

CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP

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ABSTRACT

When people hear the name “China”, it reminds them of different things. It reminds people of the largest nation in the world, the second largest economy, communist country, made-in-China products, and other things. China means different things to different people. To the United States and some European nations, China is a competitor and an enemy; but to the African people, China is a partner and friend. China has been a friend of Africa for many years. China has helped African nations during colonial era, during the struggle for independence, and after independence. Despite the China’s aids and assistance to the African nations, some Africans still doubt China’s sincerity of friendship. To make the matter worse, the United States and some European nations accuse China of imperialism and neo-colonialism. The Chinese leadership has defended that China-Africa relationship is born out of historical friendship, equality, common development, mutual support, and mutually beneficial cooperation. This work attempts to clear the doubts in the minds of some Africans on the sincerity of China’s friendship with Africa and tries to debunk the accusation of China’s imperialism and neo-colonialism in Africa. The work concludes that China is a good friend of Africa with many evidences of helps from China and testimonies from some African leaders.

INTRODUCTION

China

China is the world's most populous country, with over 1.38 billion people, and the second-largest country by land area. One in every five people in the world is Chinese. China’s population is four times that of the United States (CIA, 2009). China has the world's largest standing army and second-largest defense budget. China is the world's largest exporter and second-largest importer of goods. The world's first paper money was created in China 1,400 years ago. The modern word “China” most likely derives from the name of the Qin (pronounced “chin”) dynasty. First Emperor Qin Shi Huang (260-210 B.C.) of the Qin dynasty first unified China in 221 B.C., beginning an Imperial period which would last until A.D. 1912 (Tucker, 2007). The name of China’s capital has changed over the centuries. At one time or another it has been known as Yanjing, Dadu, and Beijing. Peking or “Beijing means “Northern Capital.” Beijing is the officially sanctioned pinyin spelling based on the Mandarin dialect. Beijing is the second largest city after Shanghai (National Geographic Traveler, 2001). The first known species of *Homo erectus*, the Peking Man, was found in China and lived between 300,000-550,000 years ago. It is thought that he knew how to manipulate fire. China is often considered the longest continuous civilization, with some historians marking 6000 B.C. as the dawn of Chinese civilization. It also has the world’s longest continuously

used written language. The Chinese invented paper, the compass, gunpowder, and printing. In A.D. 130, Zhang Heng, an astronomer and literary scholar, invented the first instrument for monitoring earthquakes. The machine could detect and indicate the direction of an earthquake (Cotterell, 2005). The Chinese invented kites ("paper birds" or "Aeolian harps") about 3,000 years ago. They were used to frighten the enemies in battle, and Marco Polo (1254-1324) noted that kites were also used to predict the success of a voyage. It was considered bad luck to purposely let a kite go (Perkins, 2000). The Chinese were using the decimal system as early as the fourteenth century B.C., nearly 2,300 years before the first known use of the system in European mathematics. The Chinese were also the first to use a place for zero. The oldest piece of paper in the world was found in China and dates back to the second or first century B.C. Paper was so durable, it was sometimes used for clothing and even light body armor (Wright, 2001).

According to popular legend, tea was discovered by the Chinese emperor Shennong in 2737 B.C. when a tea leaf fell into his boiling water. The Chinese consider tea to be a necessity of life. According to a Chinese legend, silk was discovered in 3000 B.C. by Lady Xi Ling Sui, wife of the Emperor Huang Di. When a silk worm cocoon accidentally dropped into her hot tea, fine threads from the cocoon unraveled in the hot water and silk was born. The Romans knew China as "Serica," which means "Land of Silk." The Chinese fiercely guarded the secrets of silk making, and anyone caught smuggling silkworm eggs or cocoons outside of China was put to death. The bicycle was introduced into China around 1891 by two American travelers named Allen and Sachtleben. The bicycle is now the primary transportation for millions of Chinese. The last Qing emperor (Puyi) rode a bicycle around the Forbidden City in Beijing. China is currently the leading bicycle manufacturer. China has the world's oldest calendar. This lunar calendar originated in 2600 B.C. and has 12 zodiac signs. It takes 60 years to complete. The most important holiday in China is the Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year. Chinese traditionally believe that every person turns one year older on the New Year and, thus, that day is considered to be everyone's birthday. Chinese is spoken by 92% of China's population. There are at least seven major families of the Chinese language, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Wu, Hakka, Gan, Xiang, and Min. The early Chinese emperors kept pandas to ward off evil spirits and natural disasters. Pandas also were considered symbols of might and bravery. White, rather than black, is the Chinese color for mourning and funerals. Martial arts are practiced throughout China and were largely developed from ancient farming and hunting methods. Red symbolizes happiness for the Chinese and is commonly used at Chinese festivals and other happy occasions such as birthdays and weddings. While the dragon is typically seen as an evil creature in Western culture, it holds first place among the four greatest creatures in Chinese mythology, including the phoenix, tiger, and tortoise. It is typically associated with the emperor. China's national flag was adopted in September 1949 and first flown in Tiananmen Square (the world's largest public gathering place) on October 1, 1949, the day the People's Republic of China was formed. The red in the flag symbolizes revolution. The large star symbolizes communism and the little stars represent the Chinese people. The position of the stars represents the unity of the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party (Perkins, 2000).

China is the home of one of the world's oldest civilizations, but it has only recently become a "modern" nation. In the last 20 years, China has changed faster than any other country in the world. Chinese history is divided into dynasties, each of which marks the period when a line of emperors

ruled. The first empire was the **Qin dynasty** and began in **221 B.C.** The last emperor was overthrown in 1912, and China became a republic. The communist government began its rule in **1949** following a civil war with the Chinese Nationalists. Ancient China was a land of invention. For centuries, China was much more advanced than most other countries in science and technology, astronomy and mathematics. The Chinese invented paper, the magnetic compass, printing, tea porcelain, silk and gunpowder, among other things.

Africa

While there are several different theories regarding the origin of the name “Africa,” most etymologists believe the name derived from *Afri*, the title for a group of people who dwelt in North Africa near Carthage around the third century B.C., and *-ca*, the Roman suffix for “country” or “land” (Fage and William, 2002). Ancient Greeks and Romans originally used the term “Africa” to apply only to the northern region of the continent. In Latin, the word *Africa* means “sunny,” and the word *Aphrike* in Greek means “without cold” (Gates, 1999). By the first century A.D., Africa had been subdivided by geographers into three distinct regions: Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia. The last term was more or less used to describe the whole of sub-Saharan Africa (Fage and William, 2002). The primary region of Africa is often called sub-Saharan Africa and excludes the mostly Islamic countries of North Africa: Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. Sub-Saharan Africa includes 42 nations on mainland Africa and the six island nations (Bowden, 2005). Africa is the second largest of the earth’s seven continents and makes up approximately 22% of the earth’s total land area (Habeeb and Robert, 2004). With the inclusion of the disputed Western Sahara territory and the island nations off the continental coast, there are a total of 54 independent nations in Africa (Bowden, 2005). The current population of Africa is nearly one billion people. Due to rapid population growth in the continent over the last 40 years, its general population is relatively young. In many African states, more than half of the population is under the age of 25. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Egypt is the second most populous country. The largest country in Africa is Algeria with a total area of 967,490 square miles (2.5 million square kilometers), and the smallest country is the island nation of The Seychelles with a total area of just 175 square miles (453 square kilometers). While Africa makes up about 16% of the world’s population, fully one quarter of the world’s languages are spoken only in Africa. Arabic (in various dialects) is the most common language spoken in Africa with about 170 million speakers, primarily residing in North Africa. In the continent as a whole, there are over 2,000 recognized languages spoken (Habeeb and Robert, 2004). Population experts estimate that there are at least 3,000 distinct ethnic groups (tribes) in Africa. Nigeria alone has more than 370 recognized tribes within its population (Reader, 1999).

The oldest literate civilization in Africa is the Pharaonic civilization of ancient Egypt. Historical records date the rise of the Egyptian state to about 3300 B.C. and the fall from influence at 343 B.C., making it one of the world’s oldest and longest-lasting civilizations (Fage and William, 2002). The scientist Charles Darwin was the first to suggest that the ancestors of human beings may have originated in Africa. However, prejudicial attitudes toward the continent made many people in the Western world highly resistant to the idea until well into the twentieth century. In 1974, the skeleton of “Lucy,” a hominid who lived approximately 3.2 million years ago and has been considered a common ancestor to the human family, was discovered in Hadar, Ethiopia. In

1979, a 165-foot trail of the earliest hominid footprints was discovered in the Kibish region of Tanzania. The two discoveries indisputably marked northeastern Africa as the birthplace of humanity (Reader, 1999). Lake Victoria is the largest lake in Africa and the second-largest freshwater lake in the world, covering an area of 26,830 square miles (69,490 square kilometers). The Nile River, which drains into the Mediterranean Sea at the northeastern edge of Africa, is the longest river in the world with a total length of 4,132 miles (6,650 kilometers). It is formed from the juncture of two smaller rivers: the White Nile and the Blue Nile. Africa contains the world's largest desert, the Sahara, which makes up an area greater in size than the entire continental U.S. (Gates, 1999).

Prior to the colonization of the African continent, historians believe Africa was made up of as many as 10,000 different states and autonomous groups, ranging in size from small family groups of hunter-gatherers to large kingdoms. Europeans first began exploring the northern coast of Africa around 332 B.C., when Alexander the Great came into Egypt and established the city of Alexandria. The Roman Empire soon after began to integrate much of North Africa's Mediterranean coastline into the Roman system. While slavery has been practiced in Africa all throughout recorded history, Africa is the only continent to have a large percentage of its inhabitants transported elsewhere for slave labor. Historians estimate that approximately 7–12 million slaves were transferred from Africa to the Americas between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Only two African nations have never been under European colonial power: Liberia, an independent nation settled largely by African Americans, and Ethiopia, an Orthodox Christian nation known in Europe as Abyssinia. The rest of the continent was colonized by European imperial powers in the nineteenth century "scramble for Africa." During the 1950s, colonized African states began to fight for independence from imperial rule with Libya being the first African nation to declare its independence. The independence movements brought great hope and inspired U.S. civil rights leaders like Malcolm X to fight for increased freedoms at home (Fage and William, 2002). Africa is currently politically organized into the African Union, a federation created in 2001 and consisting of all of Africa's nations except Morocco (Bowden, 2005). Among the native population of Africa, there are more physical variations than on any other continent in the world (Reader, 1999). Africa is the poorest and most underdeveloped of all of the continents, despite its wealth of natural resources (Habeeb and Robert, 2004).

CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS

In 2006, China celebrated the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties with Africa. Hu Jintao, former President of China, believes that China-African cooperation presents a win-win opportunity. On the other hand, Wen Jiabao, former Prime Minister of China, categorically denies that China-African cooperation is being conducted to the detriment of development of African countries. The Chinese leadership has defended that China-Africa relationship is born out of historical friendship, equality, common development, mutual support, and mutually beneficial cooperation. During Xi Jinping's first trip to Africa as China's president, Xi started his speech thus, "my dear friends", he referred to the mutually beneficial co-operation between China and Africa and labelled the nature of the bilateral relationship as "sincere friendship". Africa shifted away from the traditional partners- primarily the United States and the European Union toward Asian, particularly China.

China has emerged as an important and dynamic export destination for Africa. China now has established embassies in more African countries than do the United States or any European country. In 2009, China overtook the United States to become Africa's largest trading partner. China investment in Africa has skyrocketed in recent years. China finances more infrastructure projects in Africa than the World Bank. China provides billions of dollars in low-interest loans to Africa. Ordinary people across the planet now view China more warmly than they do to the United States. Polls taken by the Program on International Policy Attitudes and the BBC show that majorities of people in most countries today consider China to be a more positive influence and less of a threat to international peace than the United States is. (Newsweek Staff, 2007; Pigato and Tang, 2015; Nuhu, 2014; Focac (2006)

African nations are searching for alternative partners, and the Chinese partnership is obviously an attractive one, particularly because the Chinese and Africans feel that they are linked by a common history as victims of the imperialism and colonialism. There is general tendency to put more trust in the kind of cooperation proposed by the Chinese, not only because their model has proved to be effective in restoring status to a continent that has been literally carved up by Western powers, but also because China has acquired additional legitimacy by distinguishing itself in several ways from European Union and United States. The Chinese government promotes investment in Africa through concessional loans, commercial loans, and regular and preferential export buyer's credits. From 2009 to 2012, China provided \$10 billion in financing to Africa in the form of "Concessional loans". During Chinese president Xi Jinping's first oversea trip to Africa in March 2013, this commitment was renewed and increased to \$20 billion during three years between 2012 and 2015. Although the economic interactions and cultural exchanges between China and Africa go back many centuries, then contemporary Sino-Africa relationship began with the formal establishment of diplomatic ties with African nations in 1950s. Indeed the foundation stone of China-Africa relations was laid in 1955 at the Asian-African Conference (the Bandung Conference) held in Indonesia from April 18 to April 24, 1955. Today, China has diplomatic and economic ties with 53 countries in Africa. China's relationship with Africa is based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence. The establishment of the People's Republic of China and the independence of African countries unveiled contemporary China-Africa relationship (Chun, 2013; Xinhua, 2007; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2008).

At the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Summit, President Hu Jintao pointed out that, "During the past five decades, the Chinese and African people have forged close unity, and our friendship has flourished... Today, China-Africa friendship is deeply rooted in the hearts of our two peoples, and our friendship has endured the test of time and changes in the world. This is because we have never strayed from the principle of enhancing friendship, treating each other as equals, extending mutual support and promoting common development in building our ties". Contemporary China-Africa relationship has gone through three stages since diplomatic relations were first established in 1956. The first phase, or the beginning stage, started from 1956 and ended in 1979. During this period, owing to polarity and Cold War, China-Africa relationship was political in nature. Between 1980 and 1999 was the second phase of China-Africa relationship. The focus of China-Africa relationship started to shift from politics to economy. The third phase,

or the mature stage of China-Africa relationship, started in 2000. The establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) provides an institutionalized strategic platform for the strengthening of two-way exchanges, communication and cooperation. In 2006, the Chinese government published the African Policy Paper, in which it proposed to establish and develop a new strategic partnership with African countries featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges (Newsweek Staff, 2007; Pigato and Tang, 2015; Nuhu, 2014; Focac, 2006).

China-Africa relations have progressed significantly since the end of the Cold War. In 2006, the Chinese government declared that China will unswervingly carry forward the tradition of China-Africa friendship, and proceeding from the fundamental interests of both Chinese and African peoples, establish and develop a new type of strategic partnership with Africa. China has attached great importance of friendly cooperation with African countries since its Open-up and Reform policy at the end of the 1970s. For the last six decades, cultural exchanges have also increased between China and Africa, which has helped to promote cooperation. As of 2005, China entered into 62 inter-governmental agreements on cultural exchanges and cooperation with 45 African countries, under which the two sides have organized over 200 cultural exchange delegations and hosted hundreds of cultural or art exchange events. Contrary to the conventional perception that China is interested only in Africa's natural resources, China's interests in Africa include at least four dimensions of national interest: political, economic, security and ideological. China seeks to satisfy four broad national interests in its relations with the Africa continent. Politically, China seeks Africa's support for China's "One China" policy and for its foreign policy agendas in multilateral forums such as the United Nations. Economically, Africa is seen primarily as a source of natural resources and market opportunities to fuel China's domestic growth. From a security standpoint, the rising presence of Chinese commercial interests in Africa has led to growing security challenges for China, as the safety of Chinese investments and personnel come under threats due to political instability and criminal activities on the ground. Last but not least, China also sees an underlying ideological interest in Africa, as the success of the "China model" in non-democratic African countries offers indirect support for China's own political ideology and offers evidence that Western democratic ideals are not universal. As the 54 African countries account for more than one-quarter of UN member States, China has relied on their support at the UN for its political agenda. Today, on issues ranging from human rights to UN reform, from regional security to China's core national interest, China looks to Africa to be on its side (Sun, 2014; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2008; Hongming, 2006; Anshan, 2008; Yangyong, 2008).

BENEFITS OF CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS

It is an undeniable fact that the Chinese boom has brought lots of benefits to Africa. Africa has always been known for its inadequate public infrastructure that has hindered its economic development and a lack of financial resources and technical expertise has prevented them to improve its existing infrastructure. China's assistance covers nearly all the 53 countries and in areas such as public utilities, transportation, housing, public health and energy sector. China also gives grants and interest-free loans to African countries. These forms of assistance are provided primarily for the realization of large and medium-sized infrastructure projects, which

focus on Africa's development and improvement of people's livelihood. These cover building of roads, airports, schools, hospitals, power station and water reservoir. January 2012 marked the opening of the African Union (AU) Headquarters in Addis Abeba, a 20-storey tower dominating the capital city of Ethiopia. The imposing tower cost \$200 million and the project was funded by China as a gift to the AU -“China's gift to Africa”. The new African Union headquarters are thus one of the landmarks of the long-term partnership between China and Africa (Khooblall, 2014).

According to the China-Africa Research Center, Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in *China-Africa Trade and Economic Relationship Annual Report 2010*, China's assistance to Africa has always focused on Africa's development, people's livelihood and capacity building. Since 2000, China has assigned a high priority to assisting Africa to achieve the UN millennium development goals (MDGs). Fostering progress toward these goals, the FOCAC action plan laid a solid foundation for the overall expansion of China's assistance to Africa. I try to elicit China's assistance to Africa from the report as follows:

1. China helped Africa with a variety of light industrial, agricultural, social welfare and infrastructure projects, such as the Tazara Railway. In 1955, China purchased 13,000 tons of cotton from Egypt, helping the country resist economic sanctions imposed by western countries. In 1956, China provided Egypt with a grant of 20 million Swiss francs to help it reclaim the Suez Canal. That action marked China's first direct economic assistance to Africa. In 1963, China sent a medical team to Algeria, the first time China provided such medical assistance to Africa.
2. China organized African Commodities Exhibition at home, reducing or exempting both fees and domestic freight charges for African exhibitors. In addition, Chinese trade missions went to Africa to help increase the continent's exports to China, China also developed training programs for African inspection and quarantine officials to promote China-Africa cooperation on quality control. With a view to facilitating balanced trade between the two sides, China also promoted air travel, ocean shipping, financial and tourism services, and encourage Chinese citizens to visit African countries.
3. China has made a sizeable investment in Africa. According to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, by the end of 2008, Chinese investors had set up around 1,600 companies in Africa, while the cumulative Chinese direct investment net stock reached 7.8 billion USD, which is 4.2 percent of China's total outward direct investment stock. Investing in Africa not only spurs the growth of Chinese firms but also allows Africa to upgrade industrial technology, boost employment, increase foreign exchange earnings, improve lives, and promote socio-economic development.
4. Chinese businesses have made a concerted effort to demonstrate social responsibility, to support environmental protection, and to carry out public welfare endeavors. For example, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) has donated 50 million USD to Sudan for the construction of hospitals, schools, boreholes, roads and bridges that will collectively benefit more than 2 million local people. It has also helped to build the world's largest

biodegradable waste water treatment facility in Sudan's block 1/2/4 oil fields to eliminate the discharge of effluents.

5. China Nonferrous Metal Mining (Group) Company Ltd. invested over 1 million USD in Zambia for projects on preventing such diseases as AIDS, malaria and polio, and on employment of women and education of children. It also helped build the China-Zambia friendship hospital. In Tanzania, Kenya, and some other countries, Beijing Holley-Cotec Pharmaceuticals Company Ltd. has established a scholarship program to support impoverished local medical students who maintain excellent academic records. In Kenya, the firm has set up a fund to protect local wild animals.
6. In addition to the construction of houses, roads, and bridges, Chinese firms now obtain contracts for water conservation, hydropower, petrochemical manufacturing, telecommunications, building materials, water supply systems, and agriculture.
7. Chinese has provided preferential loans and commercial loans to finance infrastructure construction in Africa. Export-Import Bank of China (China Eximbank), the China Development Bank of China (CDBC) and other financial institutions have also extended substantial commercial loans to African countries. China provides grants, interest-free and preferential loans to African countries according to their specific needs. This assistance can take the form of contract projects, the provision of material resources, technical collaboration, or expert guidance and training. By the end of 2009, China provided preferential loans to a total of 159 projects in 39 African nations, covering areas of agriculture, industry, communications and transportation, among others.
8. Chinese firms have also become major players in Africa's power generation development, completing about 30 power stations and transmission projects in African countries including Ethiopia, Kenya, Angola, Nigeria, and Sudan, among others. These projects helped to ease local power shortages.
9. On the telecommunications front, Chinese firms are equipment suppliers rather than operators in Africa. Numerous high-profile Chinese telecommunications companies, including Huawei technologies, ZTE Corporation and Alcatel-Lucent Shanghai Bell, have entered the African market. Chinese telecommunications products and services are now available to over 300 million consumers in 50 African countries. Chinese firms have constructed over forty 3G networks for more than 30 African countries, in addition to establishing national trunk optical fiber communications networks and e-government networks for over 20 African countries.
10. Through collaborative efforts, Chinese firms have not only provided Africa with good infrastructure at a low cost, but have also trained a large number of African technicians and workers. According to rough estimates, through the end of 2008, Chinese contractors in Africa had employed more than 110,000 local people, trained 54,000 local employees, made donations worth a total of 55.51 million USD, and built 218 kilometers of roads, 15 schools and 79 hospitals at no cost to the local people.

11. Since 1956, China has provided aid within its capacity to meet the needs of African nations. By the end of 2009, China had completed 884 complete plant projects in Africa, sent 17,000 medical personnel and 312 youth volunteers to Africa, trained 26,488 local people from various fields, and offered substantial resources and humanitarian assistance across the continent. In addition, the Chinese government has forgiven 312 debt repayments in 35 heavily indebted poor countries and least developed countries in Africa.
12. China's assistance to Africa covers 53 countries and spans such areas as infrastructure, housing construction, transportation, agriculture, medical care and public health, education, human resource development, clean energy, and environmental protection. Since the 2006 Beijing Summit of FOCAC, such assistance has grown significantly. Between 2006 and 2009, the amount of china's unconditional assistance and interest-free loans to African doubled. To promote the integration of African countries, China built the African Union (AU) Convention Center.
13. China has constructed farms and irrigation facilities; it has carried out technical collaboration efforts and conducted extensive training in African; it has sent both agricultural experts and agricultural machinery to African countries to boost Africa's agricultural development and food self-sufficiency. In addition, China organized extensive training on topics ranging from the cultivation of rice and vegetables, fishery management, and meat processing, to the use of agricultural machinery.
14. China has helped to build 54 hospitals and has established 30 malaria control centers in Africa. It has also provided 35 African countries with RMB 200 million of anti-malaria drugs. Medical teams sent to over 40 African countries have treated more than 200 million patients. Dozens of Chinese medical team members have sacrificed their lives in such efforts. Through training, collaborative work, seminars and workshops, Chinese medical teams have enhanced the skills of tens of thousands of Africa doctors and nurses. Many of the newly-trained African doctors have become the backbones in local hospitals.
15. China has provided training for government officials, business managers, researchers and specialized technicians on over 20 topics including economy, diplomacy, public administration, agriculture, animal husbandry, fishery management, medical care and public health, science and technology, environmental protection, and finance, China has also pledged USD 1.5 million to New partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD) for supporting its human resource training program, China's assistance to Africa has reaped remarkable results.

China's assistance to Africa helped to strengthen the friendship between the two sides, to improve Africa's ability to develop independently, and has contributed greatly to Africa's socioeconomic development. The result is a significant improvement in the lives of Africans. These assistance efforts and their results have received wide acclaim among African countries. To help Africa reduce poverty, boost economic growth and advance social welfare, China has worked to fulfill its commitments to developing countries under the framework of the UN Millennium Development

Goals. It has opened up its markets, increased its amount of aid, offered debt relief and training programs, stepped up its assistance in education, medical care and public health, and built small clean energy facilities for Africa. Furthermore, China has collaborated with strengths to assist African countries in capacity building. Each year since the Beijing Summit of FOCAC, the Chinese government has sent youth volunteers to Africa to provide training on computer science, physical education, public health, agriculture, etc. In 2009, 187 youth volunteers went to 17 African nations, including Mauritania, Morocco and maintaining local information technology systems, offering medical care, training agricultural technicians, improving seed varieties, and teaching applicable agricultural production technologies. Recognizing China's efforts, in July 2008, the World Bank published a report entitled *Building Bridges: China's Growing Role as Infrastructure Financier for Sub-Saharan Africa*. This report indicated that China's finance often goes to large-scale infrastructure projects, with a particular focus on hydropower generation and railways. Chinese finance is on a scale large enough to make a material contribution toward meeting Africa's vast infrastructure needs. As such, it offers an important development opportunity for the region (Foster et'al, 2009).

There are some interesting moments that make the Chinese presence in Africa beneficial for the African economy. Firstly, in an effort to promote trade with the continent, China removed tariffs on around 500 imports and most African exports now receive duty-free access to China's market. Secondly, Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) activities are quite different from those which come from North America or the EU. China's FDI in Africa is more heavily undertaken by either partially or wholly state-owned enterprises, which means that the objective is not simply making short term profits, but also forming long-lasting relationships with the region. Thirdly, behind Chinese commitment to development and poverty alleviation programs for the continent there is no political interest or linkage of aid to African recipients to some values or specific development models for African countries. That is why China is so welcomed by many African governments (Turkina, 2013).

ACCUSATIONS AND CRITICISMS AGAINST CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS

Chinese Vice-Minister of Information, Wang Guoqing once said at a media seminar for African journalists in Beijing, China in 2012: "We know that there are some people who do not like our relationship. These people often try hard to demonize the relationship." But given the growing relations between China-Africa over the past years, it puzzles my mind as to why the press has chosen to wear blinkers in its coverage of China-Africa yet other relations such as Africa-Europe, Africa-America or China-Europe have never come under intense scrutiny or have been grossly misrepresented by the media. Worse still, this misrepresentation is happening at a time when China-Africa relations are now "too big for anyone to ignore or even misrepresent" (Sikuka, 2013). The 21st century has witnessed growing economic relations between China and Africa, however, the blooming relationship between China and Africa continues to receive its own share of negative attention from the most westerners, some Africans and media. Western countries have been the main source of accusations that China is a neo-colonist in Africa. For example, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently warned against a "new colonialism in Africa," in which it is "easy to come in, take out natural resources, pay off leaders and leave." It was a veiled jab at China, according to the *Guardian*, a UK newspaper. But Ms. Clinton's point echoed across the continent,

and it appears that African leaders are now treading cautiously. Nigerian Central Bank Governor Lamido Sanusi criticized China's engagement in Africa publicly in the *Financial Times*. His most quoted charge says "China takes from us primary goods and sells us manufactured ones. This was also the essence of colonialism." (Reuters, 2009; Blair, 2007; Sanusi, 2013).

While it is easy to conclude that China is taking over and 'colonizing' Africa when one sees 'Made in China' goods in every African marketplace and Chinese construction crews on seemingly every construction site, it is easy to forget that Chinese goods and labor are able to entering the African marketplace amicably, rather than the historical model by which Beijing would be sailing a warship up to the coast and forcing African governments to accept trade. In fact, Chinese goods and companies are possible in Africa because WTO efforts over the past two decades have decreased trade tariffs and opened up the African marketplace. Ironically, therefore, it is not a 'colonialist' China, but the WTO that set the playing field for Africa as an attractive opportunity for China (Kuo, 2015).

According to the Washington Post (2015) in an article titled *Many in the West fear Chinese 'aid' to Africa. They're wrong. Here's why* by Axel Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Brad Parks, Paul Raschky and Michael Tierney: We find no evidence that China favors authoritarian or corrupt regimes (so-called "rogue states") when it allocates official development assistance (ODA). Nor does China seem to take natural resource considerations into account when committing ODA to African states. Instead, we find that Chinese ODA to Africa is strongly oriented toward poorer countries. Beijing seems to consider demand-side humanitarian and socioeconomic needs when making ODA allocation decisions. We also find evidence that China rewards foreign policy support from its aid recipients. These findings, when taken together, suggest that Chinese ODA is allocated much as is that from Western donors.

TESTIMONIES OF CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS

As cited in Zoumara and Ibrahim (2013), "Notwithstanding, some analysts see the relations as positive commitment to the development of Africa (Rotberg, 2008; Eisenman and Kurlantzick, 2006). Even though some have highlighted the weakness of the relations and concluded that it was pernicious (Alessi and Hanson, 2012), thorough and objective analyses show that the engagement is still deepened. Indeed, the partnership is largely appreciated on the African continent as it has boosted its growth (Li, 2007). Under-developed several years ago, as majority of African countries were, China succeeded in breaking through the ranks of major economic and industrial powers and made positive impact (Li et al. 2012). It is therefore, not surprising that African leaders continue to seek ways to develop their countries with the assistance of China, especially and rightly so, as conditions imposed by Africa's traditional donors did not lead to any definitive economic independence." No wonder the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, in striking and metaphorically speaking stated that "We are returning to the days when our greatest friends were the Chinese. We look again to the East, where the sun rises, and no longer to the West, where it sets". The former President of Nigeria, Olusengun Obasanjo testifies thus: "The 21st century is the century for China to lead the world. And when you are leading the world, we want to be close behind you. When you are going to the moon, we don't want to be left behind".

CONCLUSION

It is undoubtedly obvious that China-Africa relations have both advantages and disadvantages but its advantages are greater than the disadvantages. Despite the accusations and criticisms against China-Africa relationship, the relationship is growing positively daily. From the evidences of assistance to Africa from China and positive testimonies from Africa leaders, China remains a good friend of Africa. However, Africa has a role to play for this relationship and friendship to be successful and strong. While China has a clear and strategic policy for Africa, Africa as a united force has no unified policy for its relations with China. Indeed, it is a worrying situation for a relation that is supposed to be based on mutual values in terms of cooperation, trust and development to lack this key ingredient. Each African country therefore, pursues the relation based on its unique needs and development agenda resulting in weak bargaining power in certain aspects and attracting less developmental projects from China. Therefore, Africa must necessarily develop a coherent and structured plan in successfully asserting its political, economic and social ties with China. It must avoid repeating some of the mistakes committed in its past relations with its traditional development partners (Zoumara and Ibrahim, 2013).

Over the last decade, the China-Africa relationship has been dictated by China's interest in Africa's natural resources. But for African countries to maximize the potential benefits from this partnership African governments must articulate their own comprehensive China Policy which should include strategies for engagement beyond natural resources. China will remain an important trading partner for Africa over the next decade. Therefore, Africa should look for ways to leverage its relationships with China in order to increase productivity in the natural resources and mining sectors, and to diversify into other sectors. In the years to come, Africa could benefit from more meaningful exchanges with in a number of areas, including infrastructure development, technology transfer, job creation, institution building and even international aid reform. However, a clear policy framework for engagement with China is needed (Songwe and Moyo, 2012).

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