



## **The politics of Chinese engagement with African 'development': Case studies of Angola and Ghana**

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China's enhanced role within the global economy has profound political implications across the world, but takes a particular form in Africa. Meeting China's increased demand for resources from Africa and expanding her markets also means securing political influence. Over the past few years China has pumped in much aid and technical support to Africa and for the first time since the end of the Cold War African leaders have genuine choices about which aid donors and investors to work with. Given the problems of governance across much of the continent these new economic and political choices will have major impacts on African leaders, political parties, civil society groups and other aid donors. This research, in collaboration with Durham University, assesses what impacts Chinese aid, trade and investment are having on the politics of specific African countries and the extent to which it excites geopolitical competition.

### **Research themes**

(1) The changing patterns of Chinese involvement in Africa: China's recent heightened involvement in Africa builds on longer term linkages. In order to understand in detail the patterns of aid, trade and investment the project will document and analyse the continuities and changes in policy towards the case study countries through the production of a database of historical and contemporary Chinese aid, trade and investment activities.

(2) The politics of trade, investment and African productivity: Chinese economic involvement generates both livelihood impacts and political responses. These impacts vary by country so it is vital to undertake country level analysis of how political actors - particularly political parties and civil society organisations - perceive the Chinese impact and respond to it.

(3) Aid and regime stability: China's involvement in Africa relies on 'soft' and 'hard' power in the form of development aid and military assistance. China takes an apparently more 'hands off' approach to politics than other donors so a point of tension is likely to be these differing approaches to aid. Key amongst them is whether China's involvement extends the life of some regimes in order to secure economic access and whether this enhances the militarisation of the continent.

### **Country case studies**

The project has two case study countries:

**Angola**: China supported anti-colonial movements in Angola and refused to maintain diplomatic relations with Portugal until shortly before independence. Since the turn of the new millennium, China's influence in the country has grown rapidly and in 2004 Angola became China's largest supplier of crude oil in Africa. As energy security has become a pressing concern, Beijing embarked on a strategy to enhance its influence as a development 'partner' through interest free loans and investments in the telecommunications and transport sectors.

**Ghana**: By contrast Ghana has long been an ideological 'friend' of China and relations remained cordial until the new millennium, when activities intensified. China has entered many infrastructure contracts and is a net importer to Ghana. Tensions exist over Ghana's textile industry where job losses have been high in the face of Chinese competition.

### **Contact details**

The project website can be found at [http://www.dur.ac.uk/geography/research/researchprojects/\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*](http://www.dur.ac.uk/geography/research/researchprojects/*****)

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