

China-Africa Trade and Investment: Moving Beyond the Neocolonial Debate

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Abstract—China has become Africa's leading trading partner, with the trade exceeding US\$210 billion for 2013, and projected to reach US\$400 billion by 2020. China's increased economic presence in and importance to Africa has understandably attracted global attention by scholars, business people, pundits, politicians, and journalists. Unfortunately, much of the discussion concerning the Sino-African relationship takes the form of a debate as to what extent is China a neocolonial power in Africa. We argue that neither the economic data nor the facts on the ground support this line of inquiry; that China and Africa are clearly in a postcolonial relationship of mutual interdependency; and that the neocolonial debate obscures vital issues of global importance concerning developmental economics and the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development and protecting the environment, and sovereignty and social development in a multipolar world. By putting the neocolonial debate to rest and asking better questions, policy-makers, business people, academics, and activists can have both an improved understanding of and more full participation in the Sino-African relationship.

Index Terms—China-Africa trade, developmental economics, sustainable development, neocolonialism.

I. INTRODUCTION

On 1 August 2012, Hillary Clinton, then the US Secretary of State, began an 11-day tour of Africa with a speech in Dakar, Senegal, that observers widely agreed was sharply critical of China, comparing the Chinese interactions in Africa to those of the 19th century European colonial powers [1], [2]. Clinton's remarks gain no points for their originality. The academic and journalistic discussion of China's involvement in Africa, so far a dominantly Western discussion, has typically concerned to what extent is China a neocolonial power in Africa, and how well or not China is playing the soft power game. Prominently representative examples of this, Clinton's speech notwithstanding, include the pundit Moisés Naín (2007) in the journal *Foreign Policy* denouncing China as a "rogue donor" [3]; the esteemed political scientist Joseph Nye (2013) for the same declaring that China "doesn't get" soft power [4]; and the *Economist* magazine (2008) describing China in Africa as "a ravenous dragon" [5]. Indeed, in general terms, as Mehari Taddele Maru (2013) has observed, both the academic and journalistic discussion offer two opposing narratives of the Sino-African relationship: the first and still dominant one, depicting China as the new colonial power in Africa; the

second and reactive to first, depicting China as a possible savior and genuine partner of Africa [6].

We argue that a careful analysis of the economic data, trade policy, and China's actions on the ground in Africa support neither the neocolonial narrative nor its idealized inversion: rather, to understand the China's economic and political engagement with Africa, we need to move beyond the neocolonial debate. Building upon Stephanie Rupp's (2008) analysis, China and Africa, we likewise contend, are in a postcolonial relationship of mutual interdependency: the economic needs and benefits are shared, albeit not always equally [7]. Our argument and analysis proceed as follows. First, we provide an overview of the economic data-calling attention to some arguably obvious but seldom discussed implications. Second, we discuss China's general policies towards and practices in Africa-and how these do not fit well in the current debate. Third, we consider some of the facts on the ground-what China is actually doing in Africa in terms of trade and investment versus the misrepresentations perpetuated by seemingly authoritative and predominantly Western sources. Fourth, and finally, we provide a critical survey of vital economic and policy issues too often detracted from or obscured by the neocolonial debate.

II. ECONOMIC DATA AND ANALYSIS

In 1980, when the pragmatist Deng Xiaoping had effectively gained control over China's economic policy, China's trade with Africa-what China imported from, and what China exported to Africa totaled US\$1 billion. By 2000, three years after both the death of Deng Xiaoping and the transfer of Hong Kong from British to Chinese sovereignty, and the year in which China established the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the China-Africa trade totaled US\$10 billion. By 2010, the trade totaled US\$114 billion. By 2013, the trade totaled an estimated US\$210 billion [8]-[10]. For a visual display of the data, please see the graph immediately below:

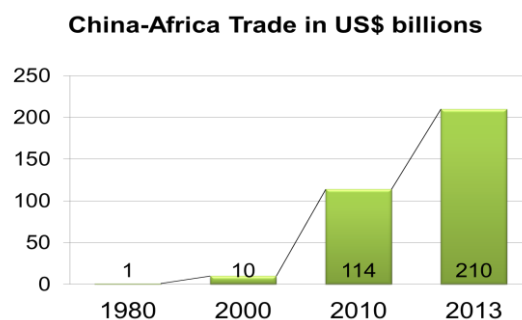


Fig. 1. China-Africa trade from 1980 to 2013 [8]-[10].

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In other words, the China-Africa trade had a 17% annual growth rate from 1980 to 2013.

We may contrast this with China's GDP. In 1980, China had an estimated GDP of US\$303.40 billion; in 2000, US\$1,199 billion; and in 2013, US\$9,185 billion [11]. For a visual display of the data, please see the graph immediately below:

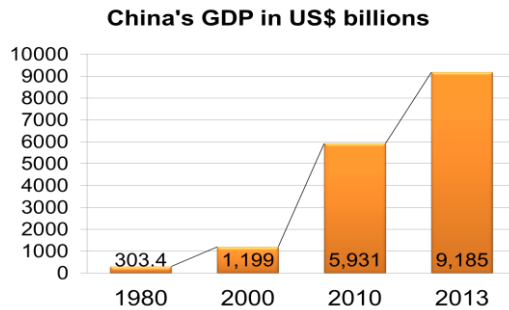


Fig. 2. China's GDP from 1980 to 2013 [11].

In other words, China's GDP had a 10.55% annual growth rate from 1980 to 2013: historically remarkable for a period over three decades long, but still lagging roughly 6% behind that of the China-Africa trade for the same time period as detailed below:

TABLE I: ANNUAL GROWTH RATE FROM 1980-2013

China-Africa Trade:	17%
China's GDP:	10.55%
Percentage by which GDP lags:	6.45%

If we restrict the time range from 2001 to 2013, 2001 being the year China joined the WTO, the results—even with the global financial crisis of 2008—are more revealing. In 2001, China's trade with Africa totaled US\$10.8 billion; in 2013, again, US\$210 billion [8]-[10]. This reveals an astonishing annual growth rate of 25.64%. In comparison, China's GDP for 2001 was an estimated US\$1,325 billion; in 2013, again, US\$9,185 billion [11]. So from 2001 to 2013, China experienced an exceptional annual growth rate of 16%; but one still lagging 9% behind the growth rate for the China-Africa trade for the same time period as detailed below:

TABLE II: ANNUAL GROWTH RATE FROM 2001-2013

China-Africa Trade:	25.64%
China's GDP:	16%
Percentage by which GDP lags:	9.34%

Another important comparison emerges from the macroeconomic data. In 1980, the value of the China-Africa trade was equivalent to 1/303 of China's GDP; by 2013, the value was equivalent to 1/44. Proportionally, the value of the China-Africa trade has become almost 7 times greater since 1980. For China's 2013 GDP to have the same value ratio to the China-African trade as it did in 1980, it would need total not US\$9,185 billion but a staggering US\$63,600 billion. Clearly, the China-Africa trade has been having an increasing role in China's own economic development.

The case is not simply that China trades more with Africa because the Chinese economy is expanding overall: rather, the China-Africa trade helps fuel China's economic growth.

As the numbers show, the China-Africa trade both leads

China's GDP in terms of annual growth percentage rate and has increased in value proportionally to it. From this we may infer that the China-Africa trade serves both to drive and sustain China's economic growth; and now does so to the extent that China now all but requires continued and increased trade with Africa to maintain a stable and growing Chinese economy. Beijing seems to think so. In fact, on 5 May 2014, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang promised to double China's trade with Africa to US\$400 billion by 2020 [12].

III. THE RESOURCE EXTRACTION DEBATE

The China-Africa trade, as indicated above, helps to drive and sustain China's economic growth for primarily two key reasons: Africa offers developing markets with new opportunities, and Africa provides strategic resources needed for China's economic growth. Since it is China's quest for strategic resources, however, which many Western commentators claim exhibits neocolonial behavior, we will discuss this quest and its criticism in some detail.

Of the strategic resources Africa has to offer, China's petroleum imports from and related investment in Africa has been the most studied and discussed. Formerly an exporter of petroleum (oil), China became a net importer in 1993 [13]. According to current estimates, China overtook the USA in 2013 as the world's largest importer of oil; and furthermore, oil consumption in China presently outstrips production by 6.3 million barrels per day [14]. Since both China's energy security and economic growth depend on importing oil, China has a global energy strategy in which Africa plays a major part [13]. Based upon current known and speculated oil reserves, the current and foreseeable state of green technology, and more, we have no reason to believe that the China-Africa oil trade will become any less important over the next two decades—and it will highly likely become more so, with increased Chinese investment in, imports from, and future purchase commitments with African oil-producing nations.

Besides oil, Africa also has to offer a wealth of strategic metals and minerals: copper, cobalt, niobium, tantalum, uranium, platinum, ferrochrome, zinc, gold, and diamonds, to start. Several of these are crucial to manufacturing and development in the technology sector, where China for both economic and defense reasons hopes to have a leadership role not only as a producer but as a designer of highly advanced technological commodities [15]. Since the amount of strategic metals and minerals is ultimately finite, insofar they remain essential for the foreseeable future, China deems it necessary to have reserves if possible—a stockpile for national economic and security reasons [16]. Therefore, China also has a global commodities strategy in which Africa plays a major role. We also see no reason for this to change over the next two decades or so. The China-Africa trade here also will likely increase.

The acquisition of vital natural resources, without question, plays a central role in China's economic engagement with Africa. But as one Nigerian official (2009) remarked: “the Chinese are trying to get involved in every sector of our economy. If you look at the West, it's oil, oil, oil, and nothing else” [17]. In addition to becoming Africa's major trading

partner, surpassing the USA and the EU, China invests heavily in Africa in multiple economic sectors. As D. Leung and L. Zhou (2014) point out, over “2,000 Chinese companies have invested in Africa, including in natural resource extraction, finance, infrastructure, power generation, textiles, and home appliances” [18]. By sector percentage as of 2011, the breakdown is mining at 31%; finance at 20%; construction at 16%; manufacturing at 15%; leasing and business services at 5%; and others at 13% [19]. For a visual display of the data, please see the graph immediately below:

Chinese Investments in Africa by Sector (as of 2011)

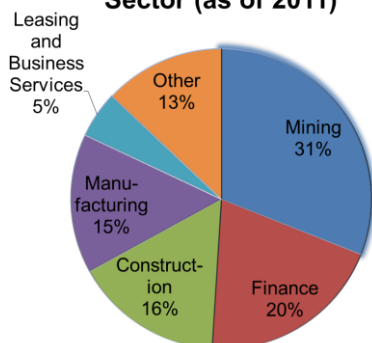


Fig. 3. Chinese Investment in Africa by Sector (as of 2011) [19].

Rather than just extracting resources, China’s engagement with Africa, Deborah Brautigam (2009) cogently argues, “is about generating business” [17]. And as H. Edinger and C. Pistorius (2011) point out, the trade between China and Africa has become almost an even split between exports and imports [19].

Moreover, and in further contrast to those who claim China is simply interested in extracting resources, Brautigam (2009) observes that the “reality is that Chinese engineering companies are rebuilding Africa, and they are doing it nearly everywhere” [17]. Robert Rotberg (2014), generally considered a China critic, likewise concedes that “few African countries have failed to benefit from China’s willingness to build dams, hydroelectric facilities, and thermal power plants; construct roads; erect stadiums, hospitals, and party headquarters; renovate railways; refurbish ports; and upgrade mining projects” [20]. In fact, and in direct regard to resource extraction, Edinger and Pistorius (2011) believe that the “biggest opportunity and advantage for Africa represented by China’s engagement in the mining sector” is China’s commitment to providing the “much needed supporting infrastructure” since Africa has “the highest transport cost per unit in the world” and will “benefit greatly” from improved transportation networks [19]. And lastly on the infrastructure debate, and in response to a fairly superficial World Bank study which suggested otherwise, Brautigam (2009) has argued that the “roads, bridges, sewer systems, and power plants built with Chinese finance in places such as Botswana, Kenya, Rwanda, Madagascar, Mauritius, and so on, do not map out to some kind of master plan for resource extraction” [17]. What the massive current and proposed infrastructure projects do show, obviously, is that China has a comprehensive and long-term commitment with Africa: the infrastructure projects are a

visible manifestation as to how the economic futures of China and Africa are now to a real degree shared.

IV. WHY THE CHARGES OF NEOCOLONIALISM FAIL

This economic and trade relationship is best described as one of mutual interdependency, not neocolonialism. As Rupp (2008) and others (2012; 2009) have observed, the Sino-African relationship fails a number of basic tests for colonialism or neocolonialism [7], [15]-[17]. To start, China has no territorial claims in Africa; nor any policy of encouraging Chinese immigration to Africa; nor any mission to “civilize” Africans according to Chinese standards of religion, morality, law, or political order; nor any meaningful military presence in Africa. Furthermore, China respects the national sovereignty of African states; it actively cultivates diplomatic and political relationships with the same; and it treats African citizens as potential consumers rather than as conscripts for manual labor. Li Anshan (2008) points out that Chinese-African relations are “characterized by summit diplomacy, equality, co-development, and cooperation” [21]. Despite its considerable economic power, China does not play the political hegemon in Africa and does not interfere with the internal affairs of African states. Dambisa Moyo (2012), unafraid of controversy and actively making alarmist claims about China’s potential domination of the commodities markets, nonetheless argues that “China is not going down this [the neocolonial] path. China’s modern-day interests [in Africa] are largely transparent and driven by its dogged and narrow motive to establish commercial relationships” [15].

We hold that China’s motives in Africa are not so narrow as Moyo declares: China does want to reinforce the South-South alliance [22], and along with its partners in BRICS, offer developing nations an alternative to the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the IMF (both of which themselves been accused of neocolonialism bias) [23]. Likewise, China also does seek to cultivate and maintain political allies and retains the One China policy (Taiwan as part of China) as a mainstay of its international diplomacy. But all of this again fails the test for neocolonial behavior in Africa: China is developing partnerships, not interfering with the internal affairs of sovereign African nations. Furthermore, because of its interest in African citizens as consumers of Chinese goods and services, China benefits from greater general African prosperity—not just that of the elites.

Although China’s actions in Africa are clearly guided by national (and mostly, economic) self-interest, China is evidently sincere about having “win-win” arrangements which benefit both the Chinese businesses and the African host nations. Such arrangements offer Chinese investors and corporations considerably less risk of having their African assets expropriated in case of an economic downturn or civil unrest, and considerably more opportunity for securing future business. Because of its extensive investments and future contractual commitments in Africa, China benefits from and hopes to encourage African social development and political stability. But China’s understanding as to how developing nations thrive differs considerably from what has been called the “Washington consensus” [24]. In a few words,

the Beijing approach is trade not aid: and trade is better with reliable, prosperous partners. This-not altruism, moralism, or the self-righteous professions thereof common to Western celebrities, political figures, and pundits-better explains why China is committed to a brighter future for Africa. But China's pragmatism however multifaceted can hardly be deemed imperialism. (Although the vast majority of UN member states evidently hold otherwise, we acknowledge that the 21 UN member states which retain formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan would understand China as interfering with Taiwan's internal affairs: that complicated sovereignty issue and China's other disputes in the South China Sea region, however, provide further contrasting examples that China does not act as a hegemonic power towards Africa. The same cannot always be said of the USA and certain EU member states, as Maximilian Forte argues concerning "NATO's war on Libya and Africa") [25].

V. WHAT THE CHARGES OF NEOCOLONIALISM OBSCURE: ISSUES OF GLOBAL IMPORTANCE

We further argue that accusing China of neocolonialism in Africa is not merely mistaken and misguided: it obscures and detracts from a number of crucial economic, environmental, policy, and political issues.

A. *Alleviating Poverty and Improving Developmental Economics*

To start, as William Easterly (2006), D. Moyo (2009), and others have pointed out, Africa in the past 50 years has received mostly from Western nations over US\$1 trillion in development-related aid-but this aid has proved largely ineffective in reducing poverty [26], [27]. In fact, Moreblessings Chidaushe (2007) argues that "more people [in Africa] are poor today because of development aid than they were 25 years ago" [28]. Sanou Mbaye (2010), a former senior official for the African Development Bank, goes even further: "'Aid' as it now stands is an industry allowing the West to keep hostage Africa starved, bound, and addicted to handouts" [29]. One need not fully agree with Mbaye to acknowledge that Africa clearly needs alternatives both to the World Bank and the IMF, and to what some observers refer to as the Western aid cartel.

Even if we suspend for the now the debate over aid, the central challenges of developmental economics are to alleviate poverty, to set nations on the path to prosperity, and to create opportunities for citizens at all levels in society. How to meet these challenges is what policy-makers, pundits, and others should focus on: not reactively labelling and moralizing because other nations would dare offer an alternative to the Washington consensus. The political scientist Horace Campbell (2007), in fact and in contrast, finds praiseworthy that Chinese investment in and trade with Africa offers a challenge to "US global hegemony" and has enabled "Africans to defy the conditionalities of the Bretton Woods institutions" [30]. Whether one endorses Campbell's geopolitics or not, the Beijing model and other developmental economic approaches need to be evaluated on their results: and China is clearly doing some things right. Improving the practice of developmental economics even

incrementally will make a significant difference for millions of people in the world. This should take priority over reinforcing a presumed Western moral or cultural superiority, as (to choose from many possible examples) Hillary Clinton evidently felt a need to do in her capacity as the US Secretary of State [1]. In this instance, we concur with Jayati Ghosh, writing for the PovertyMatters blog at *The Guardian*, who found Clinton's "sanctimonious" speech "deluded" and her tone "pious and slightly smug" [2].

B. *Sustainable Development and Protecting the Environment*

In regard to environmental issues, China comes under some fair criticism for its practices in Africa-which truthfully do not differ significantly from China's practices at home [31], [32]. This represents a considerable opportunity for improvement-in fact, a necessity. In fairness to China, however, no nation has yet solved the riddle of sustainable development. The USA, for example, home to some of China's most vociferous critics on this issue, has roughly 5% of the world's population; but according to a recent US Energy Information Agency estimate, the USA is responsible for roughly 19% of the world's total primary energy consumption [33]. When we consider the other natural resources consumed and the US national debt, currently at \$17.6 trillion dollars, serious questions can be raised about the sustainability of the American lifestyle-and about who really pays the environmental cost for it. As the South increasingly serves as the manufacturing and industrial base for the North, we can understand the North as effectively outsourcing many of its potential environmental problems. Moreover, developing nations, as history indicates, do place more emphasis on growth than conservation in their efforts to raise the general standard of living. All that notwithstanding, China must do a better job at home and overseas in protecting the environment or find its own economic development soon hindered, its international reputation thoroughly compromised, and its citizens and consumers protesting for better health, quality, and safety measures [34], [35].

A plethora of news stories indicate that the Chinese government, media, and citizens are demonstrating greater environmental awareness: the Beijing smog, to take one prominent example, now presents a serious health risk to residents of the capital and so has become both a national symbol and concern [36], [37]. Likewise, in Africa, more attention is being paid to environmental concerns and green development-with China being called upon to improve its practices [38]. China has endorsed the Rio + 20 Document on sustainable development, and committed to the post-2015 development agenda agreed upon by member states of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development [39]. Africa will provide a global stage for showing how well or not China can engage in-as one high ranking Chinese official defined it-"poverty eradication and development promotion" while creating "a model of economic growth that is environment friendly and resource saving" [40]. It may well prove that African demands for sustainable development will benefit Chinese domestic reforms, and that the international attention paid to China's activities in Africa will also and ultimately benefit Chinese citizens. Time will tell-and shortly

so.

C. *Sovereignty and Social Development in a Multipolar World*

In regard to policy and political issues other than the environment, China is frequently criticized for not supporting Western efforts to regulate and reform African governments. This, however, as Campbell (2007; 2013) and Brautigam (2009) in quite different ways point out, begs the question [30]-[41], [42]. After decades of such efforts, we have scant proof that sanctions, embargoes, and even armed intervention help achieve social justice, political stability, and economic prosperity. For example, the fairly recent large scale and predominantly American efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan to impose regime change can hardly be seen as unqualified successes-if indeed successful at all in terms of national and regional peace and stability. Likewise, the NATO-led effort in Libya has so far proven an abysmal failure [25]-[42]. Moreover, when we look specifically at the past half century of Western diplomacy towards Africa, we find no shortage of tolerance for-and in many cases, support for-dictators, repressive regimes, and socially polarizing practices that prelude ethnic cleansing and even genocide. The support of the US, France, and Belgium for Mobutu Sese Seko, the now archetypal African dictator and kleptocrat, is a well-documented part of 20th century history [43].

Even if we ignore the past half-century, it is worth noting, for example, that although the USA presently demands LGBT rights for Ugandan citizens [44], it does not for energy security reasons demand the same for citizens of Saudi Arabia [45]. When it comes to supporting democratic reforms and human rights, Great Britain and many of the EU member states likewise have often acted with expediency rather than holding fast to expressed principles. The record shows the West has been uneven at best in following its own standards, and Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2007), Director of the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS), goes even further, finding Western criticism of China as “hypocritical” and “not real concern” but just “jealousy and rivalry about Chinese inroads into Africa” [46]. One need not fully agree with Prah to acknowledge that Western policies and practices towards Africa also require critical scrutiny, and do not provide a clear, unambiguous, and objective standard by which Chinese policies and practices can be measured.

China does need to improve its relationships in Africa, and help with African social development, but not by participating in largely Western efforts to regulate and reform African governments. These efforts, one may cynically note, often seem to end with select resource-rich nations being declared failed states, and then declared candidates for international trusteeship. Moreover, as D. Lake and C. Fariss (2014) thoroughly demonstrate, the international trusteeship model has not worked and nor is likely to [47]. China, in our opinion, needs to proceed in exactly the opposite direction: although it respects national sovereignty, China places too much emphasis on state-to-state relationships with African nations. For as A. Harneit-Sievers, S. Marks, and S. Naidu (2010) observe, the prevailing assumption seems that “only political and economic elites from both sides are the main

actors in this engagement” [48]. This excludes the vast majority of stakeholders, and so endangers the long-term stability of the Sino-African engagement. Both China and the African nations must take a more “people-centred approach to development” [48]. Likewise, Chinese businesses on the ground can and should do more in the way of technology transfer, training, and creating employment opportunities. Inclusion rather than exclusion yields better returns in the long run.

D. *Expanding Sino-African Social and Cultural Exchange and Interaction*

Furthermore, in regard to a more inclusive approach, the social and cultural interactions between the Chinese and Africans in Africa remain unnecessarily constricted-the Chinese are commonly viewed as living in enclaves, and not participating in the social and cultural spheres of their host nations [49]. Certainly, language is a barrier in part because China is not one of the former colonial powers-but the situation goes beyond that. Nor is China helped by the relative dependence of African mass media on Western media. One study of 543 news stories on Africa published in Ghana’s newspapers found that 64% were from the BBC [50]. This lends itself to bias, and more so, as another study found that news stories covering Africa in the British broadsheet newspapers tended to portray Africans as weak, Chinese as ruthless, and Westerners as morally responsible trustees [51]. China needs to counter such soft power misfeasance, in our opinion, not with propaganda but with newsworthy acts on the ground showing positive and mutually beneficial cultural and social exchange and interaction. In contrast, to cite just two of many prominent examples, the British Council is highly involved throughout the African continent with not only teaching English but also promoting African literature and culture; the Commonwealth Foundation, likewise heavily invested in both cultivating and recognizing African literary and creative talent. As of yet, the Confucius Institutes that China has established in Africa can make no such claims.

China is further hindered in cultural and social engagement because it typically does not interact with the vast number of African CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) which play numerous and vital roles in nations across the continent [52]. This lack of interaction occurs in no small part because the Chinese government is still defining its relationship to domestic CSOs [53]. More liberalization at home might well benefit China in Africa if Chinese academics, journalists, creative talents, CSO workers and volunteers could more directly interact with their African counterparts. This for the moment seems on hold. But it is just such social connections which make for a more stable long-term economic and political relationship: one of mutual benefits widely shared, and in which the majority of stakeholders feel they have an active interest worth further developing.

VI. CONCLUSION

The China-Africa trade and investment merits the international attention, study, and commentary it has received. To start, the China-Africa economic engagement is of strategic importance both to China and the majority of

nations in the African continent. It is visibly transforming Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of infrastructure development, and it is financially and politically reconfiguring South-South relationships in an emerging multipolar world. Additionally, it has considerable present and immense future implications for the commodities market, the world petroleum trade, and the global financial markets. Moreover, the China-Africa trade and investment offers for many African nations economic and development opportunities which have the potential to alleviate poverty for millions of their citizens.

The discussion of the Sino-African relationship, however, has been dominated by various answers to a bad question: the question to what extent is China a neocolonial power in Africa. Our analysis of the economic data and review of the relevant literature shows that (1) China and Africa clearly are in a postcolonial relationship of mutual interdependency; and (2) the neocolonial debate detracts from vital economic, environmental, policy and political issues which warrant further attention. We need to start asking better questions-questions about sustainable development and protecting the environment, about alternatives to both failed Western models of economic development and to the Bretton Woods institutions, about establishing prosperity and security in a multipolar world, and about expanding Sino-African social and cultural exchange and interaction. Moving beyond the neocolonial debate is the path not only to better understanding but also to a better future.

Finally, we also need to acknowledge mutual Chinese and African responsibility, and to stop giving Western experts (genuine or otherwise) a free pass to position themselves as trustees when the same have no accountability for the outcomes, and highly limited efficacy in producing results [54]. Perpetuating the myth of African helplessness benefits no one living in Africa. It also denies the dynamism and potential of numerous African societies, worthy of investment and poised for—and in several cases, already experiencing-vigorous economic growth [55]. China, as we have acknowledged, clearly pursues its own interests even as it seeks win-win solutions. We do not expect-nor should we-that China will sacrifice its own economic interests for those of other nations. This defies both the logic of the market and sound political leadership. Africans, as Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2007) has observed in return, “have to organize their side of the story as best they can in their own interests” [46]. An improved Sino-African relationship is not just about what China must do; it is also about what African governments and citizens are willing to do. The dominant rhetoric of victimization, largely Western sourced and sustained, must give way to a new rhetoric of agency, responsibility, opportunity, and participation.

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