

Appearing as: G. Mohan (2008) *China in Africa: A Review Essay*, **Review of African Political Economy**, 35, 1, 155-173

China in Africa: A Review Essay

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China in Africa by Chris Alden (2007), London: Zed Books, London; hb £45, pb £12.99; ISBN 978 1 64277 863 0 hb, ISBN 978 184277 864 7 pb.

'Africa's Silk Road: China and India's New Economic Frontier' by Harry G. Broadman (2007), Washington, DC: the World Bank; downloadable from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0,,contentMDK:21056305~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258644,00.html>. ISBN-10: 0-8213-6835-4, ISBN-13: 978-0-8213-6835-0, e-ISBN: 0-8213-6836-2, e-ISBN-13: 978-0-8213-6836.

Africa in China's Global Strategy by Marcel Kitissou (ed.) (2007), London: Adonis and Abbey; hb £45, pb £20; ISBN 9781905068548 hb, ISBN 9781905068883 pb.

'China in Africa' by Margaret C. Lee, Henning Melber, Sanusha Naidu & Ian Taylor (2007), Current African Issues No. 33, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet; Euro 9 or downloadable from <http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/download.html/978-91-7106-589-6.pdf?id=25236>. ISSN 0280-2171, ISBN 978-91-7106-589-6 (print), ISBN 978-91-7106-592-6 (electronic).

China in Africa: Mercantilist Predator, or partner in development? by Garth Le Pere (ed.) (2007), Vorna Valley: Institute for Global Dialogue and Johannesburg: The South African Institute of International Affairs; £18.99; ISBN 1-919697-96-9.

'African Perspectives on China in Africa' by Firoze Manji & S. Marks (eds.) (2007), Cape Town: Fahamu/Pambazuka; £11.95 or downloadable from http://www.fahamu.org/downloads/cia_download.pdf. ISBN-13: 978-0-9545637-3-8.

'China in Africa: Implications for Norwegian Foreign and Development Policies' by E. Tjønneland with B. Brandtzæg, A. Kolås & G. le Pere (2006), Chr. Michelsen Institute, CMI Reports R 2006:15, CMI: Bergen; downloadable from <http://www.cmi.no/publications/file/?2438=china-in-africa-implications-for-norwegian>. ISSN 0805-505X, ISBN 82-8062-171-7.

'The New Sinosphere: China in Africa' by Leni Wild & David Mephram (eds.) (2006), IPPR. £9.95 and summary downloadable from <http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=497>. ISBN 1860303021.

Very rarely do I find myself agreeing with a World Bank publication, but in the introduction to Broadman's (2007:4) *Africa's Silk Road* he writes 'there is, surprisingly, a

paucity of systematic data available on these issues to carry out rigorous analysis'. In the absence of 'systematic data' many commentators, especially segments of the western media, tend to take one example of China's less positive engagement with Africa and project this onto the entire 'China-Africa' relationship. I am not arguing that these are not critical concerns, but this crude extrapolation is part of a move to demonise China's presence on the continent in order to represent 'Western' approaches as morally and ethically superior. As George Monbiot (*The Guardian*, 2 October 2007: 32) argues, 'China the excuse is not the same place as China the country'. There is, then, a need to examine the geopolitical, economic and ideological contexts in which knowledge about China in/and Africa is being produced.

As with any new area of work, where groups of analysts hurry to publish simultaneously, combined with a desire to make the subject matter as clear as possible, on web searches there is homogeneity of titles. When I used the search phrase 'China in Africa' on Amazon it brought up five of the titles reviewed here.¹ Most of the publications are edited collections of one sort or another, usually bringing together activists, journalists, academics and policy makers. Only Alden (2007) and Broadman (2007) are single authored, though the latter has contributions from a team of World Bank researchers, and clearly enunciate a consistent line of argument.

There are various reasons why this review is timely. First, given that much work prior to the glut of publications under review has been spearheaded by journalists, many in the US, there has been a tendency to polarize the debate and present China's presence as necessarily venal and implicitly a threat to US interests. This is part of a long-standing Manichean discourse pitting China's supposedly self-serving economic motives against some philanthropic developmental impetus on the part of the US and Europe. So, it is important to review a range of voices – US, European, and African – on this matter. Second, as noted above, claims about China's impacts on Africa are often based on anecdotal evidence or one example is used to represent the entire China-Africa relationship. Hence, it seemed timely to review the publications that contain more detailed empirical evidence. For the *Review of African Political Economy* it is important to see how these different publications approach the subject of Africa's political economy in order to guide political action on the ground.

I begin with an overview of the eight publications in terms of their origins and contributors, and how they fit into slightly longer histories of publishing on this subject. In general, they are quite quickly produced assemblages of opinion and mark a renewed interest in China's role in Africa after a flurry of activity during the cold war. The next section examines the major themes running through the books in order to interrogate issues of African political economy. In particular, I examine how they actually conceive of political economy and how this is realised in concrete analysis, how this shapes questions of governance (good or otherwise), and consequently the types of scenarios that are envisaged for the future, including policy prescriptions. I conclude with a call for even more thorough empirical analysis of these issues.

The Publications

Past publishing on this subject was dominated by cold war scaremongering, and used much of the same language we see today about the Chinese 'challenge' (for example,

Attwood, 1967; Weinstein, 1975; Greig, 1977), although China was often lumped in with Russia as part of the 'red' communist 'threat' even though China and Russia were contesting Africa. Since then, publications have been sparse save for Philip Snow's (1988) admirable, but somewhat uncritical, *The Star Raft* and Brautigam's (1998) excellent *Chinese Aid and African Development: Exporting Green Revolution*. However, the rise of China's presence in Africa over the past five years has yielded a scramble for publishing. I had originally intended to review just three books, but by the time I sat down to write I had eight and simply had to ignore some of the most recent material (Alden et al. 2008; Davies, 2007). In the rest of this sub-section I give an overview of the origins and contributors to these publications and pick out some key similarities and differences.

As befits a new area of research, there is as yet no concentrated body of work from a single author or research centre, although The Centre for Chinese Studies at the University of Stellenbosch has established itself as one of the major research centres on this subject. As a result, many of the publications reviewed here are edited collections (five of the eight). The positive side of this is that they have a diversity of voices. In Wild and Mephram (2006), for example, we have academics, journalists, policy analysts and civil society activists. The same is true of Kitissou (2007), le Pere (2007), and Manji and Marks (2007). The downside of this strategy is that sometimes the collections lack coherence in terms of a sustained thesis. This is worst in the case of the Kitissou book, which has some strong chapters (discussed later), but there is no apparent logic to the chapters and a better preface would have helped to situate the contributions. Alden's is the only monograph and is a very well argued, 'light touch' political economy, which is able to sustain a coherent argument throughout. The Tjønneland et al. publication is very thorough and backed up by other studies not published in the booklet, but given its remit has a strong normative policy dimension. The other downside of collecting diverse papers is that virtually every chapter starts with the obligatory parade of statistics to evidence China's growing interests in Africa as well as mentioning the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Co-operation (FOCAC) meeting. While these rightly demonstrate China's need for and dedication towards Africa, it makes for quite tiresome reading and, again, editors could have overcome this with strong opening chapters which did all this work for subsequent contributors.

Another feature of some of these books is part of the same issue. With a lack of breadth of expertise the same authors re-appear. For example, Rocha and Obiorah both have chapters in Wild and Mephram (2006) and Manji and Marks (2007) and Chan-Fishel appears in Kitissou (2007) and Manji and Marks (2007). A related, and more worrying, tendency is that the few quality studies that do exist are used and re-used as exemplars by other authors. For example, Lindsey Hilsum has a chapter in the Wild and Mephram (2006) collection, and her groundbreaking study of the Chinese in Sierra Leone (Hilsum, 2006) is regularly cited by others. Other 'first movers' who appear in these collections or are regularly cited are Deborah Brautigam, Raphie Kaplinsky, Barry Sautman, Chris Alden and Ian Taylor. Likewise, in terms of the exemplars that are used to evidence China's impact on Africa we tend to see the same cases re-appearing. Quite appropriately most of the time, these are China's role in Sudan and Darfur as well as the \$2 billion loan to Angola which are used to demonstrate the tensions that exist with China's engagement with Africa.

Another feature, though not one new to African Studies, is that there are not many African authors in the books. The Manji and Marks (2007) collection was the first to actively seek out African responses, although the le Pere (2007) collection does quite well on including African authors. In the preface, Manji notes that 'Lost in the cacophony (of commentary on China in Africa) has been the voice of independent African analysts and activists' (vii) and he is correct to offer the caveat that 'there is no single "African view" about China in Africa' (vii). What follows in their collection, and in keeping with Pambazuka's excellent record of critical journalism, are various, more activist African voices such as Ndubisi Obiorah, the director of a legal NGO in Nigeria, and Ali Askouri writing about China in Sudan as director of a research NGO that represents those Sudanese displaced by the Merowe dam project. These represent the few critical African responses to the China issue which, given the near unilateral acceptance of China's presence by African leaders and regimes, necessarily comes from civil society organisations. However, while these authors and a few others come from across sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of African voices we do find are South African. The le Pere (2007) and Kitissou (2007) collections are filled with South African-based authors and many chapters explicitly focus on the implications for South Africa. Again, we should not be surprised by this given the level of economic development in that country and concomitantly the quality and marketing reach of its book publishing industry. Moreover, South Africa's economy is one of the most integrated with China's so that China's longer term implications for 'Africa' have heightened significance, either positively or negatively, for South Africa.

A related point is that in these collections there is very little work by Chinese analysts. The work by Chinese researchers that appears in English is generally by a small group of Chinese or China-based scholars. These are He Wenping, Li Anshan, Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong and they are regularly cited by others but only appear once in the publications reviewed here (Sautman and Hairong have a chapter in Wild and Mephram 2006). Other Chinese authors who appear tend to be officials who largely re-state official Chinese policy and may have delivered a keynote at the conference from which the papers originated. This reflects something of an intellectual division of labour (see Chan, 2007); namely, that between experts of African development and those working in and on China. Given that China's growing interest in Africa is driven by both its domestic needs and global aspirations it has been left to Africanists and African-based analysts to make sense of and connections between what goes in China and in African countries. Hopefully, this is a temporary lacuna, which should eventually be sorted once Africa 'experts' become au fait with Chinese political economy and vice versa, or at least more collaborations between area specialists emerge.

As I have noted, many studies are based on a lack of empirical detail or use data from official sources which is either flawed (see Alden 2007) and/or aggregated to a scale which makes fine-grained analysis quite difficult. Many of the case study chapters in Wild and Mephram (2006), le Pere (2007), Manji and Marks (2007), and Kitissou (2007) have data, which is drawn from official sources (such as the IMF) and is supplemented by information on specific Chinese projects derived from reviews of local news sources. The Broadman (2007) book is welcome, because it is based on original research using firm surveys among Chinese and Indian companies operating across Africa. But by and large analysis is somewhat speculative given the paucity of data from Africa and the

reluctance of Chinese authorities to release information. An example of the data problems is the number of Chinese firms operating in Africa. Even within the Kitissou collection numbers vary – Servant claims 674 companies, Chan-Fishel and Lawson 750, and Reilly and Na 700. And when it comes to Chinese migrants in Africa, the estimates vary hugely. In South Africa the number is put at anywhere between 100,000 and 300,000 and in Angola the numbers are 20-30,000, but some predict a potential total over the coming years of 4 million.

Un-political Political Economy, Governance & a Future Imperfect

In this section I outline some key themes running through the books, including different takes on political economy, questions of governance and the future

What is political economy? For whom does it matter?

Although the term political economy appears in the titles of some chapters and Harry Broadman describes his World Bank study as focusing ‘on political economy, governance, and institutional issues insofar as they directly have economic implications’ (2007:72), very few authors make explicit what they mean by the term. In this subsection I address what authors mean by political economy and how this frames their analysis and conclusions. In doing so, I highlight key differences between their political economy approaches and identify those most sympathetic to the politics of this journal.

In framing the political economy of China-Africa relations, most authors are implicit about what they mean. The Kitissou (2007) collection usefully situates the China-Africa issue within an analysis of globalisation and China’s internal reforms and internationalisation strategy more specifically. A similar pattern of argumentation is found in the le Pere (2007) collection, where the chapter by Suisheng Zhao is a clear and well argued account of changes in China’s foreign policy. Zhao argues that China has moved to a more flexible approach based on the need to achieve security in terms of raw materials. This so-called ‘peaceful ascendance’ is set within a geopolitical worldview of what the Chinese call ‘multipolarity’ in which they see themselves as one of the key ‘poles’ in the new world order. However, there is a tension with China competing with the US and at times revealing a sense of insecurity towards them. What is interesting in Zhao’s account, but also in the lore that is already surrounding this issue, is that once China engaged with the developing world for ‘ideological’ reasons, namely ‘socialist co-operation’ in order to trump the Soviets, but that now the engagement with Africa (and others in the South) is non-ideological. Zhao (2007:38) argues that China’s ‘pragmatist strategy is therefore ideologically agnostic’. While the point that a cold war dogma no longer holds sway in China’s policy is well taken, the mantra that China is now ‘non-ideological’ and simply pursuing rational economic interests conceals the obvious ideological underpinnings of China’s (or any other) economic growth strategy. As Harvey (2005) notes, China’s recent growth is ‘Neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics’ and requires a deeply ingrained ideology backed up by a raft of reform policies and an authoritarian state.

Both the Kitissou and le Pere collections have chapters by Chinese diplomats, which are interesting for a number of reasons and tells us much about the exploratory relationships between China and Africa. These chapters, based on speeches from workshops, contain very little that you cannot find on Chinese government websites

about the harmonious and supportive stance of China towards Africa. They also contain the list of concrete policies of China towards Africa. And indeed these are impressive. But what is more interesting is the fact that they are given the opportunity to uncritically champion China's Africa policy. This affirms the fact that the institutions supporting China's move into Africa are excessively keen not to offend their Chinese investors and this lack of critique overflowed into other chapters.

In the le Pere (2007) collection a number of case study chapters have political economy in the title and the substantive analysis is broken down into political relations, trade figures, and aid projects. By and large these chapters are descriptive and tend to catalogue what has happened, but with very little critical analysis. This is most apparent when accounts of the same country are given in different collections. For example, Ali Abdalla Ali in le Pere (2007) and Ali Askouri in Manji and Marks (2007) both discuss the case of Sudan. In the former, the only hint at any political tensions is that 'The Chinese generally tend to have things their own way' (p.181) and they are trying to establish a 'powerful influence in Sudanese society' (p.182). By contrast, Askouri, the director of a research NGO working with those displaced by the Merowe dam, lays bare the ways in which the Chinese support the junta and how their projects directly and indirectly lead to displacement and persecution. The former's lack of critique is startling, but pervades the le Pere collection and, again, implies a strong desire not to offend the Chinese in South Africa, from where this collection emanated. For me, and probably the readers of this journal, the best collections are those by Manji and Marks (2007) and the shorter one by Lee et al. (2007) from the Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Harry Broadman's study based on a survey of 450 Chinese and Indian firms operating in Africa is one of the few publications based on original research and should be welcomed for that. Its political economy is to situate Africa within restructuring of the global economy in which China and India are major players and set to increase their impact; what Kaplinsky usefully terms the 'Asian Drivers' (see <http://asiandrivers.open.ac.uk/>). Broadman's political economy encompasses some valuable work, especially around the ownership patterns and business models of Chinese and Indian firms and how the former are much less integrated into African economies. While he puts this down to the relative novelty of Chinese investment compared with a longer relationship with India, he also suggests that a lack of trust towards African businesses on the part of the Chinese may explain the reluctance to become more embedded locally. He also analyses the policies within Africa for attracting and organising inward investment and argues, not surprisingly, that these are multiple, overlapping and sometimes contradictory. As one of the first detailed empirical studies the book throws up some worthwhile analysis, but the policy prescriptions, as I discuss below, are nothing unexpected from a World Bank publication.

For me, the best and most coherent approach to the political economy of China in Africa is given by Chris Alden (2007) in his short and engagingly written book as part of Zed Books' *African Arguments* series. Although Alden produces no original empirical research, his thesis is well argued and clear. He argues that we need to focus on the nature of the engagements between China and Africa, while making sure we

disaggregate both 'China' and 'Africa'. His political economy, which helps explain the differential impact of China on Africa, is based around states such that 'it is best to look at the nature of the individual African regimes in place and the underlying economy of particular countries' (p.59). Although in such a short book he does not have time to get into the necessary details of 'individual African regimes' there are chapters on the changing geopolitical contexts of China's foray into Africa where Alden argues China's interests in Africa have been episodic and that older discourses of third worldism pervade current policy rhetoric. There follows a chapter on China's economic interests in Africa and usefully distinguishes between large, state-influenced Chinese corporations and the myriad smaller private concerns. The point is well made that the larger corporations benefit from close and blurred relations with Chinese official 'aid', which is usually tied to major investments or trade agreements. Alden also documents Africa's rather ad hoc policy responses to China and the reactions of African civil society, which has spearheaded the debate about China's role.

This state-based approach to political economy is echoed by Ian Taylor in Lee et al. (2007) where he argues: 'Understanding how the state in Africa really functions and its attributes has critical implications for China's initiatives on the continent' (p.22). Taylor takes a more Weberian approach to the African state in looking at organisational structures and culture and, as a result, tends to see states' articulation with international capital in terms of how it impinges upon personalised rule. His case study of Angola's loan from China in the context of massive investment in the oil industry focuses on its implications for evading 'good governance' reforms. The difference between these two authors is that Alden sees such an analysis helping to understand how ordinary Africans are affected by these engagements whereas for Taylor, the implications are more for political elites in Africa, China and the major western donor countries.

Impacts & Responses

What emerges from Alden's framework, but also the better empirical analyses (e.g. the chapters by Kragerlund on Zambia in Kitissou and by Lee on Uganda in the Lee et al. collection) is that there is no single impact of or response to China in Africa. What Alden sets out is a broad typology of states (see also Tull, 2006) which help us map these dynamics. For pariah states, notably Sudan and Zimbabwe, China's presence may prolong authoritarian rule, but as the Zimbabwe case shows, even the Chinese will not inevitably and endlessly bolster a government which continually fails to deliver on its promises. Next 'illiberal regimes and weak democracies', such as Angola and Nigeria, are likely to become more centralised as mineral rents accrue to state elites and aid allows them to rebuff or renegotiate with the major multilateral lenders. Finally, for democratic countries with diversified economies like South Africa and Ghana, there is likely to be direct competition between Chinese businesses and African ones so that the effects will come down to how effective the state and individual enterprises are at working with or against the Chinese.

The other approach found in these collections is to take a sectoral analysis, most usually and sensibly, of the oil sector. However, as research deepens it becomes clear that oil is not the only interest China has. That said, the chapters by Douglas Yates in le Pere and John Rocha in Wild and Mephram provide useful analyses of oil investment, making the point that China is moving into vertical integration of the industry as part of a wider

move not only to secure supplies, but to become a major player in global oil in the future. Although quite descriptive, Yates's chapter sets out clearly 'Hu's who' in Chinese oil, which goes beyond the usual analyses that simply list the main companies and what they do. But other sectoral analyses in le Pere (of construction by Davies and Corkin, and textiles and clothing by van der Westhuizen) and of timber (by Butler in Kitissou) show that impacts are mixed. Construction has the potential to benefit many African countries, because Chinese companies now produce high quality at competitive rates (facilitated by tied aid, low labour costs, and high levels of efficiency) although it varies how much local labour is employed. In textiles, the prospects look bleaker as Chinese imports undercut local production and lead to plant closures and unemployment, although this effect is not unique to African countries. However, the more savvy countries are thinking longer term and moving into niche markets or seeing a time when Chinese wages rise and Africa becomes a favourable low cost location. In timber, things look even worse with most accounts noting indiscriminate logging and collusion between African local governments and timber firms, although such practises are not confined to Chinese companies alone.

What also becomes apparent and important is the scale of businesses operating in Africa and their origins. Most studies focus on the big Chinese corporations that were privatised and given privileged status by the Chinese government. But what is clear, and is laid out by Alden and the chapter by Reilly and Na in the Kitissou collection, is that provincial Chinese corporations, sometimes backed by their provincial administrations, are also key players. While not as big as the centrally backed corporations, they are sizeable and win many construction contracts. Moreover, there is a myriad of smaller Chinese firms, owned privately by families that have entered not only the retail sector but food processing and agriculture. The point made by the excellent chapter by Reilly and Na is that with so many Chinese firms in Africa, emanating from different sources, it is impossible and unwise to talk of 'China's' African interests or even a 'Beijing Consensus', because there is no way that these ventures can be centrally controlled. The discourse of some Beijing-based puppeteer orchestrating a coherent 'Africa Policy' says more about the paranoia of western commentators than the realities of the situation.

Two further issues that feed into a more nuanced political economy, but are often mentioned briefly in the publications reviewed here, are Chinese migration to Africa and the environmental impacts. Migration is mentioned by Tjønneland et al. and by Steve Little in the Kitissou collection, and dealt with in most detail by Alden. Numbers are speculative, but Chinese migrants are the face of China in Africa and it is in the Chinese stores, herbalists and restaurants that most Africans encounter China. And these small-scale enterprises are significant in number and in some places displace local businesses, as detailed in the excellent chapter on Uganda by Margaret Lee in Lee et al. (2007). She discusses the responses to the Chinese presence by Kampala businesses who argue that the Chinese succeed through unfair means. Although not leading to outright hostility, we know that where Chinese businesses impact most adversely in Africa, local populations have reacted in quite strident ways.

The environmental effects of Chinese investment are dealt with by Chan-Fishel in the Manji and Marks collection and by Butler in Kitissou. Focusing briefly on different cases

of mineral exploitation and timber extraction the conclusions are saddening, but do not suggest China is any worse than other investors. Essentially, China's mining operations in Africa create the same sorts of impacts as other mining companies. While this needs monitoring and adequate policy responses implemented, the fact that commentators assume China will have a worse environmental record says much about how China's domestic record of environmental damage is perceived.

Governance: The Good, the Bad & the Ugly

The pervasive discourse of mainstream media accounts of China in Africa is that it will lead to African governments 'escaping transparency'. They feel that China's long-standing policy of 'non-interference' in the political affairs of states with which it works gives space for unscrupulous leaders to pocket the rents accruing from China's interventions and entrenching their rule. This claim is usually supported, as I said, by the cases of Sudan and Zimbabwe. While key issues for those countries, concerned Africanists, and other policy makers, what emerges from these publications is a richer and more varied analysis of the governance impacts.

China's changing foreign policy is documented by various writers, but Ian Taylor's account of 'resource diplomacy' in the Lee et al. (2007) collection is the most useful in suggesting that China uses a range of political tools to achieve its ends. What is clear are the murky linkages between Chinese aid, trade and investment. Chinese 'aid' is tied to concrete economic outcomes (preferential export agreements, closed tendering processes, specific projects) and so looks less like conventional aid. That said, many other countries use not dissimilar political mechanisms for aid. It is more the rapidity and scale of China's charm offensive that has shocked and worried western commentators. Most accounts of China in Africa have a litany of the projects that China supports and the untransparent ways they achieve influence, often couched in Nye's phrase 'soft power'. I say untransparent, because most accounts use this or similar terms and are generally very light on the details of this assumed collusion between Chinese and African elites. This is not surprising since studying such things is nigh on impossible, and potentially dangerous. However, two chapters in the Kittisou collection – on Chinese banks by Michelle Chan-Fishel and Roxanne Lawson and corporations by James Reilly and Wu Na – provide a detailed description of the mechanisms through which China engages with Africa. While many studies mention China's deep-pocketed Ex-Im Bank, the chapter by Chan-Fishel and Lawson shows that a multitude of state-owned and private banks are involved in co-financing Chinese firms in Africa. As these bankroll China's Africa resource drive they are accused by the west of unfairly subsidising Chinese firms, but the authors make the point that western donors cannot stand by and berate China while simultaneously failing to honour their own aid and debt cancellation obligations.

Although, as we saw, Alden develops a light touch political economy framework for analysing the ways in which African states are affected by China and might respond, the publications here sorely lack concrete analysis of the 'real' political effects. As I said, most political analyses tend to quote some silken words issued by an African President about China, list the agreements that African states have entered into with China, as well as outlining one or two flagship projects. But what is lacking are detailed accounts of decision-making processes, how interests are articulated by different actors, what

political parties and parliaments say and do about China, and how civil society contests China's presence. Basically, there is a lack of politics in these political economies. Odd moments are thrown out – how the Chinese are getting frustrated by Angola's failure to honour promises of reforms, how Mugabe was rebuffed by Beijing, etc. But there is as yet no concerted analysis of how the politics of these processes actually plays out.

However, there are some studies of African civil society reactions. Ndubisi Obiorah in the Manji and Marks collection sets out some political parameters of China and Africa's development. He argues that China provides a powerful development model which urges economic growth before human rights. This has a number of possible effects. First, African leaders use this model to deny political rights to their people. Second, China exports its model via growth oriented aid and overlooks the social impacts of its actions under the banner of non-interference. Ultimately this can entrench authoritarian leaders so he feels it is the duty of African civil society to debate and discuss China's role, because rentier regimes will not engender such debate. The evidence from various studies reviewed here is that the most active civil society actors are not Africa based, but human rights organisations elsewhere. However, African trade unions have been active in contesting the effects of textile imports in particular.

China-Africa Futures: Dialogues, Détente & Dependency

In terms of the future and possible political and policy implications I tend to agree with Tull (2006) that China's presence signals more of the same for Africa. Economically China probably will not alter Africa's 'extroverted' relationship with the world economy in which it supplies raw materials with little value added local industry. For resource endowed countries the evidence suggests that elites will continue to capture rents with little developmental redistribution. And politically, there is not much evidence that China will, purposefully or not, promote democracy.

The suggested solutions on the table as set out in these various publications tend also to be more of the same. From a US perspective, Raymond Copson in the Kitissou book sets out some sensible scenarios which are in contrast to the more confrontational stances that organisations like the Heritage Foundation have taken. Copson seeks to avoid what he feels is unhelpful confrontation with China and that the US should build on its existing 'good will' through such things as the Bush Government's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). While I agree in principle with Copson's more consensual approach to international relations, initiatives such as the MCA and various governance initiatives by USAID that he cites as laudable, are largely about forms of conditionality which seek to marketise Africa. In this regard they are not so different from the approaches of China; what differs is largely the ideological baggage in which this marketisation process is cloaked. And Copson adds a salutary warning that for the USA, despite some renewed interest, Africa is still marginal to its focus on the Middle East.

The need for 'dialogue' is one of the mainstays of the European donors, although Copson warns that dialogue is not the same as policy. The reports by Tjønneland et al. for the Norwegian Government and by IPPR (Wild and Mephram, 2006), very much a 'New Labour' think-tank in the UK, seek to socialise China into the western aid paradigm by suggesting dialogue between China and the rest through existing forums.

Again, this is preferential to militarised solutions, but the call for dialogue, without some goals and declaration of interests, is a liberal appeasement that seems to defer any clear position. Again, it is a proposal which acknowledges that China needs to be brought into the fold of multilateral co-operation, but it cannot be forced to do so as this would risk alienating a lucrative market opportunity. So, the result is a merry dance of cajoling China, but never pushing too hard for fear of stepping on China's sizeable feet. That said, Zhou's chapter in the le Pere (2007) collection does see China becoming more involved in multilateral institutions as signalled by developments such as the Olympics, membership of the WTO as well as international condemnation of and China's response to the Darfur situation. All this is presented as a part and parcel of China's ongoing 'responsible' and 'peaceful' ascendance on the world stage.

The Wild and Mepham collection concludes with a chapter by the editors which usefully sets out four propositions for future engagements. The first is that solutions must be *by and for Africans*, although outsiders do have a legitimate concern with China's role on the continent. While I agree with this argument they, and others such as Obiorah, place a great deal of faith in African civil society. The issue is that if African countries are to avoid another (or deeper) resource curse, the benefits must be distributed - 'managed well' - by a democratic developmental state. The conundrum is that it is not in the interests of either the Chinese or rentier elites to transform the state, so we get the same old dependency model. The only chance, some argue, is to encourage civil society organisations (CSOs) to lead the critique and debate around African countries (and by implication China's) development model. So, Tjønneland et al. and Wild and Mepham see support for African CSOs as a key priority for donors. But this has been tried before and civil society is not a homogenous realm unilaterally acting in the good of poor Africans. It is not clear how this championing of civil society can guarantee democratic development and it feels more like a prayer than a genuine hope. Broadman's study also suggests ways in which African states can benefit from India and China's presence, but not surprisingly, this is more of same in terms of liberalisation, transparency and rule driven trade - none of which are unique to African countries, China or India. I even suspect whether there is not a computer package at the World Bank which means that what ever the preamble, the policy prescriptions it generates are always the same - 'implement sound, market-based, at-the-border trade and investment policies' (Boardman, 2007:34-35).

On the other hand, China's presence does give African leaders triangular leverage in being able to play donors and investors off against one another, but the message coming from these publications is that there is a lack of coordinated African policy in Africa to begin to capture the benefits of China's presence. For example, no countries have localisation agreements which would guarantee local labour inputs or sourcing of supplies that would in turn create local multipliers. It is incumbent on African states to put in place such mechanisms. A final area of tension around governance comes from the relationship between China and the institutions of multilateral governance in Africa, notably the AU and NEPAD. The issue is that China deals with African countries bilaterally, while bypassing these pan-African organisations that it purports to support. That said, the pervasive critique of China as excessively bilateral masks the ways in which many western donors also prefer dealing country-to-country as evidenced by debates at the recent Africa/EU Summit in Lisbon. If China is serious about co-

ordinating its Africa policy it will have to clarify its support of NEPAD and the AU which is currently rather fuzzy and non-committal. For example, NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism, while not flawless, is an attempt to instil responsibility in governments, but the Chinese, according to Tjønneland et al. and Wild and Mephram, do not seem to adhere to it despite voicing support for NEPAD.

Conclusion: More Work Needed

This review of recent literature on China's engagement with Africa has established that something significant is happening and that as concerned Africanists we need to systematically analyse these unfolding relationships. However, I am with Tull (2006) and others in thinking that while we should pay attention to China's role we should not overestimate it for two reasons. First, it is unclear whether China's role will greatly alter Africa's structural position within the global economy. Undoubtedly it adds new markets and investment opportunities and creates new sources of rents, but there is little evidence that this will straightforwardly alter the continent's fortunes. Indeed, in some cases it may exacerbate conflicts in various ways. Second, in focusing on China we must not lose sight of other countries and corporations that are vying for Africa's resources in not dissimilar ways from China.

After reading these various studies I am still convinced that we need detailed, sustained case studies. As Tjønneland et al. Note: 'We know very little about the quality and impact of Chinese projects and assistance activities in Africa' (2006:ix). There are a few insightful studies in these publications and many which describe the broad brush dynamics, but very few that really tease out the relationships between classes, the state, and foreign investment. The political outcomes of China's involvement in Africa will primarily be shaped by state-capital dynamics, particularly how Chinese capital and parts of the Chinese state intertwines with fractions of capital and political blocs within Africa.

Another driver of China's African engagement that I discussed is Chinese migration. Most studies of China in Africa focus on the obvious politics as manifested in diplomatic delegations, white papers, huge loans, and large-scale projects. While necessary, such studies often overlook the processes of transformation beyond and below these 'big' processes, the most important of which is the growing numbers of Chinese who make African countries a temporary or permanent home (Mohan and Kale, 2007; Alden, 2007). Only by monitoring these everyday relationships and social processes can we fully appreciate China's impact on the political economy of Africa.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my ROAPE colleagues Rita Abrahamsen and Marcus Power for their helpful comments on this review.

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ⁱ I am aware of Ian Taylor's. (2006) *China and Africa: Engagement and Compromise* (Routledge: London), but time precluded a thorough read and so it has not been explicitly discussed here, although he has produced other excellent work in this area (see Taylor various).