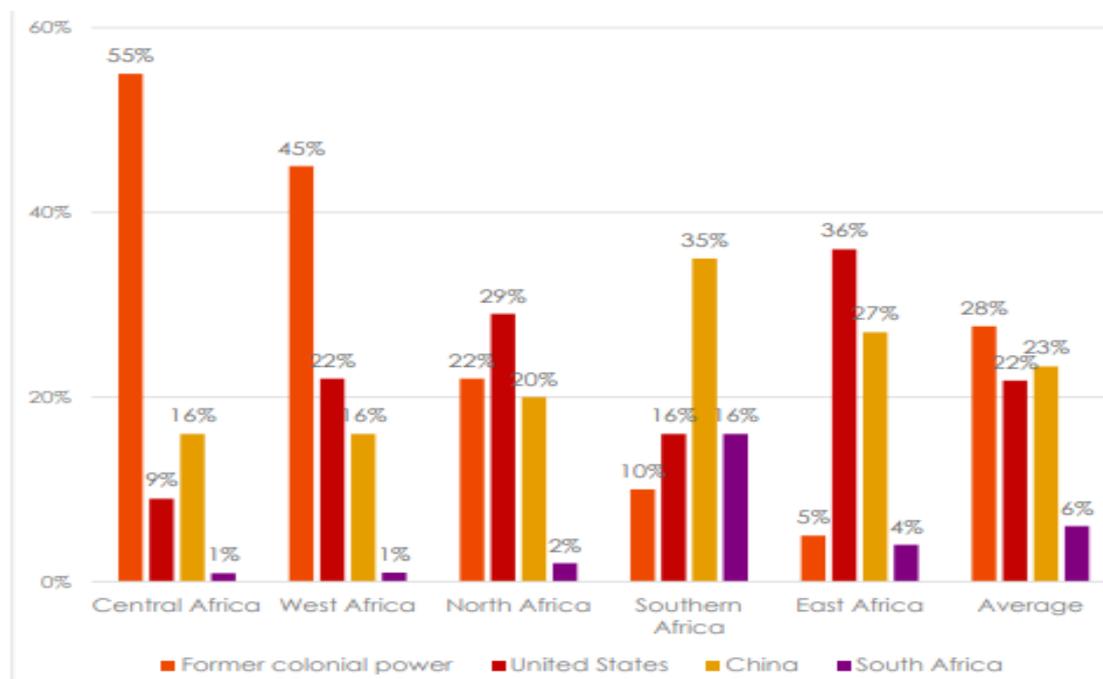
However, Mr. Wade does not mention substantial aspects of the internal battles faced by China. Such battles were those of the China's political campaigns, in which several million Chinese citizens were killed. Nevertheless, it is an accurate demonstration of the African perception of China as a state that fully understands the continent's need for internal development, often at any cost. On the other hand, this assertion demonstrates that history can prevail over Western states and nations. Most Western states are clearly perceived as former colonizers of Africa; therefore many Africans assume that such countries do not understand the actions of African politicians today.

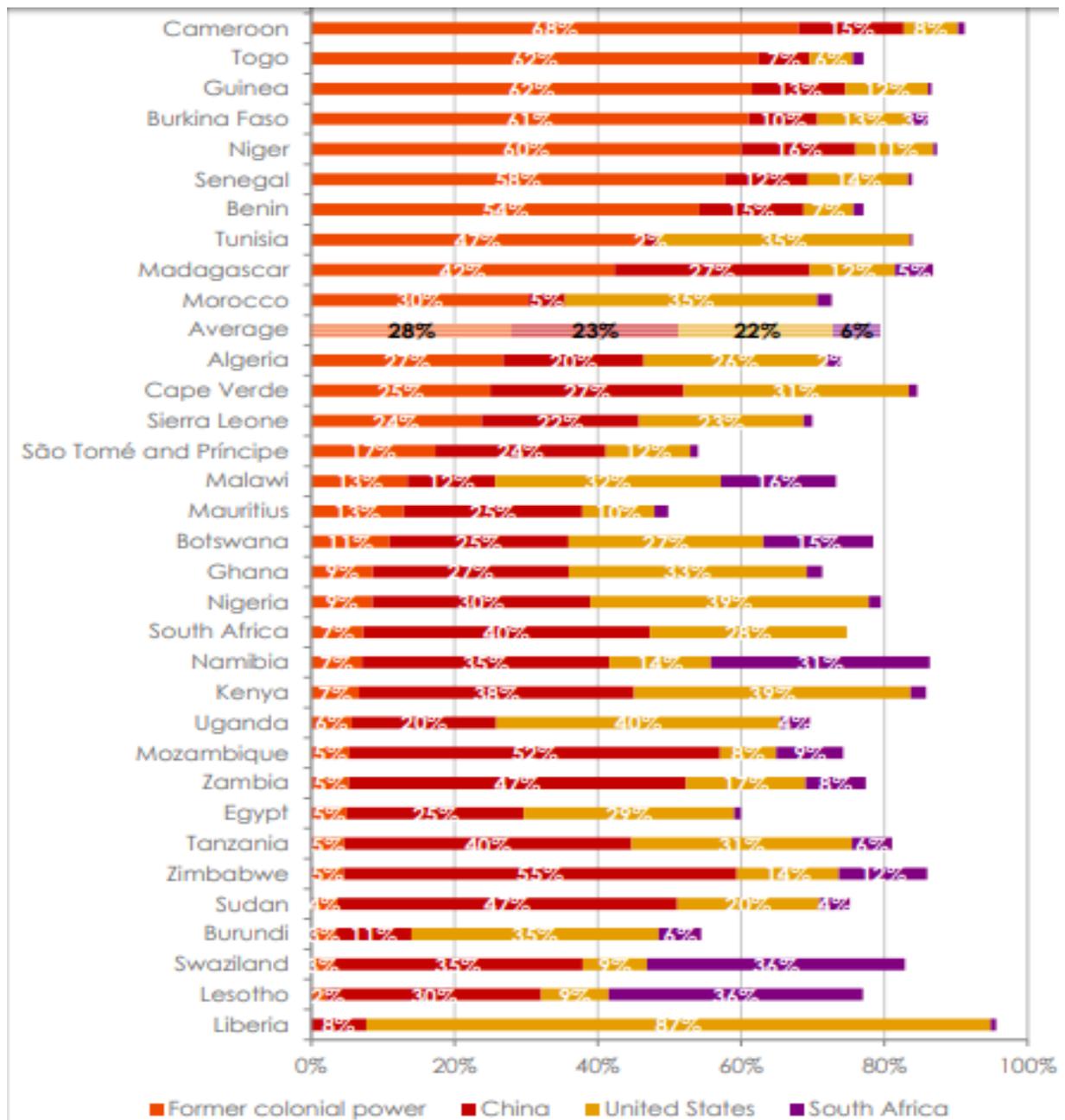
United in diversity

It would be a mistake however, to generalize that all African countries take Chinese influence with enthusiasm. Some countries have turned away from the development activities of China. Much of this criticism derives from China's poor adherence to security and environmental standards, and unfair commercial practices such as violations of local laws and debt traps. The biggest critique however, is that in some circumstances China used African resources without raising the economic level of the states. In 2011, Michael Sata won Zambia's Presidential election partly due to his acknowledgment of the anti-Chinese sentiment in society. This social attitude manifested in the shooting a protesting mob of miners, done at the command of Chinese managers. Another major African critic of China's influence is former Nigerian National Bank governor, Sanusi Lamido. Mr. Lamido once noted that, "We must see the People's Republic of China as what it is, a competitor. Africa must recognize that the People's Republic of China, like the USA, Russia, the United Kingdom, Brazil and the rest of the world, is not on the African continent because of the interests of Africa or individual African states. He is present here especially for his own profit." (Albert, 2017).

EU countries have a long history with Africa. From colonial times until today many European countries have put more effort into the protection of resources, or the fight against terrorism and migration rather than to seek development and stability in those lands. Despite the fact that the EU now has peacekeeping missions on the African continent, China is now building new roads and factories, creating jobs, and is participating in UN missions with unparalleled enthusiasm, present in seven out of ten UN missions in Africa. Mainly China is engaging in Sudan, South Sudan and Mali. EU officials have stated that increased aid from China is more than welcomed, and that they do not perceive it as an act of rivalry (Fox, 2017).

Graphs 1, 2: Results of greatest external influence in Africa and African countries from 2016



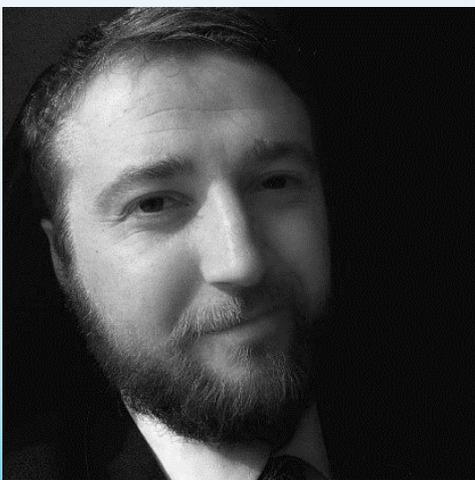


Source: Afrobarometr 2016.

Conclusion

In conclusion, significant evidence proves that China is becoming more influential than the EU and former colonial powers in Africa. The fact that China did not participate in a colonial campaign in Africa as many European countries once did is undoubtedly significant in Chinese-African relations. This allows China to have a stronger negotiation position towards African states. The Bandung conference implemented a policy of non-interfering in inner state matters and a policy of relationship based on friendship and benefits for both sides. Despite this, there are critical voices from both the U.S. and the EU regarding the new form of Chinese neo-colonialism.

The main difference between policy of EU and China towards African states relates to the general ideology. The EU presents its view of democracy and does not support African markets with weapons or stand for authoritarian governments. China has its own strategy called the "Beijing Consensus", and this strategy may clash with democratic ideals in the future. From the perspective of African countries and according to Afrobarometer, African people, including many leaders, are in favour of China's activities on the continent, as they believe that China understands Africa's needs much more than European countries do.



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