Domestic Transformations and Change in Sino-African Relations∗

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Abstract

This paper considers change in Sino-African relations. The main argument is that, for the past fifteen years a dramatic change has occurred in Sino-African relations as a result of domestic transformations in both China and Africa (rather than a result of systemic effect, i.e. the end of the Cold War). These transformations are basically: (1) Reform and Open Door Policy in China, whose implication is the introduction of private and parastatal actors in Sino-African relations. These actors do engage in activities that boost trade and strengthen economic ties in the one way, but they also serve as object of contention in host countries in the other way (2) Democratization process in African states, whose implication is also the introduction of domestic forces such as civil societies and political parties in Sino-African relations. Since Africa is in a kind of weaker position as regard to its relations with China, these forces and those that fight against their own governments, will act as watchdogs of the Sino-African relations, using at times a maximum of pressure on their respective governments, to advance their corporate interests.
Introduction

For the past four decades, Africa and China have enjoyed very special relations. The special character of these relations can be portrayed as convergence over major world issues. Yet, the Sino-African relations have been dynamic all the time. But over the past fifteen years, that kind of dynamism has taken the form of dramatic change.

Why change in Sino-African relations?

This paper argues that change in Sino-African relations was a result of domestic transformations in both China and Africa (rather than a result of systemic effect, i.e. the end of the Cold War). These transformations are basically: (1) Reform and Open Door Policy in China, whose implication is the introduction of private and parastatal actors in Sino-African relations. These actors will act to boost trade and strengthen economic ties in the one way, but also serve as object of contention in host countries in the other way (2) Democratization process in African states, whose implication is also the introduction of domestic forces such as civil societies and political parties in Sino-African relations. Since Africa is in a kind of weaker position as regard to its relations with China, these forces act as watchdogs of the Sino-African relations, using at times a maximum of pressure on their respective governments to advance their corporate interests.

To develop the above argument, this paper seeks to do three things.

First, we will present an evolutionary survey of Sino-African relations. That is, to explain how China and Africa have moved from historical linkage to change. The latter is viewed through three drives: the shift from ideology to pragmatic policies, trade-investment and their discontents, and the delicate issue of the Chinese arms sales.
Second, domestic transformations in China are the resultant of three events: the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976 that ended the dream of the extreme-leftists to keep power after Mao; the rise of Deng Xiaoping, which gave birth to Reform and Open Door Policy; the Nanjing anti-African protests and Tiananmen demonstrations which enabled a more assertive approach of China toward Africa.

Third, we will analyze why the African democratization process accounts both for the densification of and challenges to the relations with China.

1. From Historical Linkage to Change

1.1. Background

For many years and even today, Sino-African relations have been typified within the broad framework of South-South cooperation. Both parts had been subjugated to various degrees of colonial rule. By the 1950s and 60s, China and Africa naturally identified themselves as fighting against neo-colonialism once formal colonialism had been rolled back. Furthermore, the outbreak of the Cold War was the salient that helped identify a community of interests between the two. They tried to extract benefits from the rivalry between the US and the USSR, while affirming their non-alignment position to either bloc.

Sino-African relations underwent roughly four stages:

(1) Early 1950s to early 1960s: the New China faced pressure and adversary from the US, followed by a split with the USSR, which added to Beijing’s isolation. To gain friends, China embarked on a vast support of African Liberation Movements till most of these won independence.
Early 60s to mid-1970s: full-scale ideologically inspired relations. China maintained good links with revolutionary countries, providing them with military hardware, infrastructure construction, medical assistance and training, etc.

Mid-70s to end-80s: the Chinese Reform and Open Door Policy and the defining of a new vision on foreign relations. Africa embarked on the “lost decade” which was characterized by recession and less density in its relations with China.

Early 1990s onward: Regime change in Africa and implementing of a new policy on Sino-African relations, supposed now to serve economic development.

It is important to note that the Bandung Conference on April 1955 was the cornerstone of the relationship between China and the Third World in general. The “Bandung spirit” engineered by the conference aimed at safeguarding independence for Asian and African peoples, fostering world peace and enhancing cooperation among nations. By 1955, only five African nations and a few more Asians were independent. Little wonder that the basic principle of the Bandung Conference was to fight against colonialism and imperialism until all nations are freed.

Nonetheless, the Bandung Conference, which founded the Non-Alignment Movement, was more a code of conduct than an effective platform, because only a handful of nations were then independent, and those that were independent lacked real means to ensure their non-alignment advocacy. That characterization remained even after the vast majority of African nations gained international sovereignty. Moreover, the kind of relations that China and these nations had with either bloc remained blurred: an official affirmation of non-alignment, while implementing an opportunistic policy of extraction. In the 1950s, China
used its alliance with the Soviet Union to counter the Western isolation, while it used its normalization with the US to counter the so-called USSR hegemony in the 1970s. Likewise, some African states undertook a revolutionary and socialist path particularly in the 1970s, while playing a significant role by the side of the Western bloc. Most notably, many an African states and Liberation Movements turned to China for assistance when the Soviet option was not desirable, often because of the Soviet support of local rivals.³

As a matter of fact, from the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 up to early 1970s, the Chinese perception of Africa was guided by ideological needs and the vital necessity to be internationally recognized. From the Chinese perspective, Africa was definitely part of the “International United front”. As Joseph Bertini summarized it, Africa “was also a battleground in a number of important struggles. China saw Africa as the frontline in the global struggle against imperialism and capitalism, it was later the centerpiece in the Sino-Soviet conflict of the sixties and seventies, and it was also an area in which Beijing and Taipei battled for recognition as the capital of the one true China”.⁴ However, the main reason for the PRC’s search for ideological assertion was not survival, but rather the mounting influence of the leftists within China’s Communist Party (CCP). The Cultural Revolution is but an apex of such an assertion. It should be stated that the Cultural Revolution was more a leadership struggle or power (re) allocation within the party than a cultural or social movement. Its influence on China’s foreign policy has been dramatic, even as regard to Sino-African relations. For instance, between 1967 and 1969, the relations between China and several African allies such as Kenya, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Niger and Upper Volta (present Burkina Faso), have either deteriorated or cooled down. But regime change in some
African countries was also to be blamed for the split or turbulence in Sino-African relations in that period (coup d’Etat in Dahomey/Benin, Central African Republic and Ghana in 1966).\textsuperscript{5} However, the main drive of the relations remained China’s perception –later translated into policy- that Africa was a fertile terrain for the expansion of communism.\textsuperscript{6} But that agenda was far from being a priority for newly independent African states, even for the most Sinophile of them. The then Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere best echoed the African sentiment: “neither our country, principles, nor freedom to determine our fate are for sale”.\textsuperscript{7}

The above are but few examples of the fact that the honeymoon –if any- between Africa and China had been sour from time to time and the road to full cooperation had been full of ambushes and obstacles, notwithstanding all the resources that China had poured alongside the cooperation road. From 1961 to 1975, China’s aid to Africa reached $365 millions, representing more than 42 percent of Beijing’s total aid commitments to developing countries.\textsuperscript{1} But it seems that these resources did not reap significant fruits. Of course, thanks to 26 African states, China succeeded in legally ousting Taiwan from the UN, thus gaining the seat of permanent member of the Security Council. On many occasions, China enjoyed the backing of its African allies, thus escaping condemnation from the UN Human Rights Commission.

These are part of the legacies from the revolutionary era, which present China is still enjoying. In 2004, at the 60\textsuperscript{th} Session of the Human Rights Commission, China succeeded once again in escaping for the eleventh time a condemnation resolution proposed by Western

\textsuperscript{1} Source: Li Anshan, “Transformations of China’s Policy towards Africa”. Paper submitted to the Workshop “China-Africa Relations: Engaging the International Discourse” organized by China’s Transnational Relations Center at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, November 11-12, 2006.
states. Among the 28 countries that supported China, 15 were Africans while the whole Asia was backing with a meager 10 votes.\textsuperscript{8} Special relations that China enjoys nowadays with Tanzania, Egypt, Zambia, Guinea, Mali, Algeria, etc, are a legacy of the revolutionary era.

Besides, there has been an enduring fruitful cooperation between China and the former Organization of African Unity (OAU now African Union). Upholding the “One China” policy, the OAU was consistent in checking Taiwan at the continental level. On the Chinese part, the OAU was to be rewarded for its political support. Henceforth, a substantial part of the Chinese aid has been channeled through the OAU. The latter brokered even some of the Chinese military support to African states or National Liberation Movements. For instance in 1974, the OAU’s Defense Commission got 2000 pieces of light weapons from China.\textsuperscript{9}

\textbf{1.2. Change in Sino-African Relations}

Change in Sino-African relations is expressed by three drives: (1) Shift from ideology to pragmatic policy; (2) Trade, investment and their discontents (3) Arms sales.

\textit{a) From Ideology to Pragmatic Policy}

During a visit to Gabon in 2004, President, Hu Jintao said in a very straightforward way: “Henceforth China will act like any other power, in accordance with its own well-known interest. It will concentrate with its own cooperative efforts in countries where it recognizes high potential, whether it is a matter of raw materials, potential markets or diplomatic influence.”\textsuperscript{10}

As stated above, ideology was central to the Sino-African relations up to end 1970s. Otherwise put, China did come out with an ideological package to meet with the newly
independent African states’ will to secure autonomy from the West and ensure social
development. Sino-Soviet rivalry did add to the Chinese quest for ideological control of the
continent. The results harvested by such a policy are mitigated at best. In the one way, china
succeeded in building historical ties sustained by friendship with Africa. In the other way,
very few African countries were receptive to the Chinese appeal for revolution. The result is
that the perceived friendly links were not sustained by much economic transactions.

Of course, the Cold War is mainly to be blamed for the occurrence of such a
phenomenon. Marginally, states such as former Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo)
managed some sporadic escapades from their Western bloc by dealing specific businesses
with China or Russia.

The shift from ideology to pragmatic policy by end 1980s early 1990s, can globally be
viewed through: trade boosting; enlargement of the scope of cooperation underscored by
FOCAC; almost all African states building friendly relations with the PRC.

As for trade, it grew by 700 percent during the 1990s. It doubled from 2002 to 2003,
reaching $18.5 billion (Ester Pan, 2006). Last year (2005), trade volume between China and
Africa reached $39.7 billion. It is expected that by 2010, China-Africa trade will top the $100
billion mark.11

Likewise, the scope of cooperation was broadened. Out of the relics of the Cold War, the
Sino-African cooperation grew to a new height. That is, the Forum on China-Africa
Cooperation (FOCAC), who’s first Ministerial Session was held in Beijing in October 2000.
Out of that session came along two documents:

- “Beijing Declaration of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation”. That is a broad
platform summarizing a common understanding of both parties on major international issues, particularly the so-called new international political and economic order. Also, the principles of equality and mutual benefits have been reaffirmed.

- "Program for China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social Development". This is a broad cooperation area comprising economy, trade, agriculture, tourism, science, education, culture, health, environment, etc.¹²

Furthermore, the number of African states that have diplomatic relations with the PRC reached an unprecedented number of 48 by the year 2006. The November 3-5, 2006 Beijing Summit of FOCAC was held with the motto “friendship, peace, cooperation, and development”. It witnessed the establishment of a strategic partnership between China and Africa, underscored by the determination to strengthen political and economic ties.

As a matter of fact, the global role now played by China together with African oil and other natural resources are well treasured by both parts. An increasing number of African states are finding important oil reserves beneath their soils. Therefore, exploring and extracting oil have become an important agenda in Sino-African relations. Particularly, since 1993 China has become a net importer of oil, ranking second in 2003 as one of the greatest oil consumer in the world, only after the US.

b) Trade, Investment, and their Discontents

The development of the Sino-African trade and even investment package brought about some concerns from the weakest side. Africa’s important trade deficits, disturbances with the textile and clothing sector, under-employment of local labor in Chinese invested projects, these are
the major bulk of concerns.

*First*, the imbalanced trade relations between Africa and China logically stemmed from the very nature of their respective economies: China as a manufacturing centerpiece, while Africa remains importer of high added value finished products and exporter of low added value raw materials. Even South Africa, which is the most advanced Sub-Saharan state, had a trade deficit with China that jumped from $24 million to over $400 million, between 1992 and 2004.\(^\text{13}\) Some statistics hold that South Africa alone accounted for 20% of Africa’s total trade with China in 2004, but ran a trade deficit as high as $2.5 billion (Lyal White and Phil Alves, 2006). Talking about trade between China and South Africa, the deputy chairman of the South-African Institute of International Affairs, Moeletsi Mbeki put that China represented “both a tantalizing opportunity and a terrifying threat”.\(^\text{14}\) However, the trade balance between China and Africa has been more or less in equilibrium for the past couple of years, thank to the oil boom in several African countries. According to some figures, for the first 10 months of 2005, Africa exported $16.92 billion to China, while the African imports from China were just $15.25 billion.\(^\text{15}\) If these tendencies were confirmed by end 2005, Africa would have enjoyed trade surplus with China for the first time in history. Of course, there are extreme disparities among African countries as far as trade with China is concerned. The few states, which improved significantly their trade balance, are oil producers. They have been greatly favored by the oil boom in the recent years.

*Second*, the much delicate issue of textile and clothing may bring much trouble to Sino-African relations if it were not handled out appropriately. Most of the African states for which textile represents the major comparative advantage are showing increasing discontents
with the Chinese quasi control of that sector. As a consequence of imports from China, garments are getting more and more cheaper (which most consumers are happy with), but conversely, local producers can no longer sustain the competition. In South Africa, cheap Chinese imports have cost the textile and garments industry about 2500 local jobs. ¹⁶ For Princeton N. Lyman, Director of Africa Policy Studies at the US Council on Foreign Relations, as much as 75,000 South-Africans had lost their jobs by 2002, as a result of Chinese competition. ¹⁷ The state’s industrialists and workers claimed for protective action, joined by the Church leaders and the opposition leader Tony Leon. ¹⁸ In Senegal, trade unions demonstrated against what they called the “disloyal [meaning unfair] competition” of the Chinese merchants. Meanwhile, the consumers echoed: “Let the Chinese live in peace”. ¹⁹ In Benin, local wholesalers are unhappy with the Chinese, Pakistanis and Indian textile importers. The main reason is that, wholesalers are no more in control of the distribution of imported textile to retailers. The latter now can buy directly from foreign importers, which undermines the wholesaling activity.

Furthermore, it is expected that after the World Trade Organization stripped away the quotas on Chinese exports in 2005, as a result of the end of Multifibre Agreement (MFA), the African textile will be very lucky to survive on the American and European markets, even with the help of preferential treatments such as the US African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA). For instance, South Africa’s clothing sales to the US dropped dramatically from $26 million in the first quarter of 2004 to $12 million for the same period in 2005. ²⁰ Nigeria had also been obliged to ban textile imports to protect local manufacturers. But still, the Chinese and Nigerian smugglers continue flowing thousands of containers every month into the
Federal State, through the Northern states such as Katsina and Jigawa.\textsuperscript{21}

Several African textile factories have already been shot down, presumably as a result of the Chinese competition. In Lesotho, more than 10 clothing factories closed in 2005.\textsuperscript{22} To some extent, we can view the Chinese aid package to Africa as an attempt to soften the discontents engendered by the trading relations. But to which extent the aid will cool down the contention?

Third, the massive utilization of Chinese manpower, particularly in Chinese government invested projects and biddings won by Chinese enterprises. China is believed to export almost the whole manpower it needs to implement a construction agreement.\textsuperscript{23} Chinese official figures hold that there are no less than 78,000 Chinese workers in Africa. In 2005, the Angolan energy minister estimated that by 2010 about three million Chinese could move there.\textsuperscript{24} That obviously will worsen the employment situation in that country. In the credit agreement of $2 billion signed between China’s Eximbank and the government of Angola in 2004, there was a provision that only 30% of the reconstruction package will be subcontracted to Angolan firms. The remaining 70% were left open for the Chinese entrepreneurs, which very much discontented the Angolan businessmen.\textsuperscript{25}

c) Arms Sales\textsuperscript{1}

The Chinese arms sales to Africa are not really a new activity. During the era of African national liberation from colonialism, the cooperation with China was both in term of military support and arms sales. But what is new here is the scale of the sales: marketization also

\textsuperscript{1} Due to the sensitive aspect of arms sales in China, we are not able to provide any Chinese source of these sales to Africa.
reached weapons. Because of WTO admission, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is no more part of domestic arms business. Most of the arms deals are now in the hands of China Poly Group Corporation/ Poly Technologies, Inc., which has been detached from the PLA and put directly under the supervision of the central government since 1998. But it is believed that “unmoved by ideological concerns and without fear of political consequences, the Chinese government may be willing to fuel a small arms race in sub-Saharan Africa to generate additional revenues for the PLA”.26 In the late 1990s, China is said to have earned $1 billion out of the Ethiopian-Eritrea war.27 In Sudan, the genocide committed in Darfur by the Islamic government, which is a major business partner of Beijing on the continent, is making China an indirect actor of the civil war. The most important arms deal happened in 1997, when China sold 6 F6 class fighter planes, 50 Z-6 type helicopters and 100 self-propelled artillery units.1 Later on, some 12 F-7 jets were added to the deal (Esther Pan, 2006). But it should be stated that arms deals are not per se the main concern. Major powers are all involved in arms sales to Africa. Our focus point here is that these arms deals are not only part of the business package, but also are meant to protect China’s massive oil investment and economic interests in Africa. In August 2000, the Daily Telegraph reported that the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) had captured a Chinese group “carrying out a mysterious function”, during a battle with the Sudanese government.2 In Zimbabwe, China is believed to have provided a radio jamming equipment that allowed the Mugabe government to block broadcasts of independent news sources (Esther Pan, 2006). These issues have introduced a new factor in Sino-African relations, whereby China is coming closer to loggerheads with

2 Ibid.
civil societies and other domestic forces, because it does business with incumbent governments whose legitimacy is questionable, or who are not responsive enough to society needs.

Obviously, these developments do have something to do with transformations underwent by China since the last two decades.

2. Domestic Transformations in China

On September 9, 1976, Chairman Mao Zedong passed way at the age of 82. With the death of Mao, came along a series of events that triggered significant transformations within the Chinese domestic system. These are:

(1) The arrest of the Gang of Four, namely Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Wang Hong, and Mao’s wife Jiang Qing. That arrest in October 1976 and trial in 1980 put officially an end to the Cultural Revolution, which hampered foreign affairs and was cause of political chaos, social unrest and economic, cultural and educational disaster.

(2) Deng Xiaoping, a long time advocator of policy change, who was purged twice by the radicals, was now elected as Chairman by the Eleventh Session of the Third Plenary of China’s Communist Party in December 1978. He now had the opportunity to put down the seeds of his ever-loving vision to reform and open up China to the world. Mao’s era was characterized by the Chairman’s negative view of the world. The latter was to be healed necessarily by revolution and war. Deng Xiaoping had a more positive reading of the world, which he viewed as basically predominated by peace and development. That was the clue about Deng’s pragmatic reform, which some people call “China’s Second Revolution”.28 The
economic reform was meant to enhance productivity, while the Open Door Policy’s main target was to attract foreign investment. Knowing that Africa was not the right partner in terms of boosting foreign investment, Beijing was now left with the option to cooperate for the exploitation of African raw materials, to enhance productivity and meet increasing demands and dissatisfaction at home.

(3) The Nanjing anti-African protests in 1988-1989 and the Tiananmen mass movement in June 4th, 1989 were two events that ultimately were targeted at the government. These two events, which happened within a time span of less than a year, did bring along new challenges to the Reform and Open Door Policy: Reform was attacked by demonstrators on the ground of corruption, and “growing restiveness among students and intellectuals exacerbated by existing divisions within the regime” drew support and participation from the population as a whole.

Furthermore, the Nanjing protests were a symbolic attack on the Open Door Policy on the ground of resentments against privileges offered to African students. After these two events were crushed down by the coalition in power, any autonomy or challenge vis-à-vis governmental choices pertaining the outside world was hard to imagine.

Of particular interest for China was to strengthen its ties with several African states, which had expressed their will to call back their students as a reaction to the Nanjing protests. Such a threat, if implemented might have damaged Sino-African relations. Besides, the Tiananmen crackdown led to a complete isolation of China by the West. To break up with such isolation, it became vital for China to turn to its African allies. The conjuncture of energy deficiencies in China by the end of 1980s and early 90s, and the vast African consuming
market for finished products added to the strategic importance of Africa.

The way is now paved for Chinese entrepreneurs and merchants, private and public alike, to settle in Africa. Their number and scope of businesses keep on growing year by year. But these actors often succeed in securing a relative autonomy vis-à-vis the Chinese central government. Some are even overtly critical to the “passive” role played by their embassies in Africa. The non-compliance of these actors to local laws, the maltreatment and exploitation of African workers by Chinese businessmen or contractors do not have much to do with the central government’s policy to nurture a good image of China abroad. Yet, they have succeeded in diffusing to Africa some of China’s domestic dysfunctions: hazardous practices, enterprise prosperity not built on profit margin but on market share or monopoly (the ultimate purpose is to erase the competitor from the market; that is why a Chinese businessman dares loose money when he is in control of the market), irregularly low salaries, and an almost impossible integration with African societies, etc.

From the African perspective, internal forces did also evolve as dynamic actors in Sino-African relations.

3. **Domestic Transformations in Africa**

Against the backdrop of widespread corruption, mal governance and brutal dictatorship, the vast majority of African states ended the “lost decade” of the 1980s with economic chaos and social upheavals. Domestic resistance forces (intellectuals including students, trade unions, religious groups, and political groups), which were operating underground, now all came out

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1 David Zweig hinted the concept of “diffusion of dysfunctions” by Chinese businessmen, during the Workshop mentioned above. Professor Zweig is Director of the Center on China’s Transnational Relations at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
bravely to lead the upheavals. The main claim of these forces was democracy and people’s well being. “Democratization is no doubt related to issues such as inequality, development, or Structural Adjustment Programs. Similarly, state repression, which is antithetical to democratic governance, has been linked to issues of racial divisions, ethnicity, religious conflicts and the like.” Benin was the first African state to launch its peaceful shift from monolithism to integral multipartism in February 1990. Then after, the movement spread all other the continent.

To know how important have become social forces in Sino-African relations, it is necessary to look back to the role that these forces had played in the outcome of democracy in Africa. From the elite to mass, there was a linkage of social and political forces to oust dictators from power. Students and then civil servants’ trade unions did secure a relative autonomy from state control by embarking on civil disobedience expressed in terms of strikes and sit-in. Thanks to their “political sermons”, religious groups, particularly church congregations used to bring people together in large numbers. Professional associations also “played an important role in the pressure for political reform”. Grassroots movements were either organized spontaneously or by these various groups to uphold the banner of political change. Most dictatorial regimes in Africa have been uprooted through these social upheavals.

Henceforth, the change in the scope and nature of relations with China, underscored by a shift from ideology to pragmatic policy, are the result of democratic needs: (1) the unpopular Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by Bretton Woods institutions were believed to have failed and social actors now empowered by the democratic process were asking for
other alternatives.\(^1\) While denying aid to African states and insisting on “economic efficiency and its consequent austerity measures”, the West was believed to be “creating the conditions for a military intervention”.\(^34\) Due to SAPs, some of the democratically elected governments were facing legitimacy crises.\(^35\) (2) All over Africa, people were no more convinced by Marxism dogmas, which actually coincided with the removal of these dogmas from Chinese foreign policy.

However, as a result of democratization, domestic forces in Africa are increasingly echoing some of the discontents relating to relations with China, as developed above. The September 28, 2006 presidential election in Zambia is symptomatic of such a phenomenon. As a matter of fact, the political scientist at the University of Zambia, Neo Simutanyi believes that the anti-Chinese feelings aroused by the opposition candidate, Michael Sata, made the latter popular in Lusaka and the Copper belt where Chinese are much influential in the Zambian economy.\(^36\) Though President Levy Mwanawasa won the election, Sata came far ahead of him in Lusaka and the Copper belt.\(^37\)

Furthermore, there has always been a trend towards collusion between central government and Multinational Companies (MNCs) involved in extractive sectors on the African continent. The simple reason is that interests of both government and MNCs do often coincide: government is entitled to use power and authority to protect the MNCs, while the latter are supposed to provide the means to ensure a political survival for their host. However,

\(^1\) However, there is an argument that the effects of IMF conditionalities are limited in most concerned developing countries. For instance, trade openness in these countries is not much a result of conditionalities than “the willingness to reform”. For further discussions, see Shang-Jin Wei and Zhiwei Zhang, “Do External Conditionalities Work: The Case of Trade Reform Conditions in IMF Supported Programs” (\textit{NBER Working Paper 12667}, November 2006).
when government and MNCs have sometimes combined efforts to ensure local obedience through patronage and pay-offs, there still remain quite often a large segment of local forces to protest, struggle against and undermine governments-MNCs collusion. In Niger Delta (Nigeria), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has expressed its will to cripple the oil industry, whose output it has already reduced by 25 percent in 2006.

China’s multinational oil corporations (China National Petroleum Corporation or CNPC, China National Petrochemical Corporation or Sinopec, and China National Offshore Oil Corporation or CNOOC) do not diverge from that trend in their businesses with African states. They are as targeted in Niger Delta (Nigeria) by insurgencies defending the cause of the Ogoni people as threatened near conflict areas in Sudan. A hint is suggested on January 5 and 25 this year, when respectively 5 and 9 Chinese workers have been kidnapped by insurgents from Niger Delta.

**Conclusion**

China and Africa still share a lot, at both bilateral and international levels. They have succeeded in strengthening and broadening the scope of their relations. They have succeeded in turning the page where ideology was the main drive of cooperation. Domestic needs command China to hunt for raw materials and have Taiwan on check, as well as boosting trade and strengthening political ties with Africa to cope with an increasingly global role. Domestic needs command Africa to turn to China for economic aid, as well as tapping the

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continent’s vast natural resources and accessing the huge Chinese market, and also strengthening political ties with Beijing so as to play a more influential role within the Security Council.

However, domestic actors are having a different stake in the Sino-African relations. Inside China, these actors lack the autonomy that would allow them to play a different note from the one orchestrated by the central government. But outside the mainland, they do certainly secure such autonomy by engaging in activities that help develop Sino-African relations, but at the same time arouse local people’s discontents. The local actors, who suffer from the Chinese mal practices and politicians in search for voting support, will continue putting much pressure on governments to make cooperation with China more in compliance with African interests.

Then, it will be a matter of which coalition in Africa is in a stronger position to have the Chinese on check. Yet, China is no more the partner that will never interfere in African domestic affairs. Again, Zambia gives us a striking illustration: the Chinese Ambassador to Lusaka, Li Baodong was reported by the Zambian media to have threatened that Beijing might cut diplomatic ties with Zambia, if Michael Sata were elected (and recognized Taiwan).38

Moreover, China is already committed to protecting the 1,500 kilometers long pipeline that brings its oil from Sudanese oil fields to the Red Sea.39

Will China go beyond the exerting of its “soft power” in Africa?
NOTES

5 Xie Yixian, op.cit., p. 257-258.
6 Joseph Bertini, op.cit, p. 5.
7 Ibid., p. 8.
9 Li Bao Ping, Ma Rui min (eds), fei zhou bian ge yu fa zhan (shi jie chu ban she, 2002 nian), p. 98.
15 Foreign Investment Network magazine (Lagos), Spring edition 2006, p. 17.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Marie-France Cros, op.cit.
20 Princeton N. Lyman, op.cit.
21 I personally went thrice to the Northern state of Kano, where I discovered that Chinese textile was entering into the city of Kano in contraband from Niger Republic via Katsina and Jigawa states.
22 Princeton N. Lyman, op.cit.
23 Having worked from 1995 to 1998 on a hydraulic dam construction with a Chinese company, I have tested the fallacy of the argument that local workers do not have any skills.
25 Jean-Christophe Servant, op.cit.
27 Jean-Christophe Servant, op.cit.
29 The Nanjing Protests from December 1988 to January 1989 were initially an isolated incident at Hehai University. Because African students were hated for living in better conditions and getting more allowances than their Chinese counterparts, which was exacerbated by the Africans dating Chinese girls, the protests took a racial and violent forms. Then these protests quickly spread to other cities (Shanghai, Beijing, etc.) with the government now being targeted. See: http://bbs.cjdby.net/viewthread.php?tid=286046.
These include imports of undervalued goods, fake declaration to customs, fiscal evasion, money laundry, illegal emigration to Europe and the US, etc.


Ibid.


Ibid


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