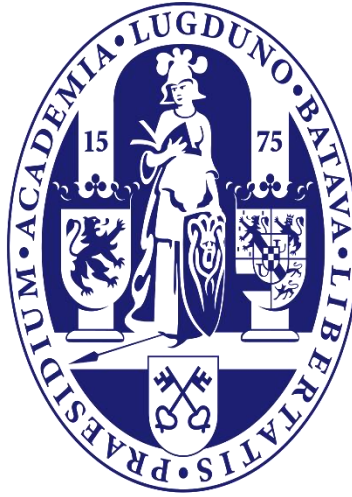


Pamela Carslake  
S2103575

# Sino-African relations: The Economic and Political Influence of China in sub-Saharan Africa.



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Pamela Adwoa Carslake

S2103575

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Supervisor: Dr. Karen Smith

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

China is rapidly increasing its presence in the African continent, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. China's burgeoning economic presence in the continent, based on trade, aid and investments has resulted in its surpassing of the United States, as Africa's largest trading partner in 2009 (Albert:2017). Modern China's active engagement in sub-Saharan Africa, dates to the 1950's. China's involvement at the time, was purely ideologically motivated. Anti-colonial liberation movements in Africa were supported and funded by China, to limit the influence of the West and the Soviet Union. Africa therefore served as a battleground between the three spheres, for ideological influence. Sino-African relations have since taken a more economic turn. The forum on China-Africa cooperation (FOCAC) was consequently set up in 2000, as a cooperating mechanism to strengthen China-Africa political and economic relations (Jianbo and Hongming:2014). China's African policy is welcomed by African leaders because it places equality at the forefront of this cooperation. Additionally, similar historical experiences with imperialism has helped in forging and maintaining this south-south relation.

Nonetheless, China's presence in sub-Saharan Africa has attracted criticisms from the West, and similarly from certain African elites, for neo-colonialism. Former Zambian leader, Michael Sata, expressed concerns over neo-colonial ambitions of China regarding Africa's wealth of natural resources during Zambian elections in 2011 (Langan 2017: p95). His subsequent electoral victory by tapping into anti-Chinese sentiments, (Albert 2017) underscores the rife nature of these sentiments, due to issues such as unfair labour practices and environmental concerns in some sub-Saharan African countries. Evidently, African elites are also not all on the same page, regarding the role China's presence play in the development of sub-Saharan Africa. Some scholars have also accused China of neo-colonialism, depicting China's investment in the continent as a second scramble for Africa. This bipolarisation of attitudes concerning the engagements of China in that region of the African continent, is the driving force behind my interest in this topic.

China's engagement in the sub-Saharan Africa, besides the political and economic, further raises questions and concerns on environmental sustainability, and the consequences of the actions of the Chinese, on the environment. Chinese firms have invested in sectors such as mining, energy, fishing amongst others. Their environmental practises on the continent however, especially in these areas have been widely criticised. Chinese investors do little to promote environmental sustainability, which would promote stable, long-term growth in the continent. Their actions regarding sustainability, feeds into the narrative of only having their vested interest in mind—exploiting the continents natural resources, whilst disregarding the environmental pollution and its impact on the country and citizens. Individual sub-Saharan African countries' approach regarding environmental protection greatly differs. In countries without good, strong and democratic political institutions, China and other investors, get to continue with their actions, with no ramifications. This is due to bribery and corruption; 'they go straight to the top officials and bribe them lavishly, and then nobody can stop them' (Laurance, 2017). Laurance (2017) additionally assert that Chinese foreign investors and firms, are prevalent in poorer countries, with weak environmental regulations and control. It could therefore be concluded that China exploits poor and dependant countries, with bad governance and weak political institutions; they do not hold them accountable for their actions.

Many literature written regarding Sino-African relations, consistently portray China as the dominant actor, giving little to no acknowledgement on the role of African agency in engaging with China. There are African actors such as business and political elites, actively exerting agency by carving opportunities from Chinese presence in Africa. They are doing so by shaping the nature of the relations and engagement, to advance their interests (Mohan & Lambert 2012: p106). This highlights the fact that Chinese presence may not exactly be a zero-sum game for all Africans.

Authors such as Brown (2012: p1894) view Africa as a continent with rising agency, and not just a passive actor in the international atmosphere as before. He cites the African Union, in terms of its membership numbers, as an organisation which can be very influential, in regard to exerting a lot of agency in the international arena. Nonetheless, the structural and political weakness of the organisation- hosting 54 diverse countries with dissimilar needs, interests, types of government, etc has made it impossible to act as unit in negotiating China's engagement in the continent.

Mohan & Lambert (2012: p110) backs this up by asserting that space for African agency varies so much that it is impossible to homogenise it outside of particular contexts. Collective negotiation could have placed the continent in a stronger bargaining position with China, as a single and united bloc. It could therefore be argued that economic and political diversity of African countries, coupled with limitations and weakness of the regional bloc, have restricted the agency of African states, in engaging effectively and as a collective with external actors in Africa. This goes to show that Africa is only united in exerting agency in the international arena, only when interests of all the countries are aligned- an example being in the issues of peace and security. This paper will be more focused on the agency, exercised by the national governments. This is due to in this case, China engaging at the state level in Africa on a bilateral basis. The principle of sovereignty enables the leader of the country to have legitimate authority over decisions and actions they take, in the interest of the country's development. The bilateral nature of China's engagement in the continent, as Brown (2012: p1892) states, leaves Africa's assertiveness in dealing with China, in the hands and influence of political leaders of individual countries.

It is evident that the ramifications China's presence in sub-Saharan Africa is not as black and white; consequences of China's engagements are also multifaceted. There are both positives and negative of China's presence in Africa, as the literature highlights. What this thesis will shed light on, is how or the role governments can play in mitigating the negative effects of China's engagement in their countries, to take advantage of the opportunity being presented to them from the engagement between the two parties. Taking all of this account into consideration, it leads me to my research question—

**Is China's presence exploitative in nature or conducive for economic development and bolstering of good political institutions in sub-Saharan Africa?**

Much literature has been written about the zero-sum game and the disadvantage of China's presence, to the African continent. Some scholars and have accused China of neo-colonialism, depicting China's investment in the continent as a second scramble for Africa. Langan (2017: p40), argues that China's use of aid and trade to sway African elites towards certain policies, to advance their own interests can be viewed in the lens of neo-colonialism; giving weight to the accusation. Additionally, China's attention to sub-Saharan Africa has been perceived as opportunistic —

exploiting weaker states in its quest for natural resources, by using economic leverage for their profitability, with little consideration for Africa's needs. The nature of China's activities has also raised some doubts over their intentions, by young educated Africans and some African leaders. Nevertheless, many scholars recognise the potential and importance of China's presence, in opening up new opportunities for sub-Saharan Africa's development. What certain of them are mindful of, is the continent's ability to use the opportunities to their advantage, to avoid being exploited by China through the economic and infrastructural investments.

China pumps billions into sub-Saharan African countries through trade and investments. Alden et al (2008: p14) highlights the fact that how the revenues would be spent, depends on the government. They additionally have the power to decide on the degree to which resource extraction is sustainable, and the degree to which the citizens profit. The degree of importance in the role of the government in the economic and political development of their country cannot be understated. Taking this into account, I have come up with a hypothesis, on which to base my research on — **China's presence being conducive to sub-Saharan Africa's economic and political development, is contingent on the agency of the respective government vis a vis China**

The angle from which I am tackling this research is important, due to the numerous written literature on China's engagement in Africa, but mostly focusing on the activities of China, in hindering of its development. My research will focus on the role of some African leaders and political structures, in hindering the economic and political development of the African continent. This research will aim to explain and understand why there is a stark contrast between certain countries in Africa like Ghana and Equatorial Guinea, with active Chinese engagements in the region, in terms of economic and political development. There are some questions to look into, to help validate my hypothesis and answer my overarching research question

- Does the type of governance in place, play a role in the agency of leaders in their relations with China?
- What is the power dynamics in the Sino-African relations: does power really lie with China? Or does Africa have the leveraging power?
- Do the Sino-African relations truly provide mutual benefits to both parties?

- Is China's guiding principles, underpinning foreign relations in Africa hindering or promoting economic and political development?

## **Methodology**

This research will be undertaken using qualitative method of research. Focused comparison will be used. Two sub-Saharan African countries will be sampled for a multiple case study; Ghana and Equatorial Guinea. One of the countries sampled is known to be a democratic country; the other, an authoritarian regime. Ghana has been chosen because it is stable and deemed as democratic countries, participating in free and fair elections. Ghana is rich in resources, with gold and cocoa being the biggest export commodities. Nonetheless, according to the Observatory for Economic Complexity (OEC), resources such as manganese and aluminium ore, as well as 70% of crude oil, which is the country's third most exported commodity were exported to China in 2016 – making it the top export destination of crude oil from Ghana. Similarly, the main export commodities of Equatorial Guinea are crude oil and petroleum gas. However, there is an authoritarian regime in government in the country. These countries have been selected, as they depict and reflect a variance in governance and resources. This is relevant because China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa is not the same within the countries. Every country negotiates to deals they deem beneficial. China's engagement in a resources rich country, having a positive or negative political and economic effect, depends on the political climate and type of governance in place. Data will be collected using primary (government publications, speeches, research data, interviews, etc) and secondary sources.

The limitation of sampling 2 countries for this research is the narrowing of scope in a vast sub-Saharan African region of over 40 countries. It will provide a more in-depth analysis than in breadth overview of the countries in the sub-Saharan area of the continent. Additionally, due to time constraints, there is no possibility of doing field work.

## **Overview: Sino-Africa historical relations**

The Bandung conference of 1955 marked the start of official relations and cooperation between Africa and China. During this period, China's motivation for establishing relations was purely ideologically motivated. This was the period of decolonisation and the struggle against



imperialism. China saw Africa as allies in the fight against western imperialism and hegemony, based on their shared experience of it. As a result of this common struggle, as stated by Anshan (2007: p70), China positioned itself at the forefront of revisionism, as well as the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle in the Third World. Enfan (1997 cited in Haifang p54) additionally gives weight to this viewpoint- he points out China's calls during the Bandung conference for an establishment of cultural and economic ties between African and Asian countries, to destroy the historical legacies of colonialism and imperialism.

China in this period, viewed Africa as a friend and this friendship underpinned their relations. This friendship manifested itself through economic assistance to African countries, despite still being a developing country. Furthermore, they provided support for liberation movement amongst others (Men & Barton 2011: p7). In turn, through the cultivation of friendly and brotherly relations between China and Africa, through their shared colonial and imperialist past, China was able to gain the support of African countries to join the United Nations in 1971 (Men & Barton 2011: p7). China's engagement in Africa in the 1960s during the Cold war was seen as expansionist and aggressive by the West - a similar comparison to the Chinese current engagement. This was particularly so in the midst of Sino-Soviet competition in Africa. China was considered a threat at the time, and was seen as characterising expansionist and aggressive behaviour, by attempting to bring Chinese communism to Africa. Larkin (1971: p8 cited in Large p:51) argues that the driving force behind China's role in Africa during decolonisation period, was driven by ideological commitment to world revolution.

There has been a clear shift in the nature of Sino-African relations; it is evident when the relationship during the period of decolonisation is compared to what has been currently established. China's relations with Africa from the mid-1950s to 1970s was purely political/ideological than anything else (Anshan 2007: p73). Since the 1990s, China's engagement in Africa has shifted to being more economic than political. This change is due to China's rising appetite for energy and raw materials, which the African sub-Saharan region of the continent can provide. China's shift to an energy exporter country, paved way for new relations with Africa, based on trade and investments. Men & Barton (2011: p7) highlight the change in relations, as they assert that China has since adjusted itself from being Africa's friend to being Africa's partner.

Nonetheless, what has not been changed since the beginning of the cooperation between sub-Saharan Africa and China are the core principles, underpinning China's foreign affairs relations with Africa, since the Bandung conference. The principles which include equality, non-interference, respect of sovereignty, mutual benefit and co-development (Anshan 2007: p74) are the core guiding principles of Sino-African relations. They have proven to be popular among many African leaders to date, due to the shared colonial and imperialist past.

Nevertheless, the principle of non-interference by China has opened up the country to criticism by the West, for fostering and strengthening authoritarian governments' hold on power, by engaging with such governments.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Brown's (2012) work on African agency, will serve as a lens to validate my hypothesis, as well as help answer my overarching research question. Brown (2012) in his 'A Question of Agency: Africa in international politics' article, shifts the focus from the usual rhetoric of Africa being a passive actor in the international realm, to focus on the exertion of agency by African actors. This is relevant to this research, as it also focuses on the agency of African governments, in relation to cooperation in particularly sub-Saharan Africa.

Brown (2012, p:1892) highlights that the degree of African assertiveness is dependent and majorly influenced by key political leaders. It shows the importance of the role of state leaders, regarding state agency. As Brown (2012, p:1892) states, African state leaders have the role of 'defining and mediating the external expression of state preferences'. This ties in with the work of Wight (2009, p:189) on agency, which emphasises on the role of individuals in relation to state agency.

Both Brown (2012) and Wight (2009) therefore acknowledge the human aspect of state agency, and view individuals as crucial in how a state exerts agency. This dimension to state agency will be explored, to validate my hypothesis on the essence of government agency in ensuring China's presence brings about political and economic development. And additionally, the extent to which individual agency may play a role in the exertion of government agency. Brown (2012, p:1901) points out further the essence of the role of political leaders in exerting agency in the international realm. He highlights the need to explore the different models of governance in largely sub-Saharan Africa, to understand African international politics. He posits that the agency of individual leaders

is 'shaped by the relationships of power between governments and their societies' (2012, p:1901). Brown calls attention to the fact that some African leaders search for funds for national development and need for regime security is a regular characteristic of African international politics, which leads to regimes being dependent on 'clientelist-type political relations' (2012, p:1902). This is relevant to this paper, as it aims to draw a link between the type of governance and how it shapes engagement with China.

Brown's work will therefore serve as a basis to answer the question of whether the nature of China's engagement is politically and economically beneficial or exploitative, by exploring the role of agency of African governments, as well as individual agency vis a vis relation with China.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

There are a lot of existing literature on the nature of Sino-African relations. Nonetheless, most seem to take the stance of China's presence in Africa, being more to China's advantage than Africa's, and driven by self-interest. These literature are of course written mainly by western authors, who may be cynical about China's involvement in the continent; even if the cooperation has boosted developmental work and investments in the region. This review will look at the different literature, written on the positive and negative implications of China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Overview: China's current engagement in sub-Saharan Africa**

- **Motivating factors behind China's shift to sub-Saharan Africa**

Many scholars acknowledge that China's engagement in Africa has mainly been economic in nature; trade, aid and investments. Alden et al (2008: p6) assert that China's engagement in Africa is rooted in domestic economic and political changes in China. Africa being a potential emerging market was viewed as a market to tap into. Taylor (2010: p71) further supports this argument, as he maintains that China's expansion into Africa was propelled by its need for raw materials and energy for China's ongoing economic growth, and for new export markets for Chinese producers

and traders. Rotberg (2008, p:1) also sustains that China's quest for sources of energy and raw materials such as copper, oil, etc., which African nations can supply, drove it to the continent. Sino-African relations, although primarily economically motivated, is also driven by international political factors. For instance, as a prerequisite for Chinese relations to be established with any African country, said country needs to have cut off diplomatic ties with Taiwan—the One China Principle. This is relevant to China, due to its need to rally support in the international realm, delegitimise Taiwan. China's attention to the sub-Saharan Africa, enables the country to form alliances with the developing nations. Taylor (2006: p3) contends that African countries are influential in the United Nations. Africa is therefore important to China, to provide a large support base to push through their ambitions. Chao (1986: p21 cited in Taylor 2006) props up this justification of international political factors being another driving force, as he asserts that the determination of China, to be a great power has propelled the Chinese leadership, to attempt to project China's presence and reputation abroad.

Previous scholars on China's foreign policy, tended to highlight the superpower factor as the main driving force behind its developing world policies; especially so after Tiananmen, when Chinese student protestors were forcibly suppressed by the army. Taylor (2006: p7) nonetheless refutes that assertion to be the case now. He maintains that expansion into Africa cannot be reduced to being principally reactive, or a part to challenge the bipolar global hegemony; particularly so after China's continued involvement in Africa, in what he perceives to be a multi-polar world, post-communism. Rotberg (2008, p:9) further backs up Taylor's argument, as he takes the same stance. He posits that China is not using its engagement in Africa to score political points in the battle for global hegemony; but to form loyal alliances, who would back the country's global agenda. This is evidenced in African countries backing of China's application for a seat in the Security Council.

### **What is in it for sub-Saharan Africa?**

There is an ongoing debate about the impacts of China's presence in sub-Saharan Africa. There is no doubt that sub-Saharan Africa has found itself in a potentially economically beneficial position from this co-operation. This area of the continent's engagement with China, as posited by Gadzala and Hanusch (2010: p2) is well regarded by some, as the partnership needed to right the imbalances of the international economic system, which has propagated the marginalisation of African countries. Despite this, most literature focus on the negative narrative, as many scholars believe

the negative impacts outweigh the positives. They are of the belief that the nature of Chinese engagement in Africa is more profitable to China. Some scholars put forward the argument that the Sino-African relations is more beneficial to China, as they are more concerned with the extraction of natural resources and raw materials than the sustainable economic and political development of the continent. Adem (2010, p:335) presents three elements of thoughts, dominating the discussion on China's increasing presence and its long-term impacts in Africa. They are Sino-scepticism, Sino-optimism and Sino-pessimism. The Sino-sceptics views China's engagement as neo-colonial in nature and its effects; the Sino-optimists perceive the relations to be positive whilst Sino-pessimists see China's engagement as a roadblock to overcome dependency and underdevelopment, as China would only perpetuate them. It is clear attitudes towards China's engagement in the continent is evidently polarised. Both the positive and negative implications of Chinese engagement, as argued by different scholars shall be reviewed in this section.

Most African leaders generally appear to welcome China's presence in their countries, due to the principle of equality being at the forefront of their foreign policy. China is viewed as a trusting partner, in comparison to the west. As van Dijk (2009: p15) argues, China presents itself as a developing country which wants to create a mutually beneficial relationship, different from the imperialist European model. Men and Barton (2011) additionally back up this reasoning, as they assert that China adjusted itself to being Africa's partner, so both parties could reap the benefits of co-operation as partners.

Furthermore, non-interference in sovereign states, which is a key principle in Chinese foreign policy, has been very appealing to African elites. Especially so with the constraints and impositions that come with economic relations with the west. Taylor (2007: p139) states that the emphasis on state sovereignty and non-interference have consequently been positions, warmly welcomed by various African leaders. The no-strings attached policy of the Beijing consensus (Van Dijk, 2009: p10) has been an attractive alternative to the Washington consensus, due to the perceived mutual equality and respect given to African countries in running their own affairs. China's Beijing consensus for economic development, treats African countries as sovereign and independent nations; it does not generate a sense of inferiority nor the perception of a continuation of imperialism as the Washington consensus does, among African governments. As Taylor (2010:

p76) posits, engagement with China is seen as a point of departure from western neo-colonialism and political conditions.

However, Alden et al (2008: p21-22) highlight the consequences of China's non-interference principle on good governance in the continent. It has led to Chinese unconditional aid and engagements in countries with authoritarian regimes, such as Sudan and Zimbabwe for instance; attracting worldwide criticisms. It can be deduced from their dealings with such regimes that China only has its self-interest at heart, and willing to support authoritarian regimes to profit from their natural resources. Additionally, efforts to promote good governance and upholding human rights of Africans, all a part of political development is being discouraged, due to being economically bolstered by China's engagement.

Scholars such as Taylor (2006: p18) point out however, that China's foreign policy of non-interference is not particular to Africa. It is not up to China to impose good governance, which they perceive as neo-imperialism, in Africa— It is therefore dependent on African leaders and institutions, to promote political development in the continent.

Chinese trade and investments have been hailed as a brilliant opportunity for Africa's development. For instance, China's engagement in Ghana, resulted in an increase of Chinese exports, totalling \$1.512 billion in 2008 as well as a construction of infrastructures such as roads, dams, etc (Hess and Aidoo: 2015). Rotberg (2008, p:3) also gives weight to this reasoning, as he sustains that China has become Africa's largest investor, trader, buyer and aid donor; touching on the opportunities China presents to Africa. Nonetheless, as Van Dijk (2009, p:201) asserts, mainly raw materials are exported to China; imports from China, also consist mainly of manufactured products. This situation however poses some challenges to economic development because the influx of cheap manufactured goods from China, undermine African producers. It provides stiff competition in local markets. It may in turn, derail diversification of African economies (Alden et al, 2008: p39). Thus, reliance on China and other countries for manufactured goods.

Chinese infrastructural and developmental projects in Africa has been acknowledged as being beneficial in stimulating economic growth. Scholars like Men and Barton (2011) view the infrastructural development as an opportunity for Africa to attract investors and potentially diversify the economic sectors of African countries. Cropley (2009 cited in Men and Barton:2011)

further asserts that poor infrastructure emerges as a major constraint on doing business in the continent. Infrastructure deficit had stifled trade regionally and internationally; an inconvenient to economic development. However, the infrastructure projects funded by the Chinese government, requires the work being carried out by Chinese workers. Consequently, the use of Chinese labour is a disadvantage to the country concerned; no employment is created (Van Dijk, 2009: p103). Furthermore, it doesn't give local companies and citizens an opportunity to gain capital and experience. The contracts overwhelmingly benefit Chinese corporations (Manero:2017)

China's economic presence has undoubtedly spilled over into the political. Men and Barton (2011) mention that China's involvement in Africa's construction and infrastructure sectors has been effective in building relations and increasing influence with African governments. Some scholars also posit that China is increasingly gaining economic and political clout in Africa. Langan (2017: p97) states that it is particularly so in countries where there is a relative dependence on Chinese aid and investment, such as has in Angola and Zambia.

Some scholars have subsequently accused China of neo-colonialism, due to its economic and political influence in Africa. Langan (2017: p100) argues that China's use of aid and trade to sway African elites towards certain policies, to advance their own interests can be viewed in the lens of neo-colonialism. China's attention to Africa has further been perceived as opportunistic—exploiting weaker states in its quest for natural resources, by using economic leverage for their profitability, with little consideration for Africa's needs. Certain scholars such as Rupp (cited in Rotberg 2009: p17) however sustain that China and Africa are engaging in postcolonial relations of interdependency, no matter the disparity between the economies. She bases this conclusion on China's respect for African sovereignty; coupled with its interest in Africans as consumers rather than labourers and its nurturing of relations with African countries in the international realm.

Additionally, Scholars like Broadman (2006 cited in Van Dijk 2009: p14) suggests that China's cooperation with Africa is about far more than natural resources. China according to Van Dijk (2009, p:15) presents itself as a developing country that has not come to exploit Africa, but rather create a mutually beneficial situation, with a different approach to the European model. It is however difficult to believe that when more Chinese aid is being allocated to African countries, whose economies are resources-dependent. Irrespective of the political climate in that country.

This highlights that China is possibly merely resources-driven in sub-Saharan Africa, and its engagement in a country's development is motivated by its natural resources.

China's unconditional aid and trade, in their resource-led African policy has according to Langan (2017: p99-100) helped in the maintenance of neo-patrimonial regimes in political power. China's economic interests is at the expense of popular sovereignty (Langan 2017, p100). It is so as regimes survive popular unrest, due to having China's aid to fall back on; such was the case in Zambia. This situation has resulted in scholars such as Kolstad and Wiig (2011: p46) stating in regard to Chinese and western intervention that, 'exploiting resources and weak institutions appears to be the name of the investment game in Africa'. This highlights that certain African elites are culpable in the underdevelopment of their countries.

Neo-patrimonial regimes appropriate public resources for their own benefits. In this context, China propping up said such regimes in return grants them access to the country's resources, as was the case in Angola during the Dos Santos presidency (Langan 2017, p 100). It highlights that China and corrupt African elites are happy to line their pockets at the expense of the ordinary African citizenries.

It is apparent that there is a mutual dependence on one another— China's need for raw materials and energy, which Africa can provide; Africa's need for economic and development investments, which China offers. China needs the African continent and, possibly even more so than Africa needs China. As Taylor (2010, p71) mentions, Africa's importance to China's development cannot be overstated. Regarding economic relations, China provides the continent with options. As Cheru and Obi (2010) argue, the west no longer has a monopoly on Africa's development, due to China's engagement, offering an alternative model of development. This means that sub-Saharan African countries could turn to the West or other countries, if China's model was not reaping benefits.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Case Study: Equatorial Guinea**

##### **General Introduction**

Equatorial Guinea is one of the smallest countries in Africa, and the only Spanish colony in sub-Saharan Africa (Fegley, 1989 p:10). The tiny nation in the western coast of Africa, gained their



independence from the Spanish in 1968 - after 190 years of Spanish rule. The country is one of Africa's largest producers of oil; having discovered it in the mid 1990's. This is evidenced in the country producing an average of 289,000 barrel per day in oil production in 2015 (Slav, 2017). Additionally, according to the South African Oil and Gas Alliance, in 2014, the country produced 0.41% of the world's oil production – making it the third largest producer of oil in sub-Saharan Africa at the time. Nonetheless, due to the wealth not trickling down to the masses; being concentrated in the hands of a few, the majority of Equatorial Guineans have not reaped the benefits of being an oil rich country.

### **The Political System of Equatorial Guinea**

Equatorial Guinea has been under the rulership of one family - the Nguema family since their independence in 1968. Their first president, Francisco Macias Nguema, had close links to the Spanish colonial administration, as well as Spanish and French financial entities. This close relationship with the latter was of great benefit to him, evident in him being provided with financial backing for his presidential campaign (Wood, 2004: p548). After having won the presidential elections, Nguema transformed the country into a single party state, nepotist state - high government positions were filled by family members and close friends of the president. This practice resulted in the presidency being referred to as 'Nguemism - rule by a small family elite' (Wood, 2004: p548). Equatorial Guinea undoubtedly became a terror state not long after gaining its independence. The actions of Macias Nguema during his period of presidency, which included ruling with terror and brutality, as well as suspending the constitution and usurping dictatorial powers are prime examples of how he turned the country into one of terror. President Nguema committed so many atrocities during his bloody rule, evidently impeding on the human rights of the citizens of the country. According to Genocide Watch (2012), his rule led to about a third of the population being exiled or murdered, especially targeting a specific ethnic group - the Bubi people.

The brutality and terror under Nguema continued until he was overthrown by his nephew, Teodoro Obiang Nguema in 1979 (Frynas, 2004: p528). The end of Nguema's reign was assumed by many to be a clean slate for the country, and the ushering in of a more constitutional and democratic state, led by president Obiang. Nonetheless it is quite clear that there has not been a very massive

change between Obiang and Nguema. Power is still concentrated in the hands of the Nguema family, with corruption and human right abuses still being rife in the country. Early into the term of President Obiang's presidency, he introduced some changes which gave the impression that he was going to instigate political change, to carve a new path for Equatorial Guinea - one completely different from the terror state instated by his uncle. Wood (2004: p 549) backs this line of reasoning by highlighting president Obiang's institution of a new constitution in 1982, which permitted the holding of elections, with one being held in 1983. Additionally, he states of the legislation of multi-party politics in 1991 by president Obiang - which was only implemented as a reaction to western pressure. The liberalisation of politics in the country was an agenda, pushed by Western donors. However, as Esteban (2009: p 672) expresses, president Obiang reverted those policies after the discovery of oil. He was and still is in a position to leverage oil against the West.

President Obiang has played a massive role in the political underdevelopment of the country. This is reflected in the fact that he has been in power for over 40 years, despite the existence of several political parties besides his own. Due to this monopoly on power, president Obiang has consequently being accused by the West and even his own people, of electoral fraud and corruption (Withnall, 2016). In spite of these initial liberalisation process, President Obiang appears to be solely interested in entrenching his authority and power, and that of his family and clan - rather than being someone to spearhead the much-needed political change in Equatorial Guinea. President Obiang appears to be pursuing the ways of his uncle, although it may not necessarily be through the same means. For instance, the former president Nguema committed genocide by targeting and executing the Bubi people. Genocide Watch (2012) assert that the Bubi people, once a majority but now a minority, are still persecuted and discriminated against. They point out the denunciation of tradition by president Obiang, by refusing to appoint a member of the Bubi ethnic group as his Prime Minister, to testify to the assertion.

Politics in Equatorial Guinea has been and is still characterised by oppression, authoritarianism, corruption and nepotism since gaining independence from Spain in 1968. Freedom House, an American think tank has, with obvious reasons, placed Equatorial Guinea on its list of the world's worst regime (Birrell, 2011). The ruling party of Obiang, Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDG) has deeply embedded itself in the country's political system, as the only viable political

party to continuously win elections. President Obiang's son has been tipped to take over from him after his death; it could be concluded that there is no end in sight to the Nguema family rule of the country. The political structure has been built and sustained as a family business in Equatorial Guinea, where power lies in the hands of a few elites.

### **The Economy**

Equatorial Guinea, before the discovery of oil, had a cocoa-based economy. Historically, under Spanish colonialism, cocoa was the main commodity export and the backbone of the country's economy. This tiny country, now labelled as the Kuwait of West Africa (Wood, 2004: p 547) nevertheless, during that period, although with a flourishing economy, the standards of living was very low; as McSherry (2006: p 24) points out, majority of the locals were subsistence farmers, with the service sector occupied by the Spanish and Nigerians. The economic benefits being reaped did not trickle down to the ordinary citizens. Additionally, there was little to no advancement of development and infrastructural projects; certain vital sectors such as health and education was largely ignored (McSherry, 2006: p 24). Tellingly, after the end of colonialism and the establishment of a questionably democratic government after national elections, nothing changed in regard to raising the living standards of ordinary Equatoguineans, from the impoverishment they had endured for so long.

After president Nguema had assumed power in 1968, the country's economy took a turn for the worst. He drove majority of the population back into subsistence farming, as he was more preoccupied with consolidating power than revitalising the education and health sectors (Wood, 2004: p 548). Both Wood (2004) and McSherry (2006) shine light on the power hunger of president Nguema and its lead to the downward spiral of the economy shortly after. They highlight Nguema's purge to usurp power, together with his expulsion of Nigerian workers and Spanish expatriates, resulted in a 90% fall in GDP. The fall of the GDP was not the sole consequence of Nguema's actions; Frynas (2004: p 528) further supports the argument, as he asserts that Nguema's reign transformed the country into a one-party, pro-soviet state, and led to the decline of the cocoa sector, which never recovered.

The discovery of oil in Equatorial Guinea in the mid-1990s, under president Obiang has made the country highly favourable to foreign investors. The country is currently in the top five largest oil producing country in sub-Saharan Africa, and top 10 in Africa. Furthermore, its oil reserves put the country in a very good economic position; it is now categorised as a middle-income economy. According to the Human Rights Watch (2017), Equatorial Guinea has the highest per capita income in sub-Saharan Africa, reaching \$20,581 in 2013 according to the World Bank (cited in Tiezzi, 2015). Nonetheless, this does not reflect in the standard of living in the country, where over half of its population are impoverished. The government spends money on infrastructure projects which are not needed, in the face of poverty among its citizens. The Human Rights Watch (2017) accentuate the fact that the country suspiciously spends about 80% of its budget on infrastructure, when the average percentage spent on infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa is 30%. This has resulted in suspicions and accusations of the president and his associates of money laundering - the vice president, who happens to be president Obiang's son, is currently being prosecuted in France for that charge.

Despite the misallocation of funding and the lavish lifestyles of the elites running the country, not to mention the appalling human rights record of president Obiang, the country continues to enjoy amicable relationships with countries like the United States. This is evident, due to heavy US investment in the region. As stated by the US department of State (2017) regarding bilateral economic relations with Equatorial Guinea, oil companies from the US are one of the largest investors in the country. The discovery of oil has made the country less dependent on foreign donors (Frynas, 2004: p536); therefore, an effective bargaining chip for Obiang's government in dealing with foreign investors. However, with oil being the main export commodity and the economy centred around the production of oil, there has not been enough attention on economic diversity. This has subsequently led to the country becoming a commodity-dependent economy.

## **Relations with China**

### **Background**

Equatorial Guinea and China first established relations in 1970, during the term of Macias Nguema. His socialist views found him favour with China. The country's relations with China was arguably strengthened by the personal relations between Macias Nguema and the Chinese political

elites. This deduction could be derived from the discontinuance of Chinese assistance after the coup against Macias Nguema (Esteban 2010, p:674).

The cooperation after it was re-established in 1985 seemed to be an all-round one, which besides infrastructure and construction, penetrated other sectors such as health, education, etc. This is evident in the construction of the Ministry of Communications building and a broadcasting station in the country (Esteban 2010, p:236) by the Chinese, as well as the provision of Chinese experts in engineering and medicine, to help with the country's development. (Liniger-Goumax 1988, p:55). The countries continue to strengthen their all-round cooperation in the economic, technical and political domain, among other areas. The discovery of oil in Equatorial Guinea, however serves as the only change in the nature of the bilateral relations; China now providing aid and investments in exchange for primarily the oil.

### **Current relations**

Currently, the People's Republic of China, still enjoy a favourable relationship with Equatorial Guinea; there is increasing cooperation between the two countries. Esteban (2009: p 677) asserts that the cooperation is predominantly between the two political parties; the ruling party of Obiang, the PDGE and the PRC. Some of the US\$2 billion fund by the ICBC in 2015, being allocated directly to the government (Tiezzi, 2015) supports this assertion. Nonetheless, China is additionally pumping in money for Chinese Multinational corporations in the country, to support them. According to Tiezzi (2015), funds were also to be allocated to Chinese firms in Equatorial Guinea, to motivate Chinese companies to invest abroad. However, as Esteban (2009: p677) posits, due to money being often channelled through the party machinery, party members use the money for personal benefits instead. Therefore, money provided for development aid is often not always allocated to the appropriate sectors. Furthermore, China's funnelling of money through the Chinese Multinational corporations and the Equatoguinean government, ensures that the interests of the Equatoguinean political elites and that of Chinese multinationals are met. The interests of the civil society are not prioritised; therefore, do not reap the benefits of China's presence in the country.

China's presence in Equatorial Guinea comprises of trade, aid, investments and financing developmental projects in the country. There is a deepening cooperation between the two countries in these areas.

## Trade

The deepening cooperation in trade is substantiated by the Guinea Equatorial Press (2017), which highlights the sum volume of bilateral trade between them, as well as infrastructure projects financed by China in the country. According to the Guinea Equatorial Press (2017), from January to August 2017, bilateral trade between the countries reached \$1,030 million. Furthermore, contractual projects totalled a value of \$912 million, with China's non-financial direct investment reaching \$31.18 million. These figures from the bilateral trade is a clear indication of the strengthened nature of trade and cooperation between the two countries. China's huge economic presence and trade relations in Equatorial Guinea is additionally apparent, with the country signing a deal to invest \$2 billion in country in 2015 (Ventures Africa, 2015).

The table below further highlights the deep trade cooperation between the two countries, with China being the top country Equatorial Guinea imported from, and the second biggest country they exported to in 2017.

### Total Goods: Top trading partners 2017

Source Eurostat Comext - Statistical regime 4

Imports			Exports			Total trade		
Partner	Value Mio €	% Extra-EU	Partner	Value Mio €	% Extra-EU	Partner	Value Mio €	% Extra-EU
World	1,858,257	100.0	World	1,879,431	100.0	World	3,737,688	100.0
1 China	374,823	20.2	1 USA	375,845	20.0	1 USA	632,021	16.9
2 USA	256,176	13.8	2 China	198,200	10.5	2 China	573,023	15.3
3 Russia	145,094	7.8	3 Switzerland	150,813	8.0	3 Switzerland	261,220	7.0
4 Switzerland	110,407	5.9	4 Russia	86,186	4.6	4 Russia	231,280	6.2
5 Norway	77,433	4.2	5 Turkey	84,490	4.5	5 Turkey	154,251	4.1
6 Turkey	69,760	3.8	6 Japan	60,493	3.2	6 Japan	129,373	3.5
7 Japan	68,880	3.7	7 Norway	50,702	2.7	7 Norway	128,135	3.4
8 South Korea	50,017	2.7	8 South Korea	49,805	2.7	8 South Korea	99,822	2.7
9 India	44,184	2.4	9 United Arab Emi...	42,616	2.3	9 India	85,907	2.3
10 Vietnam	37,018	2.0	10 India	41,723	2.2	10 Canada	69,182	1.9
71 Equatorial Guin...	1,208	0.1	126 Equatorial Guin...	342	0.0	96 Equatorial Guin...	1,550	0.0

Source: European Union, Trade in goods with Equatorial Guinea

## Impact

However, money such as the \$2 billion is a loan by the Industrial Commercial Bank of China. It is highly doubtful that this huge loan by China, could be completely repaid by Equatorial Guinea. In the case of the loan being unable to be repaid, it is likely to be repaid to China in oil and natural

resources. This conclusion could be deducted, considering the country had in the past resorted to trading off oil to repay a loan of \$2 million, given to them by the Export-Import Bank of China in 2009 (Esteban 2009: p 675). The usefulness of the loan by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, benefitting the ordinary Equatoguinean citizen is also doubtful. This reasoning could also be deduced, considering the areas the fund will be targeted. As stated by the bank, majority of the fund will be allocated to the provision of infrastructural and financial support for not only the Equatorial Guinean government, but also to Chinese enterprises in the country (ICBC, 2015). This approach to loan repayment, raises doubts and fuels the scepticism of critics of Chinese presence in sub-Saharan Africa. Certain scholars such as Langan (2017: p95) question China's motive for being in the region, asserting that China's engagement is purely resources-driven, as well as to pursue neo-colonial ambitions. The loans for oil, used as collateral approach by China in countries like Equatorial Guinea, does nothing but confirm the suspicions these critics have of China's growing presence. With the increasing national debt of the country as stated in the IMF country report of Equatorial Guinea (2016: p49), the debt to GDP ratio of the country, rose from 6% in 2013 to 15% in 2015, with a substantial portion of the debt of 51% constituting external bilateral creditors. The IMF country report (2016: p49) also states that most of the external debt is being drawn by bilateral loan agreements with China for infrastructure projects, connected to the country's national development programme. It could be argued that China is being very strategic in giving out loans for infrastructure projects to countries, which they are aware would be unable to fully repay, mounting up their national debt in the process.

The mutual benefits of bilateral trade relations between Equatorial Guinea and China is debatable. There is a trade imbalance between the two countries, at the expense of Equatorial Guinea. As maintained by the 2017 European Union trade statistics, China being the top trading partner of the country, exported goods at the value of 374,823 million euros into the country, whereas Equatorial Guinea exported goods to China, at the value of 198, 200 million euros. This highlights the disadvantageous position of the country in terms of bilateral trade with China. It further casts doubts on the win-win cooperation, being advocated by the Chinese in relation to their engagement in sub-Saharan Africa. Due to the trade imbalance between China and Equatorial Guinea, the huge importation of Chinese goods has resulted in the flooding of the market by Chinese products. Whereas this situation has been and still is the source of impediment in the development of small businesses in other sub-Saharan countries, according to Esteban (2010, p:242) the Equatoguineans

have been accepting of the penetration of Chinese goods in their market. He sustains that it is the case, due to the high purchasing power of Chinese goods; hence not competing with the local industry (Esteban, 2010, p 242). Nonetheless, as previously briefly mentioned, the labour competition brought about by the increasing presence of Chinese enterprises, the lack of employment of the locals by these enterprises, and in the rare case of employing a local, the poor working conditions they face are the main contentions of the Equatoguineans, rather than the influx of Chinese products (Esteban, 2010: p242). The government of course appears to have turned a blind eye to China's activities in the country. China seems to have the political elites in their pockets and hence, getting away with the illegal treatment and working conditions of workers in Chinese-run enterprises in Equatorial Guinea.

Furthermore, trade with China has contributed to the creation of an oil- dependent economy, with China being the largest destination for Equatorial Guinea's oil - driven by its need for energy. The most sought-after commodity in the country by China is energy; therefore, resulting in the oil and gas sector, taking precedence in relation to bilateral trade with China. The country has become dependent on the oil and gas sector as the driving force of the economy. As asserted in the 2013 African Development Bank country report, the oil and gas sector constituted 77% of the country's GDP in 2012 and accounted for almost 100% of total exports. The dependence of the country's economy on hydrocarbons is further substantiated by Tiezzi (2015), who posits that oil constituted 95% of Equatorial Guinea's GDP as of 2011. The reliance on the oil and gas sector is an impediment to the economic development of the country. The economy recently took a hit, due to the oil price shock in 2014. According to a World Bank 2018 report, the country was worst hit, due to its huge dependence on oil exports, and lack of diversification in its economy. An IMF 2016 report further highlights the effects of the crisis on economic growth. According to the report, the oil prices shock has resulted in the contraction of the economy, evidenced in the 7½% decline in GDP in 2015. There are other sectors the country has largely neglected, that could be explored to diversify their revenue streams. The African Development Bank 2013 country report sheds light on underdeveloped industries such as agriculture and fisheries, as well as the financial and tourism sectors, which have the potential to propel the economic development of Equatorial Guinea.

## **Aid and Investments**



The infrastructure projects being funded by China in Equatorial Guinea has the potential to positively contribute to the country's economic development. For instance, as stated by the 2016 IMF country report, the government has pushed through with infrastructure and development projects such as construction of roads, improving telecommunications, water and electricity access, etc. Nonetheless, the loans to finance such projects are often misallocated. As stated by the ICBC (2015), the \$2 billion investment is to besides infrastructure, also go towards 'supporting the Equatorial Guinea government and Chinese enterprises in the country'. This highlights the state-centric approach of China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa, neglecting the civil society. According to Reuters (cited in Tiezzi, 2015), the money by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China will be directly provided to the government and the Chinese enterprises, operating in the country. The government having direct access to the funds means decisions on the direction of the allocation of funds, remains in the hands of the few elites in the country. The loans by the Chinese banks for infrastructure and the local Chinese companies, appears to be more favourable to China and Chinese businesses in the country than the local Equatoguineans. As expressed by Esteban (2010, p:235), local Equatoguinean employees in sectors such as construction have become the main victims of the competitive labour force in the country. This situation has arisen, due to the active presence of Chinese enterprises in such sectors, which the elites in the country perceive to be more productive than the local labour force. Therefore, leading to these political and economic elites, awarding major construction contracts to these Chinese enterprises. The main winners of this collaboration end up being these elites and the Chinese, with little to no benefits for the ordinary citizen of the country.

Many Equatoguineans have accused the government of corruption, due to investments for the national development of the country, being concentrated in the hands of the few and being misused by them. The recent decision by a Parisian court, to convict the vice-president of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mangué, who happens to be the son of the president, has been welcomed by the civil state and many around the world. He has been accused of embezzling more than 100 million dollars of public money (Humans Rights Watch, 2018) - this gives a clear indication of the level of corruption in the government. These charges of corruption levelled against Obiang's government appears credible, as the country was ranked 171 out of 180 in Transparency International's 2017 Corruption Perception Index. Furthermore, the expensive and

grand infrastructure projects being financed by the government are one of little value to the ordinary citizen, and of no economic benefit to the country. Projects such as the building of stadia, hotels, etc are at the expense of important sectors such as education and health. According to a country report by the African Development Bank (2013), one of the many weaknesses of the health sector, is the inefficient and inequitable budgetary resource allocation. Additionally, the public health care budget is 11% below African Union target. The government nonetheless have allocated funds to one of the most expensive infrastructure projects, the Oyala Jungle Capital City Development, which is to replace Malabo as the country's capital upon completion. A 2015 IMF report stated that the planned total spending on the Oyala project that year was 8 billion dollars.

### **Impact**

These infrastructure projects such as Oyala are undoubtedly purely motivated by the self-interest of Obiang and his government, with little benefit for the civil state. The government is prioritising such projects, neglecting sectors such as education, which is in a decline and needs investment. Investment in education will be a long-term benefit for the country, particularly so due to the insufficient human capital and skilled labour for the private sector and certain services (AfDB report, 2013). As stated in the 2018 Humans Rights Watch report, in 2016, 42% of children of primary school age were not registered as students. The decline of the education system in Equatorial Guinea is further substantiated by the 2013 African Development Bank report, which states that the enrolment rate at the higher education level is below 10%. Additionally, according to the report, the government only allocates 5% of the state budget to education. The corruption and misuse of funds by the government has plunged the civil society into a life of impoverishment. An enormous number of the population living below the income poverty line, survive on \$1.90 or less according to the UNDP human development index. Moreover, according to a 2017 country report by the Human Rights Watch, they rank 138 out of 188 countries in the human development index, which measures social and economic development. It is evident that the revenue from the oil and the investment funds from China are not being channelled to fund relevant sectors in the country, to promote its national development; including the welfare of its citizens - the wealth doesn't trickle down to the Equatoguineans.

The increasing presence of the Chinese in the country, has a part to play in the lack of diversification - they have occupied certain sectors, providing services and thus, preventing the country from investing and developing in such sectors. For instance, the penetration of the informal sector by the Chinese, has led to the abandonment of the development of the local industry. However, as Esteban (2009: p683) posits, the flooding of Chinese products into the market is generally accepted. Therefore, China cannot be held solely responsible for the lack of diversification. The government came up with a national economic development plan, Horizon 2020 after the Central Africa Economic Monetary Community (CEMAC) crisis. According to the World Bank (2018), the second phase of Horizon 2020 is to focus on economic diversification, targeting underdeveloped sectors like fisheries, etc. This proactiveness of the government, with China being on board to support the country's diversification efforts, through its 2-billion-dollar loan to the country (Tiezzi, 2015) is a clear indication of the essence of the agency of governments, in perpetuating economic development vis a vis their relationship with China.

Equatorial Guinea has the highest GDP per capita in sub-Saharan Africa. Hon Cesar Mba Abogo, the Secretary of State for Planning and Development, in his speech at the Chatham House (2015), mentions of the country's GDP growth reaching up to \$17 billion in 2012. This corroborates the wealth oil has generated the country. However, despite the boom, the high per capita income is not reflected in the living standards of the population. According to the African Development Bank report (2013), almost three out of four persons are poor. The impoverished condition of the citizens, despite high revenues brought in over the years could mainly be down to political corruption, repression, misallocation and misuse of public funds by Obiang's government. Oil revenues and China's investments and loans procured, which have the potential to transform the social and economic development of the country, remain in the hands of the political elite. Because of the authoritarian nature of Obiang's government, China's engagement with Obiang has been criticised as a hindrance to the political development of the country, due to the close alliance between the PRC and Obiang's political party; propping the corrupt and authoritarian government. China's non-interference policy in its engagement in Equatorial Guinea, has been welcomed by president Obiang, who thanked China for the provision of aid with 'no strings attached' (Tiezzi, 2015). Chinese aid, unlike that from the West, is without a condition to promote good governance. Hence, the accusation of China by critics, for encouraging and sustaining the corrupt, repressive

and authoritarian government of Obiang. They do so, according to Esteban through financial means, provision of military training to the Equatoguinean army, etc (2009, p:669). In so doing, strengthening the authority of president Obiang's government, whilst diminishing popular sovereignty by modifying the balance of power between the state the Equatoguinean society.

Scholars such as Taylor (2006: p34) point out that it is not up to China to enforce good governance; it is dependent on African leaders and institutions to promote political development. However, it is difficult for political development to take place in Equatorial Guinea, when the party of the government has financial and military support from China. China may not be responsible for imposing good governance, but their engagement sustains Obiang's government, making it difficult for popular sovereignty to work. Bad governance not only hampers political development, but economic and social as well. The government realises this, hence the national economic development plan -Horizon 2020, consisting of improving governance and fighting corruption (IMF country report, 2016). Nonetheless, with corruption being endemic and very embedded in the government, the success of this anti-corruption fight is doubtful.

China's presence in Equatorial Guinea, provides the country with a brilliant opportunity to economic development. Trade, aid and investment have opened the door to infrastructure projects, to modernise and accelerate economic development. However, the country's inability to fully capitalise, to advance the welfare of its citizens appears to be hampered by the current government. China's willingness to assist the government in the diversification of the economy, highlights that they are willing to support the economic development of the country. It further shows that it is up to the government, to drive the economic development of their country, vis a vis their relations with China. China may not necessarily be directly responsible for the economic state of Equatorial Guinea, but they have played a role in hindering the political development of the country. It may not be China's responsibility to enforce good governance as Taylor (2009, p 34) states. Nonetheless, China is guilty of sustaining Obiang's corrupt, politically repressive government, making it difficult for the civil state to replace him. China has hence fostered the consolidation of bad governance in Equatorial Guinea, which directly impacts the rate and nature of its economic development. The actions of the Chinese show that they put their national interests ahead of the interests of the Equatoguinean citizens, whom have to bear the brunt of Obiang's government

being in power. It proves the point of Kolstad and Wiig (2011: p 46), who put forward that in regard to Chinese and western intervention, 'exploiting resources and weak institutions appears to be the name of the investment game in Africa'.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Case study: Ghana**

#### **General Introduction**

Ghana was the first sub-Saharan country to gain its independence; the country achieved its independence from Britain in 1957. The country has diverse ethnic groups, and is endowed with natural resources such as gold, bauxite, cocoa, oil amongst other resources. Furthermore, Ghana is widely known to be a politically and economically stable country in West Africa, and on the continent.

#### **The Political System of Ghana**

Ghana is generally viewed as an example of a democratic state in Ghana. The country had not always been a shiny beacon of African democracy. This was due to the centralisation of power by the then president, Kwame Nkrumah after the creation of the First Republic in 1966. The new constitution created alongside the Republic, permitted Nkrumah to act in his own discretion, and not obligated to listen to anyone's advice (Constitution of Ghana, 1960). It was not long until Ghana became a one party-state in 1964 (Brierley, 2012: p422), consequently followed by the rule of authoritarian and military regimes in the Second and Third Republic of Ghana (Brierley, 2012: p422). The establishment of the Fourth Republic in the early 90s, ushered in the beginning of democratisation of Ghana. The 1992 Ghanaian constitution sealed the return to multi-party democracy and the introduction of a unicameral legislature (parliament). Nonetheless, despite the presence of many political parties in the country, the political system is dominated by 2 main political parties; the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). These two political parties have been alternating in winning elections, since the first electoral process in the Fourth Republic in 1992. The other parties have failed to receive more than 5% of the national votes during elections (Pryce & Oidtmann 2012, p:331)

Ghana has been a stable democratic country, under the Fourth Republic, with active citizen participation being at the heart of the democratisation process. According to the voter turnout database by International IDEA, the first parliamentary election in 1992 recorded a turnout of 28%. However, throughout the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of Ghanaians, engaging in the electoral process. For instance, there was a record 80% turnout in the 2012 parliamentary election, but a drop to 67.55% in the recent 2016 elections. Nevertheless, elections after 1992 have always exceeded the 50% majority mark. As stated by the Ghana Electoral Commission, there were 15,712,499 registered voters for the 2016 parliamentary elections, with 10,713,734 total valid votes at the end of the electoral process. Considering the population of Ghana is 28 million (World Bank), it is evident that political participation and interest in the political process, is high.

There are however some challenges to democracy in Ghana. The constitution of Ghana has bestowed a lot of powers to an acting president. Brierley (2012, p:431) backs this statement, as she asserts that the constitution has given the Executive, a plethora of agenda-setting powers, which helps in their monopolisation over the legislative process.

Furthermore, Brierley (2012, p:431) mentions of the strengthening of the Executive's position, and their link with the legislative branch due to Article 78 of the constitution. The article stipulates of the hybridity clause, which specifies that the president picks his ministers from parliament. According to Lindberg and Zhou (2009 cited in Brierley 2012, p:431), it has resulted in the weakening of the Ghanaian parliament since 2002; when the former president, John Agyekum Kufuor appointed over 40% of his party's MPs to be Ministers. It creates the condition whereby MPs carry out favours for the Executive for Ministerial positions.

The challenges of the hybridity clause have further been highlighted by a Majority leader in Parliament, Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, who expresses that due to the hybrid system 'MPs have not been able to adequately hold the Executive accountable' (Tengmaa, 2018). The array of powers, granted to a Ghanaian president by the constitution, is a source of worry for certain politicians in Ghana. For instance, the Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin has expressed the urgent need for a constitutional reform. He asserts that the setup of the constitution undermines democracy, making MPs powerless in regard to accountability of the Executive (Dovia, 2018)

Despite the nature of the constitution of Ghana enforcing a condition conducive for dictatorships, there have been smooth transition of power since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1992. This highlights the political stability of the country, and the respect for civic participation in the electoral process. Additionally, there are organisations such as the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development and the liberalised media, working to promote transparency, good governance and accountability in the country. The government recently released a publication of the presidential staffers for 2017 to parliament (Frimpong, 2018). This action portrays a clear instance of openness and transparency in the country. The subsequent scrutiny and call for action by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development, against the growing numbers of presidential staffers, displays a good picture of democracy at work.

The picture of democracy in Ghana is not perfect. However, it has worked to promote stability in the country so far. The political system in the country under the fourth Republic, has been established with the civil society being at the core of it, evidenced in the interest in political participation, backed by voter turnouts in previous elections. This, as well as the consistently smooth transition of power, from one political party to another. There are certain actions, undertaken by the government in power, which put the democratisation of the country into question. For instance, in relation to fighting corruption in the public sector, the current government under Nana Akufo-Addo has been very proactive in his anti-corruption stance. The setting up of an Office of Special Prosecutor, and the subsequent recruitment of a neutral, non-partisan Special Prosecutor by the president (Welsing, 2018), to help in the fight is an apparent indication of his determination to uproot corruption. There is a stark contrast between the current government and the previous one under Mahama, in regard to attitudes towards anti-corruption fight. The Deputy General Secretary of the party of the previous government, Koku Anyidoho, reveals the disregard by his party during their governance, of corruption in the Ghana Football Association. He was told to 'slow down' (Ghana web TV, 2018) by the former President, on his probe into the activities of corrupt officials in the public body. This approach on corruption, reflects the 2017 Corruption Perception Index, where Ghana was ranked 81 out of 180 countries (Transparency International) - the country's lowest score in the past four years. This government comparison consequently highlights the importance of the agency of the government in power, in upholding the democratic values of their country.

## **The Economy**

Ghana is one of the biggest economies in West Africa; recording a GDP of \$47.93 billion, the country is the second-largest economy in West Africa (Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture). Ghana has a diversified economy; the agricultural, industry and services sectors, are the driving forces behind the country's economy. The agriculture sector, which according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, employs over 40% of the labour force, has been on the decline in the past few years. The once dominant economic sector has been overtaken by the service sector. This is supported by the Ghana Statistical Service 2016 annual provisional GDP report (2017) which states that the services share of GDP to the country's economy was 56.5% in 2016, highlighting that it still remains the largest economic sector of Ghana. Furthermore, of the three economic sectors, the industry sector seems to be lagging behind. The decline of its growth rate to -1.4% in 2016 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017) whereas the agricultural and services sectors recorded a growth of 5.7% and 3.0% respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017), substantiates this statement.

Ghana discovered oil in 2010 and is currently an emerging oil and gas producer. According to the OEC, besides gold and cocoa, the country exports \$1.15 billion worth of crude petroleum. There have been concerns over the direction of Ghana's economic development, since the discovery of oil on its shores. There are fears of the country becoming oil-dependent. The 2017 figures by the Ghana Statistical Service, shows that the economic growth in the third quarter of 2017 was led by the oil sector. Oil and gas grew by 72.2% and contributed to 9.3% of the country's GDP. Interestingly, the services sector, unlike the previous year, lagged behind the oil, industry and agriculture sectors. This illustrates the ever-changing nature of the Ghanaian economic sectors or perhaps the neglect of the other sectors in favour of the oil industry.

The decline of certain sectors has been put down by some, to the discovery and subsequent favour of oil and gas. For instance, Dr Ebo Turkson, a senior economist at the University of Ghana, has attributed the decline in the agricultural sector, to the shift of focus to the oil sector. He asserts that there is not a lot of money being directed agriculture; consequently, leading to its decline (Citi Business News, 2017). However, the incumbent president, Nana Akuffo-Addo, in his state of



nation speech, expressed his commitment to develop the agricultural sector, to modernise and diversify the economy. In his speech, he pledged to embark on a programme, to build a sustainable agricultural sector; the ‘one-village, one-dam policy’ (Akuffo-Addo, 2017). The commitment of the government to avoid becoming a resources dependent country, is further accentuated by the president’s will to modernise and diversify the economy. In his 2018 speech at the London Business School, the president expresses that his government ‘is going to use oil revenues to create assets, not waste it on consumption and accumulate debts’. Ghana under the current government, aims to use revenues from oil to industrialise the country, with the aim of adding value to her primary products (London Business School, 2018). This signals a change from the raw materials exporting nature of the country. According to the OEC, refined petroleum is one of the top imports of the oil and gas producing country, with the value of \$557 million. The situation of the exportation of raw materials and subsequent importation of the consumer products of the primary goods, is an apparent reason for the case to industrialise. It drives the government’s will to industrialise and diversify the economy, for the long term economic prosperity of the country.

## **Relations with China**

### **Background**

Ghana and China first established diplomatic relations in 1960. Akin to Equatorial Guinea’s Macias Nguema, Ghana’s first President, Nkrumah enjoyed favourable relations with China, due to his socialist rhetoric. He provided support to China for instance by backing China in 1962 during a border dispute with India. Hence, similarly, relations between the two countries became frosty after Nkrumah’s government was overthrown. This is evidenced by China’s withdrawal of aid workers and embassy officials after Nkrumah’s overthrow (Idun-Akhurst 2008, p:4). Relations got better after China received diplomatic support in the UN vote in 1971. The nature of the relations could then be concluded to be characterised by political/ideological support, in exchange for assistance. Cooperation between the two countries have since shifted from mainly ideological focus, to a wide-ranging cooperation in trade, technology, culture, agriculture, health, amongst other areas.

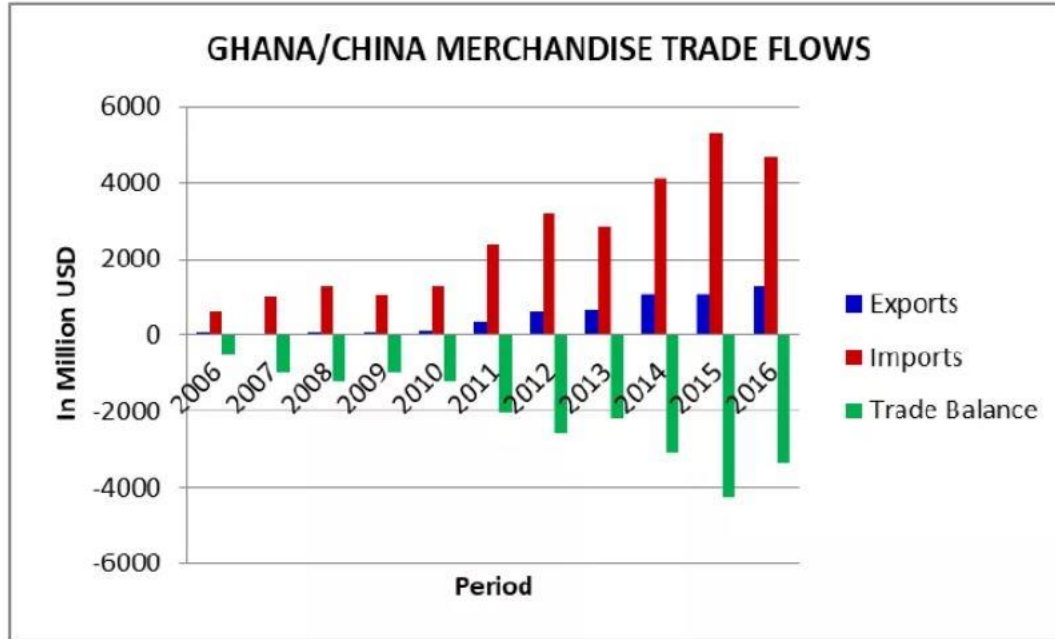
### **Current relations**

#### **Trade**

At present, Ghana and China enjoy deep bilateral and economic relations. According to the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (2018), China has become Ghana's largest trading partner, with trade rising from less than US\$100 million in 2000 to US\$5.976 billion in 2016. Generally, in regard to trade, Ghana exports raw materials to China, whereas China's exports to Ghana are predominantly manufactured products. According to the Economics and Commercial Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Ghana, Chai Zhijing (2018), China's export to Ghana in 2017 was \$4.8 billion, whereas import from Ghana was around \$1.8 billion. There is an evident trade imbalance between the two countries. The nature of the trade relations has further drawn criticisms, citing the disadvantages at the expense of the Ghanaian local economy, because of cheap manufactured Chinese products flooding the market. The industry sector, comprising of manufacturing, is one of the revenue-generating sectors of the country. The manufacturing sector has been negatively impacted, due to the influx of cheap Chinese products. Ademola et al (2009 cited in Langan 2010: p99) highlights the consequences on the Ghanaian textiles industry, such as it leading to job losses and the displacement of Ghanaian textiles by Chinese textiles, due to the influx. Nonetheless, there are low-income consumers, retailers and wholesalers sourcing from Chinese imports who benefit. However, the crippling of the manufacturing subsector may have a negative impact on the wider economy. Additionally, as Alden et al (2008: p39) state, it could derail the diversification of the economy.

The figure below depicts the increase of goods being exported to and imported from China over the years.

Figure 7: Ghana's Merchandise Trade Flows and Balance with China



Source: Observatory for Economic Complexity

### Impact

Situations such as this fuels the scepticism of China's exploitation, as the relationship between them and countries such as Ghana, in relation to trade, does not appear to be equal. Nonetheless, according to Chai Zhijing (2018), import from Ghana has increased by 3.37%. Furthermore, China has taken steps to increase its import from Ghana, in a bid to support its National Export Strategy policy, which aims to drive Ghana as a 'world class exporter of products and services' (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2013). Encouraging Ghanaian businesses to showcase Ghanaian products at China's Expositions, as proposed by Chai Zhijing during the 2018 opening of China Trade Week in Ghana, to break into the Chinese market is one of the initiatives being taken to promote Ghanaian made products. The increase in the importation of goods and the initiative to increase imports to China, could be argued to be a step in the right direction towards driving economic development and mutual benefits in the bilateral relations.

### Aid and Investments

Ghana benefits from Chinese Foreign Direct Investments. As stated in the 2017 quarterly report by the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), China by number of projects, was the top

investor country from the first to the third quarter, with 25 registered projects in Ghana. Nonetheless, in regard to high value in investments, The Netherlands and India are top two countries with FDI value of US\$2.44 billion and US\$411.75 million respectively (GIPC quarterly report, 2017: p5). This brings to focus the role of other countries in the economic development of the country, and their non-dependence on China. This state of affairs propels scholars such as Hess and Aidoo (2015, p:53), to draw the conclusion that the role of the Chinese is not strongly felt in the Ghanaian economy, due to the value of their investments. This assertion is debatable, especially so due to China being Ghana's top trading partner - Ghana imported Chinese goods worth a value of over 300 million euros in 2017, as stated by the European Commission 2017 trade statistics. China additionally assists in spearheading infrastructure projects by providing Ghana with funds. For instance, according to the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), China has pledged US\$15 billion to Ghana, for development projects within the country. China has besides the loan, according to the GIPC report, agreed to construct 90 bridges for the country. Nevertheless, instead of saddling the economy with debt to fund its development projects, Ghana is leveraging a fraction of her untapped mineral resources, particularly bauxites, to China. The Vice-President of Ghana, Dr Bawumia expresses this approach clearly, as he asserts that what the country needs is a 'financial module that utilises a small fraction of those reserves to finance infrastructure'(GIPC) during his visit to China. This approach to bilateral trade and partnership between the two countries, supports the assertion by Taylor (2010: p71) of China's expansion into Africa, being propelled by its need for raw materials and energy.

### **Impact**

China's engagement in Ghana has expanded to the extractive industry, such as the mining sector; a subsector of the industry sector. There have been rising tensions between the two countries, due to the widespread of illegal gold mining, which is being supported by Chinese companies. The rampant surge of illegal gold mining in the country has had devastating environmental and social consequences, such as violence and the pollution of the river bodies in Ghana. Despite the harmful environmental effects, the activity being backed by Chinese companies, could be argued to showcase the true intentions of China's engagement - purely for the natural resources. These actions cast doubt when scholars such as Broadman (2006 cited in Van Dijk 2009: p14) suggest that China's cooperation with Africa is about far more than natural resources. The government's

response in tackling the issue has been applauded by the public, at the risk of straining relations with China. The government has been tough on their crackdown on illegal gold mining in the country, arresting both guilty Ghanaian and Chinese miners - charging and deporting Chinese nationals for 'violating immigration laws' (Fick, 2017). The President, Nana Akufo-Addo, has expressed that the law will be enforced, regardless of nationality (Kanarku, 2017). The Akufo-Addo government's drive to put an end to illegal gold mining, being perpetuated by both Ghanaian and Chinese nationals, with the backing of Chinese companies, give prominence to the need for government agency, as well as the necessity for good political institutions vis a vis relation with China. It is needed to avoid exploitation by China during their engagement, by holding them accountable for their actions.

Ghana's present relations with China during the presidency of Akufo-Addo has changed. The country under the current President is establishing a relationship with countries such as China, with the aim of moving Ghana away from aid, putting more focus on trade and partnerships. There is a stark contrast between the former government of the National Democratic Congress under former Presidents Mills and Bawumia, and the current government of the New Patriotic Party under Akufo-Addo regarding Ghana's relations with China. For instance, in 2011, the Mahama administration of the National Democratic Congress, signed for a loan with China Development Bank, for the development of gas and oil infrastructure worth US\$3 billion (Aidoo et al, 2017: p37). According to Chen (2016 cited in Aidoo et al: p37), the loan committed Ghana to provide 13,000 barrels of crude oil to China for fifteen and a half years. This deal was argued to be on breach of the Petroleum Revenue Management Act (PRMA), which specifies that Ghana's oil could not be used as collateral for more than ten years (Hardus, 2014 cited in Aidoo et al, 2017: p37). Furthermore, the Mahama administration of the National Democratic Congress, was accused of striking a deal which was more beneficial to China than Ghana (Aidoo, et al, 2017: p37). The former government used the country's mineral resources as collateral for taking in loans; a financial approach which has been labelled by Frontani and McCracken (2012, p283) as 'uncharacteristic of a healthy financial system or sustainable development'. According to the 2009-2013 trade statistics by the Ghana statistical service, Ghana in 2012 and 2013 imported Chinese goods worth the value of 4,329.9 million and 4,458.8 million Ghana cedis respectively. Whereas the country exported goods of the value of 1,125.3 million and 893.2 million Ghana cedis

respectively in the same years. The figures highlight the immense trade deficit between the countries during the Mahama administration. Moreover, the current government's policy to move away from being an import driven country by launching the National Export Strategy, with the aim to export more Ghanaian products to countries like China, sheds light on the contrast between the two governments. Moreover, the policy being supported by China to assist in the economic development of the country, underscores the necessity of government agency in driving economic development in their relations with China. The differences between the two Ghanaian governments, puts into focus the essence of the agency of the government.

China has had no negative impact on the political development of Ghana. If anything, it could be argued to have strengthened it. This is so because the bilateral relations draw attention to the need for good political institutions and good governance, for engagement with China. In the case of the relations between Ghana and China, the liberalised media of the country have been great in gathering attention on issues, prompting the government to act on resolving the problems. For instance, radio stations like Citi FM, have been very active in their campaign against the rise of illegal mining in the country, backed by the Chinese companies. The radio station launched the #StopGalamseyNow campaign, whilst other important media outlets established the Media Coalition Against Galamsey (Adogla-Bessa, 2017). These campaigns by many media outlets in Ghana, calling on the government to put an end to the practise, arguably put more pressure on them to act on clamping down illegal gold mining. The Ghanaian civil society's agency in actively campaigning for the government to act on ending galamsey, is a strong characteristic of living in a democratic society with good and democratic governance and institutions. It is a stark contrast between democratic Ghana and Equatorial Guinea, where the regime is so repressive that the civil society is not potent. Therefore, China operates in the country, and gets away with neglecting the needs of the civil society, as long as the interests of the elites are met.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Comparative Analysis**

#### **Agency**

China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa is being explored through the lens of agency; the agency of African actors in benefitting from this cooperation. There are different levels of agency; that which could be found at the state level, and individual agency. State agency is one exerted by the government and elected representatives, on behalf of the country. Constructivist scholars such as Wendt, does not distinguish between individuals and the state, positing that the state should not be reduced to the actions of state officials (Wight 2009, p:183). This highlights the contrast between Wendt and Wight, with the latter putting emphasis on the importance of conscious human agency. Wight asserts that 'state agency can only be accessed through the agency of individuals' (2009, p:189), this is further backed by Brown (2012, p:1892) who asserts of the importance of political leaders in exerting state agency. This is relevant to this chapter as the roles of the elites and the government will be analysed, and comparisons drawn through the lens of individual agency.

### **Role of Government and Elites**

The analysis on China's engagement in Ghana and Equatorial Guinea, depict a stark contrast between the two countries vis a vis the respective government's approach in engaging with China, to promote economic and political development in their countries. Mohan and Lambert (2012, p:109) advance the argument that African agency could also be found at the individual level, besides the state. They assert that this agency, have been able to shape relations with China, to drive their interests and bring about types of wider social benefits. This assertion could be argued to apply to businessmen and the political elites. In the context of Ghana, the influx of cheap Chinese products on the market may have negative consequences on the manufacturing subsector of the industry sector, particularly for the local artisans. However, the actors who stand to benefit most are the businessmen; especially wholesalers and retailers, who source cheap consumer goods from China. In the case of Equatorial Guinea, political elites shape agency in relation to engagement with China. As previously mentioned, there is a close link between the political parties from both sides. As a result of this, China's engagement is centred at the state level, with the political elites reaping the most benefits. Due to the narrow interests of the few being met, it has resulted in the situation in Equatorial Guinea, where 'unaccountable modes of political and economic governance are reinforced' (Mohan and Lampert, 2012: p110). This leads to the uneven

balance of wealth and power between the civil society and the state, therefore consolidating the authoritarian regime in the country, impeding its political development. The economic and political support by China, as stated by Lewis (2006, p:1 cited in Taylor 2007, p144) could increase the leeway for politicians to misuse and manipulate institutions to preserve their power. This is evident in Equatorial Guinea, where President Obiang's PDGE party has developed close relations with China, to the extent of money being channelled through the PDGE party system. It has given rise to corruption and misuse of public funds in the country, evidenced in the country's poor standing in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

Tull (2006, p:474) further states that the championing of democracy is not a goal for China's foreign policy; therefore, accounts for the policy of non-interference and engaging with authoritarian regimes such as Obiang's. However, examining the impact of China's relations on the political systems in Ghana and Equatorial Guinea, it can be concluded that China's presence in a country, strengthens whatever type of governance is in place. For instance, financial support of the PDGE party of Obiang has undoubtedly undermined national demands for human rights and democratisation of the country. On the other hand, in the situation of Ghana, it could be argued that China's engagement in the country, fortified democracy, and depicted a clear picture of a working democracy. The work of the free and independent media in the country, on campaigning and calling on the government to act on illegal gold mining backed by Chinese companies, sustains this line of reasoning. The current Ghanaian government, subsequently acting to clamp down on this environmental issue, irrespective of the impact it may have on relations with China, demonstrates the need for good governance and political institutions in holding China accountable. Similar demand of Chinese accountability is absent in countries like Equatorial Guinea, where the financial and political support from China, helps sustain the regime, at the detriment of the ordinary citizens. It could be said that Chinese engagement in such countries is a win-win for China and the state elites; China does not seek to meddle by introducing initiatives to promote democracy (Taylor, 2007: p142). Hence, so far as the regime's power is consolidated, China is left to its own devices. This is a clear example of the 'clientelist-type political relations' Brown (2012, p:1902) speaks of.

Equatorial Guinea is one example of an African and sub-Saharan country with an authoritarian regime in place, where China has established bilateral relations. It is evident that engagement in



those countries, have only sustained and entrenched the power of those regimes. Scholars such as Taylor (2004, p:99 cited in Tull, 2006: p 476) agree that China's presence 'does not contribute to the promotion of peace, prosperity and democracy on the continent' as evidenced in Equatorial Guinea. Furthermore, one can contend that despite the win-win rhetoric and the championing of south-south cooperation and development by China, ultimately, when it comes down to it, China puts China first. The role of the Chinese companies in perpetuating the illegal mining of gold in Ghana, despite the harmful environmental and social impacts, and the funnelling of money through Chinese Multinational corporations are clear examples to advance this line of reasoning. What is therefore needed is a strong government, assertive enough to put their country first as Ghana's president, Akuffo-Addo demonstrated. However, the type of governance in place may not guarantee that the government in place asserts enough agency in putting their country first whilst dealing with China. Ghana's previous government under former president Mahama's signature of a deal with China Development Bank, which put Ghana at an economic disadvantage whilst boosting China's interests, is a clear example of this.

### **Individual Agency**

The explanation of the differences in agency between the two Ghanaian governments could be viewed through Wight's framework of agency, in which he emphasises in relation to state agency, the importance of the human aspect of it. Wight (2009, p:189) states that 'if the state has agency, it can only be accessed through the agency of individuals'. This is in direct contrast of Wendt's framework of the state being a person, neglecting the essence of human agency. As showcased by Presidents Mahama and Akuffo-Addo of Ghana, and comparably between the similarly one state parties of China and Equatorial Guinea under Xi Jinping and Teodoro Obiang respectively, also clearly evidences an undeniable the role of humans in exerting state agency, to drive either economic or political development, or both depending on the type of governance. For instance, despite anti-corruption fights by the governments of both parties, China's Xi Jinping has been more fruitful in the fight than president Obiang. It is evidenced in the Chinese president having over 182,000 party members investigated, whilst having 32 leaders occupying prominent position levels at the party arrested, a year after he took over power (McElveen and Li, 2014). These examples give a clear indication that in relation to states exerting agency, individual(s) acting and making decisions on behalf of the state is perhaps more essential in driving economic development

than the type of governance. It is particularly relevant in this focus on the role of African governments, in facilitating a conducive environment for economic development, vis a vis relation with China.

As mentioned in the literature review, many scholars are of the opinion that China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa, provides huge economic opportunities. Certain African scholars such as Dayo (2008 cited in Adem 2010, p:339) perceive China's presence with optimism, for the economic development for Africa. He views China as a global power, 'laying the tracks for an Africa-wide economic renaissance'. Furthermore, scholars such as Anshan (2007, p:78-79) mention of the economic benefits that China's presence presents to Africa. She states of the economic advantages that China's principle of mutual benefits brings to region; China, gaining natural resources in exchange for investments and aid in Africa. It can be acknowledged that China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa has presented the region with a diversification of development, trade and investment partners. It has further provided funds for infrastructure development, which helps contribute to the long-term economic development of countries in the region. Anshan (2007, p:79) additionally highlights one of the advantages of economic cooperation between Africa and China, is that 'it reduces and relieves African countries' debts'. Although there is truth in this statement of China wiping away the debts of some African economies, they are still amassing massive debts from China, through loans as in the case of Equatorial Guinea. The mounting debt has been viewed as a ticking time bomb. As stated by CARI, China provided African countries with loans worth US\$89.9 billion between 2000 and 2014. The top recipient was Angola with \$21.2 billion (Dzimwasha, 2017). The opaqueness and lack of transparency in resource rich countries with authoritarian regimes such as in Angola under former President dos Santos and Equatorial Guinea in relation to funds from China, raises scepticism on China's interest in Africa's long-term economic development.

Despite all these economic advantages and opportunities that China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa may bring, China's elite-centred approach of financial assistance, for instance providing funds for the President's Obiang's PDGE party of Equatorial Guinea, as well as providing money for the country's infrastructure development through the party, has been detrimental to the economic development of the country, due to rampant corruption in the government and among

party officials. Consequently, as Tull (2006, p:476) puts forward, this Chinese approach in countries with autocratic regimes, provides them with valuable contracts. Therefore, the state elites are the economic and political winners of China's increasing presence in sub-Saharan Africa and the continent as a whole. Moreover, Chinese loans tied to natural resources has been perceived by sceptics of China's growing presence, as proof of the country pursuing its 'narrow self-interests at the expense of Africa's long-term interests' (Adem, 2010: p 346). In the context of countries in the sub-Saharan region, Ghana's previous government's negotiation with China for a loan, which resulted in using the country's oil as collateral for a longer period of time than legally permitted is a testament. In addition to this, Equatorial Guinea's government being given loans by China, to be repaid in oil also questions the conduciveness of China's presence for the long term economic development of the region.

Referring back to the literature review, Adem (2010, p:335) presents three strands of thoughts; the Sino-scepticism, Sino-optimism and Sino-pessimism, dominating discussion on China's growing presence in Africa. This thesis leans towards combining both schools of Sino-optimists and Sino-pessimists, in determining whether China's presence in sub-Saharan Africa is conducive for economic and political development. Sino-pessimists advocate that China's presence in Africa would keep in existence the structures of dependency and underdevelopment, already in place. This is true regarding countries such as Equatorial Guinea, where China's presence is sustaining an authoritarian regime; therefore, contributing in impeding political liberalisation and by extension, political and possible economic development in the country. The strand of thought of Sino-optimists adopts the liberalism ideology of international political economy, to advance their argument (Adem, 2010: p335). Their liberalism stance that African states would benefit more if the right policies are implemented (Adem, 2010: p335), is also taken on in this research. Ghana's huge trade imbalance during the term of former president Mahama, compared to the current president's National Export Strategy. The aim of the policy to transform the country into a world class exporter, and the policy being supported by China through the introduction of initiatives to expose Ghanaian products to the Chinese market, is a clear example of this. What this brings to focus is the differences in bilateral relations between different governments and countries, not only in the sub-Saharan region, but the African continent as a whole. It also pushes to the forefront that Sino-African relations should not be generalised, but analysed according to China's engagement

with the different governments in the various African countries they have a presence in. It is evident in this research, the essence of government agency in negotiating for favourable deals regarding economic cooperation with China. In addition to that, also holding China accountable for their activities, during their engagement in respective African states.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, this paper set out to analyse whether the nature of China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa, promotes economic and political development, or is exploitative in nature. From my findings, it is clear that China's presence in authoritarian regime countries like Equatorial Guinea, does not promote political development. Their non-interference policy underpinning their foreign relations, serves as a justification for them to engage with any country, irrespective of the type of governance. This serves as a drawback for political development in such countries, due to China's financial support maintaining the regime, and the elitist nature of the engagement. China is not held accountable for its actions as long as the interests of the few are met. For instance, as Esteban (2010, p:239) posits, Chinese firms justify poor working conditions, due to the repressive regime in place, largely ignoring the complaints of ordinary Equatoguineans. This underscores the importance of the type of governance, vis a vis China.

In contrast, the Ghanaian civil society campaigned against Chinese backed illegal mining of gold, resulting in action being immediately taken by the government. It depicts a stark contrast between a democratic and repressive civil society, in engaging with the government to exert agency. Nonetheless, I found that good governance although promotes political development, is not always synonymous with economic development in engagement with China. As evidenced by differences in agency by the former Ghanaian president Mahama and the current, Akuffo-Addo, it is evident that the assertiveness of key political leaders heavily influences state agency (Brown, 2012: p1892). Furthermore, as shown by the previous parallel drawn between China's Xi Jinping and Equatorial Guinea's Obiang, the necessity of individual agency is obvious in advancing either political or economic development or both.

It is evident that the type of governance plays a role in the nature and the economic and political development of China's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa. It is additionally clear that government agency, plays the biggest role in perpetuating such developments. However, the role of individual African state leaders cannot be overstated in relation to exerting such agency. Therefore, from the

research paper, it seems to be that China's presence being exploitative or conducive for political and economic development, is heavily dependent on the type of governance and the individual(s) exerting state agency.

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