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# China, constructing difference with Africa

How China portrays itself as a different partner to Africa.

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## ABSTRACT

When looking at the African continent, Africa is now a socially and economically vibrant destination for foreign powers to invest in and has generated interest of traditional Western powers and of the newly emerged 'Southern powers' such as China. China puts great effort in differentiating themselves from other partners of African nations. China portrays itself as an 'all-weather friend' of Africa that strives for changing the economic world order justly in which all (developing) countries have a say. This research looks at how the Chinese government constructs its engagement in Africa as different compared to Western involvement on the African continent, and how this difference is constituted through different strategies of differentiation: historical ties, South-South mutual understanding, Soft Power and Non-conditional development cooperation.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AU	African Union
BC	Beijing Concensus
CI	Confucius Institute
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPP	Department of Policy and Planning
EXIM	Export Import
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FMPRC	Foreign Ministry of the Peoples Republic China
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily In Debt Poor Countries
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
LDC	Least Developed Country
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NEPAD	New Partnership of African Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSR	New Silk Road
ODA	Official Development Aid

OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	Public Private Partnership
TAZARA	Tanzania-Zambia Railway
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
WAC	the Washington Consensus
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

## I. INTRODUCTION

*“Both China and Africa are cradles of human civilisation and lands of great promise. Common destiny and common goals have brought us together. China will remain a close friend, reliable partner and good brother of Africa. Let's join hands and endeavour to promote development in both China and Africa, improve the well-being of our peoples and build a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity!” - Hu Jintao, 2006*

When looking at the African continent, Africa has generated interest in the world, which has attracted the attention of traditional Western powers and of the newly emerged ‘Southern powers’ such as China. Africa is now a socially and economically vibrant destination for foreign powers to invest in its further development. Africa has, according to Dor et al., ‘outgrown the gloom and doom’ and is now one of the world’s fast growing regions where revenues come from natural resources, but also from the financial, retail, agricultural and telecommunications sectors. ‘Not every country in Africa is resource rich, yet GDP growth accelerated almost everywhere’. (2010: 80) The growing presence of China as a global power, and its engagement in investing in developing countries, specifically on the African continent, has led to China to become a popular topic within academics and in policy-making circles. Partly due to the contribution of Chinese investments, trade and partnership cooperation towards Africa’s growth, that is taking place next to long-established relations with the West, the West considers its ‘monopoly’ on the continent is undergoing changes. Globally, China and India’s engagements in Africa are interrogated in order to understand the implications of their involvement for both the developed world and the global South. These current dialogues demonstrate that the ‘Chindia’ (Corkin & Naidu 2008, 116) debate is adjusting the academic and political thinking. Analysing the rise of the so-called ‘Asian Drivers’ has produced scholarship across a range of fields and has forced scholars to confront realities that defy traditional categorisation. (Corkin & Naidu 2008, 116)

Wenping’s *The Balancing Act of China’s Africa Policy*, portrays that China has moved increasingly towards a market-based system whilst maintaining their principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of others, which consequents into unconditional aid from China to Africa. China believes that upholding non-interference and offering unconditional aid are important to its principles to develop lasting relations with Africa. They must be predicated on a basic respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as deference to the ruling power of the legitimate governments. These factors form the foundation of a basic equality between China and Africa countries (2007: 33). Chinese-Africa economic relations have grown since the 1950s from political engagement to a more economically motivated relationship. When in 1978 the Chinese economy began to open up, engagement with the African continent was still limited. However, when China’s economy began to develop exponentially in the 1990s, its relations with Africa entered a commercial

phase, marked by the increasing demands for resources to match its rapid pace of economic growth. In 2006, China declared that it will ‘unswervingly carry forward the tradition of China-Africa friendship, and, proceeding from the fundamental interests of both the Chinese and African peoples, establish and develop a new type of strategic partnership with Africa (Chinese MOFA; Hu Jintao). Chun came up with ‘three phases of development’ of China in the past decennium. The first phase started from the 1950s to the 1970s ‘Open Up and Reform’ policy of China, and was focused on political development after new gained independence from colonial powers. This relationship was based on mutual political support with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist sentiments. (This is the period where the TAZARA railway line came into existence.) The second phase, according to Chun, in the 1980s, was focused on the ‘Four Principles’ of Chinese cooperation with Africa: ‘equality and mutual benefit’, emphasis on practical results, and ‘diversification in form and economic development’ (Looy 2006). The third face is after the Cold War, when China actively re-engaged with the continent “on different terms”, focused on trade and improving the investment environment in Africa and the emergence of Chinese business (Chun, 2013, 11)

From the late nineties and early 2000 onwards there has been rapid economic advancement and growth in volume of trade with the African continent coming from China; from \$10 billion in 2000 and \$20 billion in 2001, to \$73 billion in 2007 and \$108 billion in 2008, to \$120 billion in 2011 (Cheru and Obi 2011, 72), to nearly \$300 billion in 2015 (China-Africa Industrial Forum 2015). This made China Africa’s second leading trading partner after the United States in 2008, having surpassed France as one of the continent’s key investors (Alden and Large 2011, 23). Yang Fuchang, former deputy foreign minister of the PRC, stated at the 4<sup>th</sup> China-Africa Industrial Forum 2015 to be seeking to raise its trade with Africa to \$400 billion in 2020. Also, African business investment in China is rising and totalled \$14.2 billion by the end of 2012 (China Daily 2015).

Nevertheless, the growing influence of China in Africa may be a double edged sword, and there are different views on China in Africa. On the one hand, China’s influence can serve as a counterbalance in a world system still dominated by the West. On the other hand, it can intensify the ‘new scramble for Africa’ and further the ‘securitization’ of Africa’s international relations. In sum, “the glass is half full and half empty: for Africa, there are opportunities to exploit and rough currents to avoid” (Shaw, et al 2012: 197). Some claim that China’s rush to Africa for energy and resources is similar to what the Western countries have been doing for decades, and concluded that the “new scramble” on the continent has had, or will have, negative consequences for Africans (Alden et al, 83-109); China is accused of neo-colonialism. The West portrays China’s relation with African countries with a particular (negative) bias; China is “locking out” European energy interests in Africa (Down 2007, 43) and China is exploiting Africa as a passive victim (Mawdsley 2008, 9). Furthermore, when looking at China’s global role in general, one struggles to reconcile a China that tries to alter the status-quo, advocating for rebuilding the current world order; with a China that is power-seeking and



promoting the current way of development and the architecture of international institutions. In Dutch media there has been talked about ‘the myths and truths about China involved in the African continent’. Common (mis)conceptions that are that ‘China is ‘new’ in Africa; China has more involvement in Africa compared to its traditional partner; the relationship between the country and the continent is solely based on economics; is ‘only’ because of China’s interest in African resources; the relationship is exploitative; and is destroying African economies. (De Correspondent 2014, Vermeulen) Western sources consider there to be a rising “China threat” which challenges the current political and economic order and puts the existing “development” paradigm into discussion. (Corkin 2014, 49)

Others have their doubts with this supposed “scramble”, and consider it to be an exaggerated narrative that draws negative conclusions too soon, and Western media has blown things out of proportion (Fryans and Paolo 2007, 229-252; Chong 2008, 16-37). After all, China’s energy expansion in Africa, as fast as it has been in recent years, is still relatively small by all major measurements (Down 2007, 42-68). It might be argued that economically there is some asymmetry between Africa and China skewed towards China, but when looking at the political ‘power’ of Africa towards China, it clearly has, as a whole continent against one country, more political legitimacy on the global stage. The growing engagement of China with Africa has extensive significance for both sides, and, as mentioned by Le Pere and Shelton, added a vital framework to South-South cooperation. In their book ‘China, Africa and South Africa – South-South co-operation in a global era,’ they indicate that if China’s relationship with Africa is ‘properly managed’, both sides will greatly benefit from the South-South cooperation and consider the notion of China rushing to Africa for its resources to be incorrect (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007). Zhang Chun and Li Anshan, both Directors of West Asian and African studies at respectively the London School of Economics and Peking University and both Prof. Dr. from Chinese origin, believe that the Sino-African cooperation has performed positively and multifaceted in Africa. However, they recognize new challenges for the Chinese and Africans to come and advise China – to be able to sustain future development of this relation – to build a stronger social basis for Sino-African relations and to increase non-governmental capability, to improve public diplomacy and diversify diplomatic skills and stakeholders, to contribute to the peace and security of the African continent, without oscillating their basic foreign policy principles of non-interference, mutual development, equal partnership and respect. (Chun, 2012: 18 and Li Anshan, 2007: 86-87)

What can be understood from the reviewed literature is that China’s involvement in Africa is something that evokes varying responses and is apparently something that is changing the existing narrative on how foreign powers should aid Africa and influence its development. The Chinese put great effort in differentiating themselves from other partners of African nations. China portrays itself as an ‘all-weather friend’ of Africa that strives for changing the economic world order justly in which

all (developing) countries have a say. Their difference seems to be based on the fact that there have been strong historical ties between the two sides, based on non-hegemonic friendly relations. China underlines their South-South mutual understanding of their African partners, their shared struggle in independence, colonial rule and finding their own development path. Another aspect of difference executed by the PRC is its engagement with African countries and the international community according to the principle of ‘non-interference’, as it does not interfere with the policies or societal structures of the countries with whom it is collaborating. Additionally, China sees value in strengthening its “Soft Power” in the international community. This research looks at how the Chinese government constructs its engagement in Africa as different compared to Western involvement on the African continent, and how this difference is constituted through different strategies of differentiation.

### *i. Research question*

This research aims to find an answer to the question: *How does China construct its relationship with Africa as being different from that of other external actors?*

To find an answer to the research question, the following elements of difference used by the Chinese government will be considered:

- Weaving a narrative of historical ties to emphasise the of the longevity of the relationship and depicting China as part of the Global South, therefore sharing a common vision with Africa;
- The use of language/image-behaviour to emphasise the special nature of the relationship; between China and Africa, looking at terms such as ‘friendship’, ‘partnership’ and ‘win-win’.
- The use of soft power;
- The provision of ‘non-conditional’ development assistance.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Chinese state seems to use the theory of constructivism to justify and differentiate its involvement on the African continent. In this research there will be a focus on how official narratives of the Chinese government are constructed, thus how the relationship between Africa and China is framed and differentiated from previous partnerships. Hence, this research explains how the relationship of China with African countries has come about in terms of China claiming to be different from other partners of African nations from a constructivist perspective.

The theory of Constructivism in International Relations will be used as a theoretical framework for this research. Hereby, constructivism is understood as a “social theory of international politics,” that considers world affairs to be socially constructed and composed of many different ways of human interactions and ways in which human beings think and interact with one and other (Chernoff, 208, 68). According to constructivist thought, International politics are constructed through

the identities and practices of the participants, and are influenced and developed by changing normative institutional structures. From which can be understood that norms and values evolve over time and influence the political structures and communications of world politics. Actors are not just responding to the existing conditions but actively involved in creating them. This knowledge construction is socially constituted through discourse and language as well as by social practices: interpretation of one's world by the "life world" of the actor, or through the language shared by the community of the observers (Guzzini, 2000, 160).

Constructivism is "the view that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human and action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world." (Adler, 2005: 90) It is a theory that was established – in the late 1980s and early 1990s – by, amongst others, Emanuel Adler, Alexander Wendt and Martha Finnemore; it is a "social theory of international politics" which emphasizes the social construction of world affairs as opposed to the claim of (neo-)realists that international politics is shaped by rational-choice decisions and behaviour of self-centred actors that are only interested in utilitarian calculations that maximize their benefits and minimize their losses.

Comparing constructivism to the IR realist theory, which considers international relations to be driven by states' security and material interest defined in terms of power (Griffiths, 2008: 51); and to liberal internationalism that focuses on the reliance of international actors and their agency and procedures happening within constitutional restraints; constructivism recognizes international politics as a field of interaction constructed by the identities and practices of the participants. According to Reus-Smith, realists and liberalists similarly consider international actors inherently egoistic and their interests are formed "prior to social interaction", hence, this interaction is only for material gain or strategic purposes. Both liberalists and realists take the "self-interested" state as the starting point for theory (Wendt, 1992:392). Constructivists, however, consider international actors to be "intrinsically social beings whose identities and interests are the products of inter-subjective social structures." (Adler, 2005, 193)

Hence, constructivists consider the actors of the international system to play a crucial role in how the system is interpreted, and that their positions can evolve over time; actors do not just respond to and comply with given conditions but actively create them (Ruggie, 1998: 877). This ties into how the concept of framing of an issue through the use of language constitutes to understanding the world, and how through frames we construct our narrative of understanding the world.

#### *i. How actors frame issues*

The notion of framing has its origins in communication studies. The main argument of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from varietal perspectives and deduced to having multiple implications for values or considerations. Framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue. (Chong and

Druckman, 2007: 104) It is a process “by which actors produce frames of meaning to mobilize support for their respective positions” (Fiss and Hirsch, 2005, 30) which are embedded in historical and material contexts. Hence, with framing the narrative is of great importance. Therefore, Fiss and Hirsch consider framing and sense-making to be inherently connected, as “framing focuses on how different meanings compete for support, sense-making stresses how the identification of patterns of meaning depends on salient cues from the environment” (2005, 13; Weick 1999). Additionally, Snow explains frames to constitute “schemata of interpretation” that “organize experiences and guide action”. (1986: 464) Frames make sense of relevant events, and like framing, sense-making implies that the world does not come to us in “raw form,” but that we actively construct it. (Benford 1993 quoted by Fiss and Hirsch, 2005, 31)

“How actors frame issues”, a study developed by Rein and Schön, shows how framing is inherently selective and done in normative ways. Thus, this perspective recognises that social problems are not merely ‘out there’ and dictated by facts but rather, that they are socially defined or ‘made real’. Naming features of a situation, policy-relevant actors draw on language reflecting their understanding of the situation, while naming in effect directs attention to certain characteristics of the situation while diverting it from others. Hereby differences are established between for example, friends and enemies, victims and perpetrators, normal and abnormal, old and new, or whatever is relevant to the issue at hand. (Van Hulst and Yanow, 2006: 96) According to Rein and Schön (1997), situational storytelling helps policy-relevant actors to bind elements of a situation into a pattern that is coherent and graspable. (Rein & Schön, 1996) Storytelling enables policy and administrative practitioners to do one’s work (Van Hulst and Yanow, 2006: 98) because “it explains their audience what is going on, and what needs to be done”, and past, present, and future are corresponding to the plot line of a policy story. (Van Hulst and Yanow, 2006, 100)

Inhibiting frames and images are persistent with the neo-liberal institution of international relations, which emphasizes the significance of reputation in conducting foreign affairs. According to Robert Keohane reputations are a crucial resource for a government: “to a government their reputation values its ability to make future agreements; and the most important aspect of an actor’s reputation in world politics is the belief of others that it will keep its future commitments even when a particular situation makes it appear disadvantageous to do so” (1984: 116). Similarly, significance of reputation is also part of constructivism in international relations; because, states often act differently based on the identity, interests, culture, and relationships amongst states (Behravesch 2011). As Wendt puts it, “states act differently towards enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not, [...] it is collective meanings that constitute the structures which organize our actions.” (1992: 397)

Moreover, Adler claims that with states and people, when, where, how and why are not solely determined by physical forces and constraints and neither only depending on individuals preference and rational choices. “It is also a matter of their shared knowledge, the collective meaning they attach to their situation, their authority and legitimacy, the rules, institutions and material resources they use to find their way, and their practices, or even, sometimes their joint creativity.” It is through the interaction of these actions that concern constructivism, identity based on interactions and interpretations. (1998: 321) This is in line with the theory of Constructivism that considers how norms and frames develop, who demands these norms, who establishes norms differing from current ones and which norms matter under what conditions (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 894). Confirmed by Reus-Smith (2005) claiming, “Identities are constituted by the institutional norms, values and ideas of the social environment in which they act (199).” The role of the individual is critical.

## *ii. Methods*

All analyses to answer the research question will derive from academic peer-reviewed articles and books; government data; working papers; white papers; and renowned newspaper articles. Content analysis, discourse analysis, and historical analysis are essential to this research because data includes relevant policies, figures, statistics, speeches and interviews. By combining several forms of data the researcher can approach the subject from different angles, in order to provide a complete picture of the considerations at hand. Academic literature has been used to provide historical and contemporary background of the subject, present the theoretical framework and outline the research method.

To be more specific, the researcher is looking at several strategies of the Chinese government in cooperation with Africa to differentiate themselves from other partnerships. The research will constitute of exploring the four identified pillars of differentiation executed by the Chinese government in their relationship with Africa: the notion of historical ties, use of rhetoric, the concept of aid investment and cooperation and the practice of Soft Power. Content analysis will be done on the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) sources of the years 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012 and the China’s Africa Policy White Papers. Secondary academic sources will supplement the research on the four pillars of differentiation. Taken together this will constitute an analytical framework based on a constructivist approach. The researcher has chosen this type of analytical framework because it constitutes to interpreting what the Chinese do in their Africa-policy when portraying itself as a different actor on the African continent compared to other African partners.

This research will be limited to a specific timeframe up to and until the fifth FOCAC meeting in 2012, motivated by the consideration to keep the number of government publications manageable. Also due to the very recent nature of this subject, which is discussed in a changing matter, the opinions on the subject change as well. Therefore, the researcher tried to restrain the change of

opinions on the subject by looking at sources up to 2012, with some exceptions made for recent articles that accurately connected to the literature used and the subject discussed. A possible difficulty is that a selective bias might arise by researching this topic as it can be unclear from what perspective the possible sources have written their articles or books. It seems that in Africa a more anti-Western sentiment has emerged which may result into anti-western/non-western perspectives on the influence of China in Africa if compared to the influence of the West in Africa, and, the ideas about their relationship in the past. Moreover, the researcher is aware of its own bias because of education, although internationally oriented programs, mainly based on Western ideas and all taught in the Netherlands. Lastly, the researcher does not understand the Chinese language, which will limit access to sources coming from Chinese researchers and Chinese government sources that have not been published or translated into English (or Dutch). The motivation behind this research is getting a better understanding of China as a new world force and its motivations behind its actions, and how perspectives presented in Western media might be untrue when looking at the Chinese reality in Africa.

The sub-sections under the research question suggest the direction of the research, every sub-header focuses on one element of differentiation used by the Chinese government. Yet, they are analysed in relation to each other, because the research is about how these different aspects together, according to China, constitute a different voice in foreign involvement on the African continent. Chapter 1 presents the historical ties of China and Africa, its portrayed longevity of their relationship and their common vision as both being part of the Global South, and how the past is used in foreign policy between China and Africa today. Chapter 2 discusses the rhetoric and language used by the Chinese government when talking about their relationship with Africa, specifically the continuous use of the words ‘cooperation,’ ‘friendship,’ and ‘win-win.’ Chapter 3 provides an overview of what kind of financial involvement China has on the African government, which is based on a combination of non-conditional aid and economic investment through (concessional) loans and grants. Chapter 4 discusses in what ways soft power is executed by the PRC in Africa. The last chapter will conclude the research by providing an answer to the research question and finding possible new leads for further research.

### III. EMPHASISING HISTORICAL TIES

There has always been persistence in tradition in Chinese (foreign) policy. Or as Mark Mancell already put it in 1963, “history is frequently invoked as a common reference point in the official discourse of contemporary China-Africa relations”. This chapter will look at which aspects of the general past the Chinese government deliberately uses in the present, hereby justifying and explaining the contemporary involvement of China with Africa. The current acknowledgement of China’s historical past involving in international relations with for example Africa, contradicts the notions of China’s isolated position at the world stage, and their ‘secondary’ position as compared to Western power structures. How the Chinese involve their history of their relations with Africa into present relations reveal the symbolic and instrumental use of a shared past and historical connection to explain their current involvement with the African continent. This in turn also helps the Chinese to advocate against the supposed probability for them take on a hegemonic role. A backward looking approach to their present-day relationship grants a better perspective on growing China-Africa relations and the Chinese route to and position in the modern world order (Large 2008, 48).

The People’s Republic of China, founded in 1949, has since its beginning identified itself as part of the global south and has had development cooperation with other developing countries as one of its main themes of their foreign policy and relations. Mao’s theory of the differentiation of the three worlds, introduced in 1974, reaffirms that the two super powers – at the time the United States and the Soviet Union – were the common enemy of mankind and that the Third World was the main force against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. (Yu-Shek, 2016) Hence, from this idea originates China’s motivation to support developing countries “in their just struggle for winning and preserving national independence, safeguarding sovereignty and developing national economies”. (Mao Zedong quoted by Mei and Hongwu, 2012)

#### *i. Chinese Emperors and the Star Raft*

Gao Jinyuan describes that in Chinese historical records ('Shi Ji'), written by Chinese historian Si Machien, one hundred years BC Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty sent envoys far west to make alliance with friendly tribes against the powerful Huns in the north. There are several indications of product exchange between China and Africa happening two thousand years ago. There are stories about Queen Cleopatra of Egypt, ruling from 51 to 30 BC, wearing dresses made of Chinese Silk; she might have benefitted from the ‘Silk Road’ that started in Sian and stretched across mid-Asia until the Mediterranean (Jinyuan 1984, 241). According to Basil Davidson – “an English historian that with his works intended to destroy the idea that Africa before the arrival of Europeans was a sea of barbarism” (1959, 158) – Chinese goods were certainly reaching the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, by the sea routes, as early as the beginning of the Christian era. Moreover, he mentions the finding of bronze pots of 'undoubtedly Chinese shape' discovered in Meroe, which was the capital of ancient kingdom

Kush, present Sudan (Davidson 1959, 158). Archaeological discoveries show the exchange of products between China and Africa: Chinese coins and porcelains or fragments of them of Sung Dynasty have been found in Zanzibar, Brava, Kilwa and further inlands in Zimbabwe (Shinn and Eisenman 2012, 18).

Furthermore, if one looks deeper into the continuation of these historical connections of the Chinese and the Africans one can look at Philip Snow's book 'the Star Raft.' He describes how Chinese sea vessels likely from the sixth century AD onwards (hence, before the Europeans) travelled to Indonesia and India to, amongst ships from Persia and Ethiopia, trade silk, aloes, cloves, sandal wood and other products. It is unclear if Chinese traders accompanied their silk, but in Africa Chinese produce such as porcelain and copper coins were found and its trade exchange of products has been recorded. In return, East African products such as ivory, rhinoceros horn and tortoiseshell, reached China (1988, 4-7). In 1414 a fleet commanded by Zheng He, the Chinese Columbus and the Chinese personification of maritime endeavours employed by the Ming government, advanced into more distant regions after Indochina, Indonesia, south-west India and Ceylon. Even though Zheng He embarked three-quarters of a century before Columbus, he – instead of three one deck ships weighing 415 tons that Columbus commanded – had sixty-two galleons weighing 1,500 tons auxiliary vessels, more than hundreds of them. On He's third expedition encountered with a giraffe on Bengal land, not exactly Africa yet but an enchanting introduction with an unknown animal (thought to be a unicorn which was a holy creature for the Chinese) coming from the land of 'the blacks.' The fourth journey of Zheng He most likely went no further than the Gulf, but nevertheless brought him in contact with the East African world by meeting merchants from the Somali coast, Mogadishu being a place of flourishing oversea trade.

What Snow underlines in his book is how different the Chinese visitors on the African continent were compared to the Europeans arriving seventy years later. Although the Chinese were 'armed to the teeth', they, unlike the Portuguese, were not aggressive, did not storm cities and did not conquer land. There have been conflicts between the Chinese and the Africans, but according to Snow, these conflicts took place because of the Chinese cultural necessity of foreigners paying respects to their emperor and the misunderstanding of what paying these essential respects to the emperor entailed. Nonetheless, when looking at sixteenth-century Chinese novelists, it becomes clear that the Chinese were also anxious to avoid disturbing the small coastal states more than necessary to achieve their ends. The Chinese brought gifts of coloured silk to the coastal traders: 'all they sought from Africans was a gesture of symbolic acquiescence in the Chinese view of the world (1988, 29).' While, according to Snow, all the Portuguese wanted was plunder, burn down African properties and impose their religious convictions onto African souls.

Why Chinese behaviour differed from their Western successors is thought to be for two reasons. First, because the Chinese did



not come to Africa to assault and conquer, but to garner prestige and profit for the Chinese emperor in Peking, which could be achieved through their traditional system of exchanging imperial favours for foreign 'tribute.' Second, the Chinese would have never considered the Africans to be worth assaulting in the first place. For the Chinese, China was the centre of the world and they were in no need of African gold or other resources because they had plenty of gold and other forms of wealth at home. Only some unknown spices and animals were of interest. The Portuguese soldiers arriving in, amongst others, Mogadishu and Brava witnessed golden cities richer than their own and Portuguese priests noticed heathens with crying souls to be saved (Snow 1988, 29). Meanwhile, the Chinese believed that all non-Chinese were barbarians. As a Ming writer urges his generation to 'treat the barbarian kings like harmless seagulls,' hence, meddling with African beliefs was not necessary. According to Snow, Zheng He and captains observed the Africans from a far too elevated level to think of meddling with African life. Also, a big difference between the Europeans and the Chinese on African grounds, the Chinese left. (Snow 1988, 30)

*ii. Institutionalising South-South cooperation*

Taken from the above review of what has been said in historical and academic literature about Chinese involvement on the African continent, one can better understand where the Chinese foreign policy tradition of falling back on past 'connections' stems from, and why it constitutes to the Chinese self-portrayal of being different than other foreign powers present on African lands. Their continuous looking and referring back to the past, supports the Chinese in saying that they are different. Hence, one can conclude from past involvements that China is a major peace-loving power, an anti-hegemonic force and an international co-operator.

Also, the current notion of a South-South connection between China and Africa was built upon the connections of the past. The South-South alliance was formed at the foundation of the Non-Aligned Movement, at the Asia-Africa Bandung Conference in 1955 in Indonesia, held with the intention to organize states that did not want to align with the USA, and neither with the Soviet Union, but desired to remain independent or neutral during the Cold War. The Non-Aligned movement "sought to create an independent path in world politics that would not result in member States becoming pawns in the struggles between the major powers" and recognized as its main objectives "the right of independent judgment, the struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism, and the use of moderation in relation with all big powers" (Wang, 2003). Another goal of the Non-Aligned movement was the restructuring of the international economic order, for it to be equal and inclusive of developing nations. According to Muekalia China has a unique position in the community of nations because it is able to straddle both the developed (as a member of the UN Security Council) and the developing worlds with its official connection since the Bandung Conference (2010).

Due to this Chinese position, FOCAC cooperation built upon the guidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement with the focus on to institutionalising the common goals and common future of

China and Africa. Hereby, looking back at their similar pasts of fighting for national: both “made strenuous efforts for peace and development and made historical progress in building up their countries”; both sides fought an anti-Fascist war during the Second World War; the Chinese and African people both treasure independence, love peace and long for development and that they are both important forces for world peace and common development”. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, held for the first time in 2000 in Beijing attended by over 800 officials from China and 44 African countries, “constitutes a platform for African and Chinese policy-makers to strengthen Sino-Africa relations” (Anshan, 2013) and, “the forum provides an important platform for China-Africa cultural cooperation”. “Convened once every three years, the FOCAC Ministerial Conference is a promise between China and Africa”, a friendship that will bring our African friends to Beijing, and Beijing to Africa, as brothers and sisters (Yang Jiechie, 2012). As published on the FOCAC website that maintaining peace, seeking stability and promoting development is an aspiration of people all around the world, the FOCAC has served as “an important platform for collective dialogue and an effective mechanism for practical cooperation between China and Africa countries. FOCAC has greatly boosted the political influence of China-Africa relationship and served as an important driver for China-Africa practical cooperation in various areas”. Also, according to Tian Xuejun, FOCAC has become “a flag that encourages and guides the international community to follow and support Africa’s development” (2012).

The great presence of South-South mutual understanding in China-Africa relations becomes apparent in many of the published official documents and statements from and around the FOCAC meetings. Jiabao: “Chinese-African relations have become a role model for South-South cooperation and their close partnership spanned over half a century”; “promoting Chinese-African cooperation is essential for interests of both sides” (Third FOCAC, 2009). And the Sharm El Sheikh Action Plan 2010-2012 created at the fourth FOCAC, China comes back to the NAM aspirations of restructuring the global order by mentioning developing countries deserving a greater role in the UN, including the Security Council, and priority must be given to increasing the representation of developing countries, particularly African countries, in the SC”; “the two sides stand for reforms in the international financial system, and will work to increase the presentation and say of developing countries and build an international financial system that is fair, just, inclusive and orderly”; and, “the two sides call on the international community, developed countries in particular, to promptly deliver their pledges of assistance and debt relief, continue to step up assistance and investment, and help African countries in particular to overcome the difficulties and realize the MDGs at an early date”. The South-South cooperation and mutual understanding is opposed to the friction between the North and the South. For this reason, to truly create new fair and rational international economic order, China also proposes to strengthen and work for the North-South dialogue. In this respect, the Chinese clearly identify with their position as part of the Global South and as a developing country.

*iii. Past to Present*

Also current personal relationships between Chinese and African leaders draw from history. The relationship developed between Zambia and China was founded on Mao's principles, and is remembered and (intensified until today) as a long history of 'friendship' because of China's involvement in the fight against colonialism. "The China-Zambia friendship, established by leaders from an older generation, is all-weather nature." Moreover, Xi highlights the mutual support demonstrated by both countries on issues concerning core interests, its sound coordination in international affairs and fruitful cooperation in various fields. Kaunda stressed Zambia's appreciation for the PRC's support in Zambian independence, as well as Zambia's contribution to helping China to regain its seat in the United Nations in 1971 (Lusaka Times, 2011).

In 2012, the then president of Mozambique, President Joaquim Alberto Chissano, speaks of important role played by the Chinese people during the liberation struggle for the people of Southern Africa against colonialism and apartheid. "China was a very poor country by the time of the liberation struggle, but unwaveringly supported their poor brothers and sister in one way or another, sometimes until death and their remains are buried in the African soil. Not because their remains could not be sent back to China, but rather to show their deaths were the result of resolve and deep commitment to continue the support (of China to Africa) without fear or do it out of fear" (Tanzania Daily, 2012).

An article published on the International Exchange section on the website of the Chinese government, published on May 24 2016, Chinese and African officials 'vow to carry long-standing historic relation forward' and 'underlined the need to further strengthen Sino-African friendly relationship based on past successes and longstanding historic ties'. The showpiece – 'A monument to China-Africa Friendship' as it is called by the published book – of their strong connection is the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA) project. Following the article, the TAZARA project is a Chinese financed and built railway covering a total length of 1860 kilometres, running from Tanzania's capital Dar es Salaam towards New Kapiri Mposhi in central Zambia; the main rail line that connects east Africa with southern and central Africa, as depicted in figure 1. This 'Railway of Freedom' or 'Railway of Friendship', founded by Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Moa Zedong of China, was officially inaugurated in 1975, but has been expanded and continued since. The creation of the railway was considered as a concrete way to liberate the nations at the time still pressed under colonialism. The recent initiative of the revitalization of the line has more economic motives (for China). The book – first published by the Chinese MOFA in 2015 and now translated into English through a joint project by the Zambian and Tanzanian governments – will according to China "provide a deeper understanding of the exceptional courage and great vision of the leaders of the pioneer generation, the devotion and selflessness of the Chinese who participated in the construction of the TAZARA line and the deep-rooted China-Africa friendship and its bright future". Moreover, AU Commission's Chief Advisor Baso Sangqu pointed out that China's cooperation with

Africa has made positive and significant impact, based on mutual trust, win-win situation, and cultural exchange, mutual assistance in security, and solidarity and coordination in international affairs. Zambian diplomat Susan Sikaneta and Tanzanian diplomat Suma Mwakyusa praised Chinese cooperation with China in this ‘historic project’ being completed two years ahead of schedule ‘due to dedication and commitment of the Chinese to the project’, and praised them for their friendship with Africa.

Concluding, present relations between China and Africa are explicitly based on the historical ties between the ‘Two Sides’ layed down by Zheng He on his voyages to Africa, and later Mao’s determination to support African independence from colonial powers on the bases of non-interference and non-conditional aid. Strauss: “it is the long-standing non-aggressive, peaceable and trading intentions of the People’s Republic of China towards Africa in implicit contrast to the colonial and exploitative West both historically and in the present” (2009, 29).

Figure 1. TAZARA Railway between Kapiri Mposhi Zambia and Dar es Salaam Tanzania, build in 1976.



#### IV. LANGUAGE / RHETORIC

##### *“Friendship in hard struggle”*

The Chinese use rhetoric and language as a mechanism of differentiation to identify themselves as partners of African government. When looking at the FOCAC publications starting from 2000 onwards, one can recognize a consistent use of words to describe and address the China-Africa relations. When Zhou Enlai as premier of the PRC visited several African countries in 1965, he set the tone for China-Africa relations and its morality behind it – delineation of China from the West, respect for state sovereignty, support for anti-colonial struggles, no-string developmental assistance, notions of supporting self-reliance, and friendliness found on the basis of equality (Strauss, 2009) – which still resonates in the discourse today. For example, in 2012 Yang Jiechi closes his speech with saying that “China-Africa cooperation does not match that between Africa and its traditional partners in either scope or depth” and presents a Chinese saying that translates into “good friends value the promise they make, even if it means traveling a thousand miles to meet”. He hereby shows the commitment of the Chinese towards their African friends, and their willingness to invest a lot into this friendship. The words that the Chinese use consistently and extensively to describe their political, economic, and cultural connections to several African nations are terms as ‘cooperation’, ‘win-win’, ‘partnership’ and ‘friendship’, this chapter will deconstruct the use of these terms. Also, in general the way the Chinese tell the African story preserves core rhetorical framing positions that have been used since the involvement of Mao in China in the 1960s (Strauss, 2009: 779), and is thus strongly connected to the historical lineage used in Chinese portrayal of their relation with Africa.

Strauss asks the question why there is a relative uniformity of discourse in China on Africa, when the actual conditions of China’s relations with Africa are so multifaceted and varied, and why this discourse eagerly claims itself to be part of an unbroken lineage back to the 1960s and 1970s and to earlier Mao years. It can be claimed that framing and rhetoric of (“Post-Westphalian) state policies always consists of gaps between what they say and what they do, real life actions differ from the principles behind real life actions, and China is not an exception on this (2009, 777). Nonetheless, the Chinese official and semi-official discourse on China-Africa relations portrays “elite policy-making hopes, aspirations and sense of place in the world as it does about China’s burgeoning and multi-layered actual involvement in the increasingly complex and varied realities of Africa”. China does not have a history of colonizing Africa and has its own history of colonial struggle, underdevelopment and a rich past of non-Western civilization. Hence, China portrays a development model to Africa that is better from the West and separate to the West. In the Beijing Action Plan of 2012 the importance was stressed of a “favourable public opinion” for China-Africa cooperation, how their relation is portrayed in the media and how this influences the effectiveness of the partnership and the mutual understanding.

*i. Cooperation*

When looking more specifically at particular words used since the beginning of China-Africa involvement and publications of their relations, cooperation is one of them. Articles published on the website of Forum on China-Africa cooperation mention for example a Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Yi stresses importance of China-Africa ‘friendship’ (04-11-2009); FOCAC based on mutual respect, understanding, interest (04-11-2009); Africa-China cooperation not exclusive but win-win, says Kenya’s PM (24-07-2012); Stronger Youth Ties for Better China-Africa Cooperation (27-06-2012); Chinese willingness to ‘expand win-win cooperation with Ghana’ (5-7-2017); Kenya’s readiness to ‘deepen pragmatic cooperation with China’ (10-7-2017); Tunisia that ‘boosts deal’ with China to ‘commercial cooperation’ (10-07-2017); and Mozambican president hoping to ‘strengthen cooperation’ with China (14-07-2017); and Angolan Vice President Manuel Domingos Vicente is thankful to Chinese help in ‘rebuilding’ and their ‘economic development’, on a ‘firm foundation’ for bilateral ‘friendly’ cooperation’ (18-07-2017). In all of the afore mentioned discourse on Chinese-African cooperation the ‘traditional friendship’, or differently phrased, time-honoured relationship, partnership or long-term friendly cooperation between the nations is emphasized. Domingos Vicente: “China is always committed, despite uncertainties in international economic situation, we firmly work with African countries to implement the outcome of the summit and advance our relations” (18-07-2017). Also the China-Africa forum held every 3 years is founded on the basis of ‘Cooperation’, emphasized in its very name. Cooperation is used to present the China-Africa relationship is on basis of equality and partnership and is not a relationship in which one party mostly profits and/or in which one party makes the relationship.

*ii. Friendship*

Also the notion of friendship is very present in Chinese (and African) portrayal of the Sino-African relationship. In the first FOCAC meeting, held in Beijing in 2000, it already becomes clear that China looks back at Moa Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Ding Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders of older generations “and the forerunners of the African movement for national liberation who forged and nurtured this great China-Africa friendship”. The friendship between China and Africa emphasizes the development experience of China and the possibility of advancement without “superior-inferior tutelage” (Strauss, 2009, 780), under the premise of non-interference.

During the Second FOCAC Ministerial Meeting, new president Wen Jiabao speaks to his “African friends” about the remarkable achievements of China-Africa cooperation on all fronts, and he speaks of the “friendship and mutual trust are stronger and deeper”. He echoes China being the largest developing country and Africa being the largest developing continent, which results into a “new-type partnership featuring long-term stability, equality and mutual benefit and all-round cooperation”. The Chinese president proposes to further promote China-Africa relations through “promoting further development of China-Africa traditional friendship through mutual support”,

through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). He also proposes to turn a new page in China-Africa friendly relations through enhanced cooperation by further opening the Chinese market for African products, increasing capital investment, encouraging and facilitating mutually beneficial cooperation between Chinese and African enterprises, and stimulating cultural exchanges. Later on the NEPAD is described as being all together "the result of continuous growth of the traditional friendship between the two sides.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> FOCAC meeting onwards, there is more information published on the FOCAC website. Besides the publications of the formed Action Plans and official documents, much is published about individual meetings of Chinese leaders with African leaders, commentary of African leaders on Chinese visits, and follow-up actions after the Summit took place. The publications mention for example: "Chinese Foreign Minister stresses importance of China-Africa friendship" (04-11-2009); "FOCAC based on mutual respect, understanding, interest" (04-11-2009); China-Africa cooperation "overladen with fruits" (03-11-2009); and "Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visits boosts civilization dialogue, friendly cooperation" (10-11-2009).

Confirmed by Strauss, is the consistency of China's rhetoric on Africa which makes its claim to be Africa's "all-weather friend" credible, unlike the "changeable West, which promotes a range of different rhetoric to justify radical changes in policy direction roughly every decade". (2009, 780) This "all-weather friendship" is mentioned in various forms, in Chinese government publications over the FOCAC years. For example, one of the speeches of the 4<sup>th</sup> FOCAC where it states that "China is living up to all its commitments to Africa despite the financial crisis"; and, "China has provided assistance through bilateral channel and the FOCAC to Africa, with no political strings attached and are willing to learn from others in helping the Africans in need. When in Africa however, we do as the Africans do [...] Africa's development should be based on its own conditions and to follow its own path, that is, the African model".

### *iii. Win – Win*

Moreover, at the root of any kind of Chinese involvement in Africa is the notion of a win-win partnership where both the Chinese as the Africans gain from their cooperation and connectedness. This denies the claims made by the West that China would be Africa's neo-colonial threat, and that China's only reason to be involved in Africa is because of its resources and the economic profit China can make from these resources. This false premise is specifically emphasized in for example a statement made at the Business Forum of FOCAC by the Vice Foreign Minister Zhai Jun, who reminisces of the 2006 Beijing Summit where China and Africa "decided to establish a new type of strategic partnership featuring political equality and mutual trust, win-win economic cooperation and cultural exchanges, thus turning a new page in China-Africa friendly cooperation". He then responds

to statements that ‘China should take up more responsibilities in Africa regarding peace and security’ and ‘China has moved other people’s “cheese” as it strengthens relations with Africa and damaged other countries’ interests there’. In response Jun states: “China’s relations with Africa are open and inclusive”, “any country that wishes to develop cooperation with Africa must respect the ownership of African countries”, “and Africa is not anyone’s cheese to begin with”. He also underlines that also China is still a developing country- which was very similarly addressed by Zhoa in 1983 – hence, their own capacity needs to be considered when providing assistance to others. This portrayal of Chinese involvement in Africa shows the selflessness of China and the need for them to succeed, thus ‘win-win’ on both sides. As is stated in China’s White Paper on African Policy of 2007, the principles and objectives of China’s Africa are based on sincerity, friendship and equality, and aims for mutual benefit, reciprocity and common prosperity. “Common strategic needs”; “partnership featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges” (4<sup>th</sup> FOCAC) are established through “maintaining unity and mutual support to jointly tackle the challenges brought by the financial crisis”; “expanding mutual benefit and upgrading the level of China-Africa practical cooperation”; and “encouraging and promoting two-way trade and investment”. Moreover, the notion of a win-win is safeguarded by:

4.2.2. The two sides will continue to promote the conclusion and implementation of bilateral agreements on investment promotion and protection, and create a sound environment with a view to scaling up mutual investment. Governments of China and African countries give encouragement and support to their competitive business in investing in each other’s country so as to raise the level and quality of cooperation for mutual benefit and win-win results (Sharm-El-Sheikh Action Plan, 2010-2012).

What can be understood from this chapter is that China portrays itself as Africa’s friend and equal partner, which underlines the Chinese aspirations to create win-win cooperation for both sides out of a position of genuine interest in Africa and its progress. Through the continuous (historical) use of certain rhetoric in expressing their ambitions and intentions for the continent, their relationship is actively constructed and framed. Hereby China presents itself as New Partners under the NEPAD framework and sets themselves apart from the ‘old’ partners. The use of language can be recognized as part of a differentiation strategy of the Chinese and will be looked further into in the next chapters about the Soft Power of China and development cooperation in Africa led by China, in which also the continuous use of specific rhetoric becomes apparent.



## V. SOFT POWER

Soft power – a notion of “power over opinion” – is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through appeal attraction. (Nye, 2009: 160 and Wang, 2011:1) However, what soft power entails is – just as the definition of power – understood from different perspectives. Power can be understood as “the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way”, “the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events”, or, “political or social authority”, “international influence and military strength”. (Oxford Dictionaries) Nye understands power as the ability to affect others to obtain outcomes you want through the ability of practicing coercion, inducement or attraction. Especially soft power is the ability to shape the preference of others by enticing and attracting, “soft power is attractive power” (2008, 95). “Convincing others to follow” based on the “appeal of one’s ideas” (Nye, 1990); hence, soft power is a rather subjective experience as it depends on the subject’s role in the relationship with the agent. (Mattern, 2007: 98) The sources of soft power are therefore what differentiates it from hard power. Hard power is the use of coercion and payment. However, soft power can vary between naturally attractive values such as ‘freedom’ or ‘human rights’, but it is also based on relationships between different actors and can be “socially constructed through reasoned persuasion”. (Fijalkowski, 2011: 224). Soft power operates through attraction produced by “culture (when it is pleasing to others), its values (when they are attractive and consistently practiced), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as inclusive, legitimate and having moral authority)” (Nye 2009, 161).

### *i. Chinese Soft Power*

Soft power has a crucial place in the story of the re-emergence of China as a global power. China strives to (re-)build public diplomacy – a country’s engagement and communication with foreign publics – in pursuit of creating a new and improved global image (Wang, 2011, 2). How China is telling its story to the world, is supported by several government practices and initiatives that can be considered as soft power strategies. China’s discontent of losing out to Western cultural exports (Gupta, 2011), the Chinese emphasis on diversity and on the necessity of challenging universal ideals that were promoted by the West, but also, the ambiguity of soft power, is all part of the debate on China’s rising use and application of soft power and ‘skilful public diplomacy’ to project a more positive image of itself (Li, 2009). The tradition of the rule of virtue in Chinese culture is present in Chinese public diplomacy. According to Wang, “Chinese people prefer self-examination and look for self-transformation in attempts to convince or convert others”. Fundamentally, the West considers individuals as entities through which the world is understood, and divides the world in good and evil which can be translated into ‘self’ and ‘other’. Contrastingly, the Chinese believe there to be many different ‘others’ that can be reconciled into on harmonious existence in which the ‘other’ can become the ‘self’ (Wang, 2008: 262). Hence, Western political discourse is concerned with the

problem of identity: “Who are you?” with distinguishing friends and enemies, and facilitating and regulating struggle, whilst Chinese political thinkers ask “Who are we?” and create “the whole world as one family,” making harmonious coexistence possible (Zhao, 2005). Also, the understanding of “power” is different in Chinese culture, as it is understood as being related to morality. There are different explanations for this connection of power and morality, for example, Xunzi or Hsun Tzu (313-238 BC) explain power to be contrary to morality, whereas Confucius (551-478 BC) argues to “become a sage from inside and an emperor outside”, which means “ruling others and cultivating himself”, specifically, “morality inside brings power outside” (Wang, 2005: 263). Confucius taught to “not impose upon others what you do not desire yourself,” and Lao Tzu (854-770 BC) directed to “govern by doing nothing against nature”. Hence, Wang concludes that Chinese idea of power stems from morality, and morality stems from nature (2005: 263). Underlined by President Hu Jintao at a Conference of Chinese Diplomatic Envoys in 2014, stating that:

*“the fundamental task and basic goal of China’s diplomatic work at present and a certain period in the years to come is to maintain the important development period featured by strategic opportunities and strive for a peaceful and stable international environment, a good-neighbourly and friendly surrounding environment, an environment for equal and mutually beneficial cooperation, and an objective and friendly publicity environment”* (People’s Daily 2004).

From this it can be concluded that Chinese speak about development and foreign relations with the notion of benefitting both sides, the investors and the receivers of development aid. Hence, aid is not just aid but is turned into cooperation. In this one can recognize the ‘Chinese model’ or the ‘Beijing Consensus’, a way of development that focuses on innovation based development; development where success is not measured by GDP per capita but by the level of sustainability and equality; and, development based on self-determination (World Foresight Forum, 2011).

#### *ii. Beijing Consensus*

The origins of China’s Soft Power stem from the Confucian ideal of ‘mean’ – striving for a balance between the two extreme positions to maintain harmony – which has resulted into the ‘Beijing Consensus’. Moreover, the “ability to influence others in world politics with the goal of achieving great power status”, is according to Yong Deng integral part of China’s strategy (2009, 64). Other examples of Chinese Soft Power practices are the way China participates and executes development assistance (discussed in the next chapter); the establishment of Confucius Institutes all over the world; the distribution of scholarships for international students wishing to study in China; and projecting international politics that is focused on a South-South common vision and mutual understanding. According to Jeffrey Gil, Chinese people and government reached an understanding that expressed “China needs foreign languages, the world needs Chinese” , which can be seen as part of a broader

effort to accomplish China's foreign policy goal of obtaining a central place in the world by spreading soft power (2008, p. 116).

The Chinese development model at its core values of economic development, social stability and harmony, which can be argued to be a form of building up China's soft power (Y.Chen, 2007). It influences the international aid architecture and its connecting power relations, by portraying themselves as alternative partners to Africa compared to their traditional partners. The China model is a tool to win more allies and friends, specifically in Africa, by going against the dominant Washington standard of development and thereby enlarging the podium of developing countries in the global world order. The policy of non-intervention in domestic affairs, the (rhetoric of) 'no strings attached' provision of financial and technical aid, speaks to developing countries that feel patronized Western aid and do not feel for a regime change to be established to be able to develop economically. (Lai-Ha Chan, Pak K. Lee & Gerald Chan)

The Beijing Consensus (BC) is the alternative to the Washington consensus. The Washington Consensus (WAC) was, according to economist John Williamson in 1989, the most effective model by which developing nations could incite growth, prescribing free-market capitalism, open trade policies, privatization and deregulation (Turin, 2010). The Washington-based financial institutions from which the term Washington Consensus originated – IMF, the Worldbank, the White House, Wall Street and the US Treasury – aimed to address both problems in developing countries of corrupt governments and inefficient non-market system and promote good governance with the emphasis on rule of law, transparency, accountability and democracy (Chan et al, 2008: 12). Therefore, the WAC development assistance comes with 10 policy recommendations: fiscal discipline; restructuring public and social expenditure priorities; tax reform; liberalizing interest rates; competitive exchange rates; trade liberalization; liberalization of inward foreign direct investment; privatization; deregulation; and, property rights (Turin, 2010).

The Chinese Beijing consensus, does not prescribe certain recommendations for the problems of developing nations, but "recognizes the need for flexibility in solving multifarious problems" and has its focus on innovation and impartial development (Turin, 2010). Instead, to initiate and enhance economic growth and economic reform, the CM, Chinese model or the "new physics of Chinese power" (Ramo, 2004), follows three hypothesis of what is needed on the ground: innovation, pursuit of dynamic goals and/or rejection of Per Capita GDP growth, and self-determination. Joshua Cooper Ramo, who introduced the term 'Beijing Consensus' in 2004 – although the philosophy behind the BC has been part of Chinese foreign policy since the early 1990s – claims it to describe how China is giving nations worldwide the possibility to figure out how to develop, and how to fit into the international order by being independent and protecting their way of life and political choices in a world with one imposing power centre. Hence, China introduces a new example for developing states

how to engage in and continue with economic reforms wherein states themselves act as the controlling party in reform and development. Also, the Chinese claim that there should not be a “universal blueprint” for development that is dictated by external actors (Zhang and Huang, 2005).

### *iii. Innovation*

Following the example of their own country, China promotes the necessity of innovation based development which can be experimented with and be used as a driver of progress (World Foresight Forum, 2011). Or phrased differently: “constant tinkering and constant change, and a recognition that different strategies are appropriate for different situations” (Leonard, 2006). China has maintained a strong focus on innovation connected to economic development in their own country, by focusing on effective policies that were important to their own people and to understand the needs of their people. As described by Ogden: “The Chinese government itself is known to carry out surveys of public opinion precisely to find out public attitude toward itself”, to truly understand the impact and popularity of their policies (Ogden, 2002, 100-101). This portrays the viewpoint of “different strategies for different situations” and how innovative policymaking is more effective when implemented because it is quickly adopted by its citizens as it is approved by its citizens. Described in the Addis Ababa Action plan 2004-2006, economic development is focused on for example, “strengthening cooperation in agriculture” which will facilitate “experience-sharing to promote Africa’s economic development”, as well as the statement that China will encourage and support its “strong and viable” national enterprises “through financial and policy incentive schemes” to “develop agricultural cooperation in projects in Africa” (4.1.1 and 4.1.2), supported by the creation of China-Africa joint ventures aimed at encouraging the transfer of technology and the creation of employment in African countries” (4.4.3). What can be taken from this is that the focus of China-Africa cooperation is based on innovation, giving Chinese companies an easy access to invest and set up business in Africa, and to exchange knowledge and technology.

### *iv. Rejection of per capita GDP*

Also, following China’s own development experience, it considers measuring development by the increase of GDP per capita as limiting and China considers the Human Development Index as a standard to “provide an alternative view of development equated exclusively with economic growth and help us understand that poverty is really the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than only the lowness of incomes” (Ogden, 2002, 367). Hence, quality of life and individual equity are considered as strong indicators of successful development and as enabling substantive results, without being misguided with numbers that possible only relate to a small portion of the population. As an example of China’s own experience with the discrepancy between GDP and HDI can be seen in China’s place on the UNDP 2007 list, published in 2009, on which China ranked 102<sup>nd</sup> place out of 182 countries, while it scored 92<sup>nd</sup> place on the HDI value of the UNDP, 72<sup>nd</sup> on worldwide life expectancy and 56<sup>th</sup>

on adult literacy. This proves that GDP is only limited in showing how far a country has come in development. According to Premier Wen Jiabao in 2006, China's Development Strategy "involves putting people first and promoting reform and innovation in accordance with the 'five-balances': economic and social development, balancing development between man and nature, and balancing domestic development with opening wider to the outside world" (quoted by Yusuf and Nabeshima, 2006, 5).

*v. Self-determination*

China feels connected to African development and recognizes their development struggle as being part of a South-South understanding and common vision. It also recognizes that a country's development should come from the inside and not be forced upon by foreign pressure and "hegemonic powers". As described by Gresh, a very important characteristic of the BC is the "valuation of independence and self-determination and refusing to let other (Western) powers impose their will", stressing that "countries can plan their own development without having to accept the unfavourable terms of the Washington Consensus" (Gresh, 2008). The Chinese way of offering help to developing nations is based on approaching it as multinational relationship, recognizing that a new global order is founded on economic relations while taking into account that political and cultural differences exist within a common global framework. This provides a new way of looking at the world (Dirlik, 2011). Understandably, the attractiveness of Chinese soft power lies in its promise of non-intervention in domestic affairs and the no-strings-attached behind financial and technical aid which offers developing countries expansion of commercial opportunities and the tools to uphold economic growth without political change (Lai-Ha Chan, Pak K. Lee, Gerald Chan, 2012: 35).

In the Addis Ababa action plan, self-determination of African countries is emphasized by encouraging African countries and regional groupings "to designate a competent organization to hold consultations with the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) as well as by giving African countries the responsibility to "form bilateral agreements on investment protection and on the avoidance of double taxation" (4.4.3 and 4.4.4), hereby underlining that African countries have to "provide necessary information to and accord facilities for Chinese enterprises to promote the effective cooperation between enterprises on the Two Sides in accordance with international commercial rules and practice"(4.8.2). What can be taken from this is that China presents tools and its willingness to cooperate, "share same positions" and creates mutual benefit and "balanced two-way trade", but gives African governments the responsibility to step up and negotiate with the Chinese government and Chinese enterprises.

## VI. DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The following chapter will look at how China is involved in development cooperation on the African continent. In the area of aid investment, China approaches it through an angle of cooperation and non-interference. Aid coming from China, in comparison with Western aid, is not politically conditioned and is based on non-intervention policy, which makes the aid unconditional. China presents for some Africans an example of development fostered by encouraging domestic savings, the factor most likely to sustain growth and its non-intervention policy may make China more, rather than less, popular among common Africans, as it obviates political obstacles to the speedy delivery of infrastructure (Sautman and Hairong, 2009, 759). And, according to Lengauer, China is no longer looking to undermine the liberal world order as during the Mao era of foreign aid engagement, and is no longer promoting communism with its foreign investments. She claims that “foreign aid policy is a tool that helps the PRC to strengthen and legitimize its new elevated position in the international community” (2011), which greatly helps China to ensure that their interests are respected and supported in international organizations such as the UN because of their cooperative relationship with many developing nations. What China is connecting to its engagement with Africa, is the commitment to strive for a just multilateral trade system in which “the voices of developing countries are heard in the decision-making of international financial affairs” through South-South cooperation (White Papers, 2007). The New Partnership of African Development (NEPAD) – a programme initiated by South African president Mbeki as a socio-economic development framework for Africa (UNECA) – is the starting point of all current Chinese involvement in Africa as it realizes “all-round friendly political relations featuring mutual respect, mutual trust and mutual benefit”. “The pragmatic cooperation between China and Africa is “facilitated through the gradual increase of aid to Africa under the framework of FOCAC” (Jintao, 2013).

### *i. Non-Interference*

According to Kishi and Raleigh in the Washington Post (2015), the non-interference policy of China is strikingly shown in Xi’s visit to Zimbabwe in 2002, when the Western EU donors sanctioned the country because of its electoral fraud and human rights abuses, while China’s president was visiting the country as part of his African trip in honour of hosting the first FOCAC meeting on African grounds. From the First FOCAC onwards, the Chinese government has been clear in their approach in cooperating with Africa is based on equality and non-interference.

*“In the new international order, the right of all countries to sovereign equality and to freedom from outside interference in their internal affairs must be ensured to them. All countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, should respect each other’s sovereignty and independence. [...] They should have the right to choose their own development path and model in light of their national conditions. No country should be allowed to impose its own social system or ideology on*

*others, nor should it be allowed to make irresponsible remarks on other countries' internal affairs"* (Jiang Zemin, FOCAC 2000).

In the second FOCAC this was echoed by President Wen Jiabao who stated that although Chinese assistance is only limited to its own capabilities, "we do offer our assistance with the deepest sincerity and without political conditions" and in firm belief that support and help between countries are mutual. China will never forget the invaluable support China received from African countries over the years in Chinese endeavours to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity". The White Paper on China's African Policy, published in 2007, speaks of "China as the largest developing country in the world follows the path of peaceful development and pursues an independent foreign policy of peace. China stands ready to develop friendly relations and cooperation with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as to contribute to peace, stability and common prosperity around the world" (375). Hereby, the African continent is described as the continent with the largest number of developing countries to be an important force for world peace and development, with which China sees traditional friendly relations coming to new opportunities under new circumstances. "The Chinese Government wishes to present to the world the objectives of China's policy towards Africa and the measures to achieve them, and its proposals for cooperation in various fields in the coming years, with a view to promoting the steady growth of China-Africa relations in the long term and bringing the mutually-beneficial cooperation to a new stage".

These Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, or the Peace Principles, borne out of post-colonial solidarity, are:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
2. Mutual non-aggression;
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
4. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit;
5. Peaceful co-existence.

Nevertheless, despite the non-interference policy, China has since the third FOCAC presented the possibility in sending Chinese peace troops to unstable regions in Africa to maintain the peace and uphold the upward development curve. Mentioned in the Beijing Action plan are the efforts of China actively engaging in African affairs by "engaging in mediation efforts in Africa's hotspots" and both sides "welcomed his continued constructive role in Africa's peace and security endeavours" (2.6.5). Therefore, one can say that there is definitely involvement of the Chinese government in African government affairs because China takes active part in peace keeping mission of the United Nations in Africa. However, China considers this to be ways of "exchanges and cooperation between the UN and the African Union in the field of African peace and security" (2.6.3). Despite its peace keeping involvement, China remains firmly committed to their non-interference policy as "it remains an

important tool for defending their rights and interests”. Foreign Minister Zhao Jun underlines this importance by stating:

*“In recent years some countries ignored opposition from regional countries to intervene militarily in some regional hot-spot issues and press for regime change [...] this has disrupted regional and world peace and stability”. “The lessons learnt should all be remembered, support for democracy and good governance in Africa is not the monopoly of certain countries, and improved democracy, legal system and governance are essential to the sound and steady growth of China-Africa cooperation. We see African countries as equals as we share more governance experience with them, [...] any country that wishes to develop cooperation with Africa must respect the ownership of African countries” (2012).*

Resulting from their non-interference stance Zhao Jun states that African countries expect China to play a bigger role in African affairs and expect to receive more Chinese assistance, which according to him “shows how much they trust us and we are willing to help”. Therefore, “in recent years we substantially increased support and help for Africa’s development, and steadily increased participation in Africa’s peace and security affairs” (2012). Herewith implying that China is only involved in a cooperative manner and China’s help is not enforced but asked for.

#### *ii. Non-conditional Aid*

China aspires to involve themselves in non-conditional aid. When talking about its opposite conditional aid, it can be differentiated into tied aid and conditional aid. Tied aid requires its recipients to buy and use goods and services from the donor country. This, according to Brautigam, biases donors to support projects with high import content instead of local input. Meaning that, it can “seduce recipients into opting for development investments that are low on the priority list” but that are profitable for the donor. This in reality means that high-cost country donors ask higher prices for their goods and services, which are not necessarily of better quality (2009, 152), hence results in that there is less money left for people on the ground. Conditional aid means that the aid will only be provided if the recipient meets up to certain standards, mostly focused on governmental and organizational structures that ought to change. While Chinese (barely) practice in conditional aid, they do involve themselves with tied aid. For example, Chinese concessional loans offered by the China’s Eximbank come with the condition of the projects exporter or contractor being a Chinese company: financed concessional aid projects should be procured from China. The *only* aid condition from China is the receiving country must recognize the One-China Policy – meaning that countries do not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state and recognize it as part of China – and collaboration with Taiwan is not allowed.

Non-conditional aid is aid given without prescribed conditions on how to spend the aid. Also, *non-conditional aid* does not simultaneously mean *unconditional investment* of China in Africa for

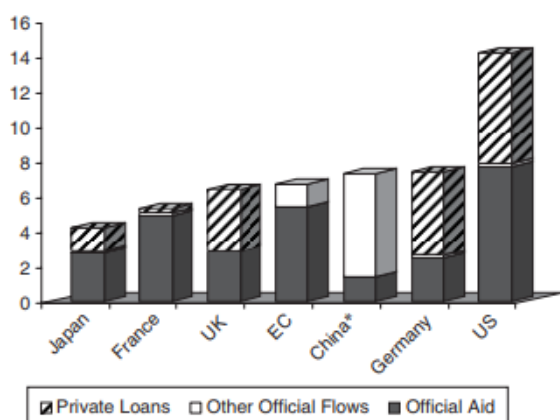


commercial projects. For example, when Huawei invested in Mauritius as a “cyber island” by moving its research, finance and administrative centres to Mauritius, this was done after intensive negotiations with local governments over royalties, rates of taxations, costs of the land, and the allowed number of workers coming from outside Mauritius (Brautigam, 2009, 4). However, this was not necessarily considered as intrusive limitations to investment possibilities, but simply seen as business conditions that are part of any business negotiation process (Brautigam, 2009, 150).

The accumulated budget figures of the Chinese government for external expenditures are annually published in China’s Statistical Yearbook. However, China uses different standards of what is considered aid and do not use the same aid standards as the ODA aid-expenditures of OECD countries. For example, China includes military aid in their foreign aid expenditures and includes grants and zero-interest loans. The Chinese Export- and Import-Bank provides many concessional loans to Africa, which is a loan with a lower interest rate than the market interest rate. The Eximbank obtains their capital on concessional loans from the market, the Ministry of Finance only pays for the difference between the interest of the market – as is followed by the central bank of China – and the interest rate of the Eximbank. Concessional loans are considered to be aid by the Chinese government. To illustrate how this works is the following calculative example:

*Say the concessional loan interest rate is 2%, and the Central Bank(market) lending rate is 6%, the Chinese government covers the difference of 4% as aid. This means that on a loan of \$100 million, the annual subsidy from the Chinese government to the lending partner on his interest will be \$4 million. Hence, this will cost China \$4 million in foreign aid.*

There is also a difference in supply of loans. There are grants and zero-interest loans, handled by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, that mostly finance diplomatic investments (politically friendly projects) that useful for development of the country, e.g. infrastructure. And there are concessional loans handled by the ChinaEximbank that finance projects with potential for a clear economic return (telecom, energy, public utilities). The grants and zero-interest loans are aid when governments cannot pay them back, concessional loans are loans provided at a lower interest rate and are to be solved. The different structures in providing aid between China and the ODA expenditures, made visible in figure 2, make it difficult to compare because traditional DAC donors only consider official development assistance to be aid if the entire value of the loan is a gift (Brautigam, 2009, 167) therefore, Chinese involvement is too often considered to be aid when it is not.



### iii. Ownership

As mentioned by Condon (2012), Chinese official statement on its policies on trade and aid with African nations is firstly based on ‘respect,’ meaning

Figure 2. Total financial flows to Africa, 2007

Note: \*Estimate figures are gross disbursements and do not include FDI.  
Sources: OECD/DAC statistics; research Deborah Brautigam, 2009.

that China does not interfere with local political systems and considers the African countries' development path to be part of their 'independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity' (p. 6). Part of the non-intervention stance of China in providing aid and development cooperation is not only about how African governments spend the money coming from the Chinese, but also about non-interfering in political situations in receiving countries, which ties into the ownership that is given to the African partners. "China is different from the traditional donors in how it does aid. The political relationship is very important everywhere and not simply in strategic countries. This fosters a lot of genuine concern with government ownership, even if the government wants a new stadium or a presidential palace" (Brautigam, 2009, 161). An example of governments doing with Chinese money 'as they please', is when Chinese ambassador Cheng Wenju in Sierra Leone is asked about Chinese investment in a football stadium in the city of Bo being a good way of spending funds in an extremely impoverished country. The ambassador expressed that from his point of view another Chinese built stadium (there was already a Chinese built stadium in Sierra Leone) was not a necessity, it was the choice of the local government, and it was therefore a "project with genuine ownership" (2009:138).

This traditional idea of ownership of donating countries in African affairs is also underlined in the Dutch newspaper the *Volkskrant* of May 31<sup>st</sup> 2018, where it was described that cabinet members fall over a Rwandan sponsorship deal with the English football club Arsenal, and are angry that Rwanda receives development aid money from the Dutch government while buying a 34 million euros sponsor deal with an elite football club. This ties back again to the Washington Consensus and its aid-conditions towards the receiving countries for aid to be successful and efficient, and the reluctance of the Chinese to stick to that. As the Chinese ambassador to Sierra Leone states when talking about Chinese investment on a Huawei telecom project, "this project should be profitable if it is run well. They must guarantee the profits. They should compete with other companies. [...] For us this is an experiment to see how to revitalize this state-owned company. I hope they will grasp this golden opportunity. But we have no conditions on this loan, just good advice" (Brautigam, 2009, 15).

The 'key features' of China's approach in aid, which has a focus on investing in infrastructure and mostly conflates aid with investment in businesses, complies to African government "ownership" of the aid that is given, and refuses to "go slow in developing debt-financed infrastructure" (2009, 148). Quoted by Brautigam is a Ugandan official who explains the difference between Chinese and traditional aid by saying that many countries believe that by giving aid they have the license to tell and teach you how to run your

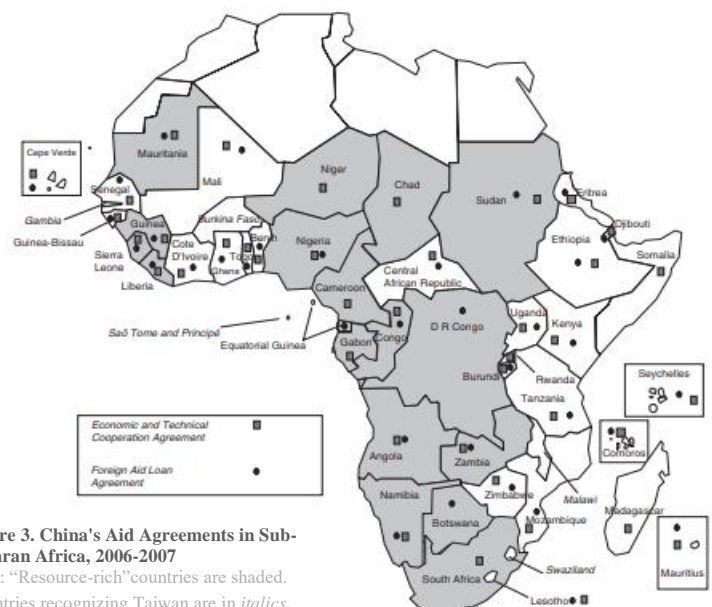


Figure 3. China's Aid Agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2006-2007

Note: "Resource-rich" countries are shaded.

Countries recognizing Taiwan are in *italics*.

Source: Deborah Brautigam, *the Dragon's Gift*, p. 278, fig. 11.1

country's affairs, "these conditions are probably well-intentioned, but they are humiliating" (2009, 149). This indicates that African governments are or feel more in control of Chinese investment and aid into their countries.

### *iii. Conflating Aid and Investment*

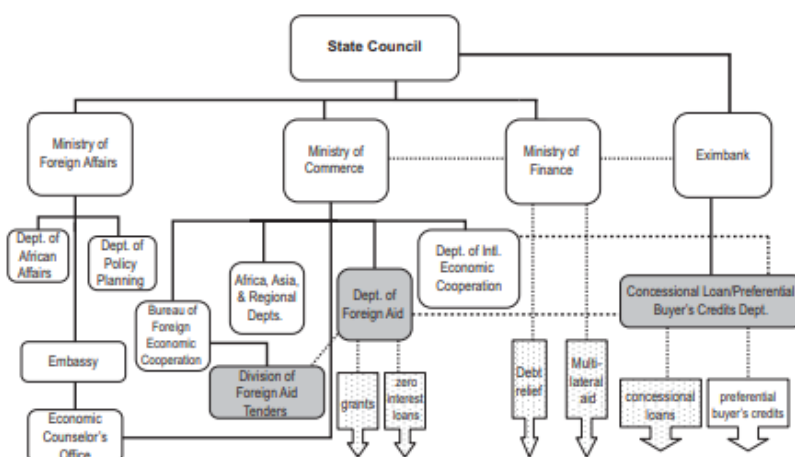
Conflating Aid and Investment, or as the Chinese call it in the Beijing Action Plan for 2013-2015, "aid-for-trade", comes from the Chinese awareness of long-term needs that can be fulfilled by emphasising helping Africa build development capacity when providing assistance. "We (China) will advance China-Africa cooperation in a way that contributes to Africa's self-generated and sustainable development and brings about greater benefits of both sides" (Minister Yang Jiechi, 2012). After the Cold War, China began to re-engage actively with the continent on the basis of trade and investment (Taylor, 1998 and Chun, 2013). First their investment was based on small government-sponsored assistance projects to gain access in local markets done by small Chinese enterprises. Due to their limited strengths, the investments between 1979 and 1990 only valued \$51.19 million. (Chun 2013: 11). These investments expanded when the investment environment in Africa improved and the founding of (private) Chinese businesses was promoted. Since 2000, Chinese investment in Africa furthered exponentially to \$2.1 billion in 2010, initiated by both Chinese governmental policies and market drivers, focused on the sectors of electronics, telecommunications, and transport (Chun, 2013, pp. 10-18).

Mentioned in the follow-up actions report of the fourth FOCAC Summit, the combination of aid-for-trade is apparent in the work of the mentioned public welfare campaigns led by the Chinese together with NGOs from South-Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. These campaigns, focused on cataract treatment, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, involve Chinese enterprises and expatriates that are both actively involved in private investment and African social and public welfare programs which played "a positive role in Africa's educational development, medical service, social relief and disaster prevention and control". Also, an article looking forward to the fifth FOCAC speaks of "China-Africa investment and industrial cooperation has the facilitator of modernization and industrialization of African countries. China's increasing investment in African infrastructure has improved its investment environment and thus the sustainability for future growth" (Sheng, 2012). Sheng claims that China has rich experiences in promoting economic growth, while Africa is in transition from poverty alleviation to economic growth, wherefore collaborating with China would be very advantageous to African countries. The "China Factor", translated in the growth of Africa, "has brought new hope for Africa and provided a new model for Africa's development" (2012).

An often heard claim about Chinese involvement on the African continent is that China "plunders Africa's energy and resources". But, despite the fact that China is indeed very active in resource-rich areas in Africa, aid to Africa is not mainly offered as "quid pro quo exchange for resources", and it is also not the case that Chinese are only interested in countries with rich resources (Brautigam, 2009,

278) because it gives aid to every African country that supports the One China policy. This becomes very visible when looking at figure 3. However the Chinese do invest differently in African countries adapted to the financial possibilities of the countries. To a credit worthy country that is able to pay, the China Eximbank extends lines of credit and waits for a capable government to propose projects in which these credits can be invested (e.g. housing in Botswana); less creditworthy countries are given concessional loans for projects that will earn money to repay that loan (e.g. a mobile telephone network in Eritrea or Sierra Leone or a Kenyan cement telephone pole factory). Moreover, China also provides large competitive commercial-rate loans to finance infrastructure with payment guaranteed in resources.

Thus, one can say that, resources in Africa matter to the Chinese government and Chinese companies. However, Chinese involvement can be better summarized as generating business. It is not only about resources, but also about exports of consumer goods and machinery to Africa and about further opening their market, and “grand duty-free access for some of the commodities from the LDC in Africa” (Jiabao, FOAC 2003). For example, the Chinese exported more than \$50 billion worth of equipment, consumer goods, and machinery to Africa in 2008 (Brautigam, 2009, 279). Also, infrastructure contracts and projects are very important for Chinese construction companies generated revenues of \$20 billion and signed contracts that valued \$39.6 billion. As quoted by Brautigam, a Nigerian diplomat states: “*The Chinese are trying to get involved in every sector of our economy. If you look at the West, it is oil, oil, oil, and nothing else*” (2009, 279). Important to mention is that Chinese foreign aid programmes have always been the responsibility of the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, thus never separated from either commerce or foreign affairs in a central aid department (Brautigam, 2009) and therefore always based on sustainable development creation on the bases of profit substituted with aid, and not by altruism only which is illustrated in *figure 4*.



**Figure 4: China's system of aid and economic cooperation**

source: Deborah Brautigam, *the Dragon's Gift*, p. 108 fig. 4.1

## VII. CONCLUSION

In this research, a constructivist standpoint has been taken to analyse the relationship of China with Africa and how China's portrayal of being a different partner to African countries than other external partners is constituted. The way in which international political relations are constructed through identities and practices of its participants and how actors actively create their understanding of the world, can be recognized in China's Africa Policy approach. Hereby, the concept of framing – schemata of interpretation to organize and guide action, used by actors to mobilize support for their actions and explains their audience their action in their preferred manner– creates an understanding of friends and enemies, victims and perpetrators, and normal and abnormal. By doing so, China creates a “collective meaning” (Adler, 1998, 321) to their relationship with Africa. The aim to answer the research question *how does China construct its relationship with Africa as being different from other external actors?* can be answered by looking at four methods of differentiation executed by the (People's Republic of) China discussed in this thesis.

The pertinent understanding from the literature review discussed above, is that the public and academic opinion on China in Africa are under great discussion. Some say China is working destructively in Africa; is using it as its source for resources and as consumer for their products; or act as a neo-colonial power that needs African leaders to stand behind them to have a bigger voice in international institutions. Others consider this to be an exaggeration of the China-Africa reality; Western media has blown things out of proportion; China's run for resources in Africa is still relatively small; and, China has positive effects on the development of the continent. Clearly, the influence of China on the African continent is changing the paradigm of development cooperation and its beneficiaries. China differentiates from other African partners by presents itself as Africa's ‘all-weather friend’ that is involved in China because of its believe generating equality and peace on the African continent to be essential in justly changing the economic world order. The Peoples Republic of China uses in their relationship with Africa their historical connections; their common South-South understanding; the use of soft power and specific rhetoric and a different approach in development cooperation as tools to demonstrate their opposition to the Global North.

Their difference seems to be based on the fact that there have been strong historical ties between the two sides, based on non-hegemonic friendly relations. China underlines their South-South mutual understanding of their African partners, their shared struggle in independence, colonial rule and finding their own development path. Another aspect of difference executed by the PRC is its engagement with African countries and the international community according to the principle of ‘non-interference’, as it does not interfere with the policies or societal structures of the countries with whom it is collaborating. Additionally, China sees value in strengthening its “Soft Power” in the international community. This research looks at how the Chinese government constructs its

engagement in Africa as different compared to Western involvement on the African continent, and how this difference is constituted through different strategies of differentiation.

What becomes apparent after the first chapter on invoking historical ties in contemporary China-Africa relations is that China portrays itself, with help from its historical narrative, as a foreign power that never has been and therefore will never be involved in colonialism and portrayal of hegemonic imperialist power. China claims to always value and preserve national independence and sovereignty in their involvement in and support of (developing) countries. This translates into a South-South connection with nations that share a history of foreign aggressors that value, just as the Peoples Republic of China, independence, peaceful cooperation and long for independent development. The South-South paradigm also recognizes a need for a change in the international economic order to increase the representation of developing countries in for example the United Nations' Security Council and at the world stage in general. China presents itself, supported with a historical narrative, as a non-aggressive long-standing friend of Africa which contrasts Africa's relations with the colonial and exploitative West.

The second chapter on the language and rhetoric used by the Chinese government to set themselves apart from other actors in Africa, shows that China quite literally claims to not be similar to Africa's traditional partners "in either scope or depth" (Yang Jiechie, 2012) and that there is a clear continuation of certain rhetoric. The notion of *cooperation* is used to frame the China-Africa relationship being based on equality. This is emphasized by speaking of the relationship as being *win-win*, hence profitable for both sides, as China and Africa together expand mutual benefit by jointly tackling financial challenges to create common prosperity. Their relationship is on a basis of "all-weather *friendship*" which is apparent in their continuous (financial) commitment to Africa, in spite of financial crises and China still being a developing country itself.

The chapter on Soft Power – socially constructed power that operates through cultural attraction – shows the difference between China and the West in how they understand relations of (political) power. According to Chinese philosophy, power comes from morality and morality comes from nature, therefore, power is practiced through (natural) peaceful coexistence instead of by the creation of an enemy. Foreign relations should be practiced in "harmonious co-existence" (Wang, 2008, 262) on the basis of sustainability equality and self-determination, hence benefitting all parties involved. To emphasise its commitment to friendly cooperation and win-win, the Chinese development model is put forward as an alternative to the existing Washington Consensus, which grants excessive recommendations to developing nations receiving aid help them grow effectively. The Beijing Consensus introduces developing nations with a way of development separate from the influence of their traditional partners, and a development model that adjusts to their needs through innovation, self-determination and a rejection of traditional development measurements.

These ties into the last chapter on development cooperation, approached by China under the conditions of non-interference and non-conditional aid which shows that China greatly values ownership of the receiving governments. China's aid is about aid-for-trade – generating business through a combination of commercial investments and aid – and is provided to African countries without the need to justify their national political choices. The only condition African nations need to follow for them to receive aid, is to recognize the One-China policy. Unlike traditional aid on the African continent, China does not pretend their involvement in Africa to be led by altruism but by economic profit and win-win outcomes. Moreover, China claims that there exists no such thing as a universal recipe for development, and therefore believes in the need for flexibility in how development should be approached and listening to local governments is essential to developmental successes. Also, the developmental achievements of China show African leaders that advancement is possible without “superior-inferior tutelage” by foreign powers.

Altogether, one can conclude that if China practices what it preaches, the influence of China on the general development of Africa and the sense of ownership that is evoked by it can be a positive addition to Africa's options in developing partners. It can be understood that the involvement of China in every sector of every economy in China, is part of a government strategy to frame themselves as cooperative partners that both involve in Africa out of their wish to stimulate the creation of a more equal world which results in ‘world peace’ while simultaneously strengthening their own economic and political power. Taking China's words to be their true motivations behind their relationship with (almost) all African countries is difficult because of (the researchers own) Western scepticism on the existence of something like selfless acts executed by powerful governments. This might be because the West recognises its own history on the continent and how their motivations differed from how they portrayed (and still present) their motivations to be. To prove that China's portrayal of their involvements in Africa connect to the African reality, is by looking at the long-term effects of their work on the ground and how it translates into the representation of developing nations in international institutions. As their relationship develops, we have to wait and see. Nevertheless, one can claim that due to the actions of China in Africa, a reconsideration (and decolonialisation) of traditional aid and development structures on the continent is a must, because of its involvement in changing the paradigm on how aid and trade should be done to incite true development on the African continent. Because, if we may believe China, when countries get respectfully involved in Africa and Africa independently thrives, world peace is on its way.

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