

China, Africa, and Globalization: The “China Alternative”

George T. Yu

ASIA PAPER
June 2009



Institute for Security &
Development Policy

China, Africa, and Globalization: The “China Alternative”

George T. Yu

"China, Africa, and Globalization: The "China Alternative"" is an *Asia Paper* published by the Institute for Security and Development Policy. The *Asia Papers Series* is the Occasional Paper series of the Institute's Asia Program, and addresses topical and timely subjects. The Institute is based in Stockholm, Sweden, and cooperates closely with research centers worldwide. Through its Silk Road Studies Program, the Institute runs a joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. The Institute is firmly established as a leading research and policy center, serving a large and diverse community of analysts, scholars, policy-watchers, business leaders, and journalists. It is at the forefront of research on issues of conflict, security, and development. Through its applied research, publications, research cooperation, public lectures, and seminars, it functions as a focal point for academic, policy, and public discussion.

This publication is kindly made possible by support from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author/s and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Security and Development Policy or its sponsors.

© Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2009

ISBN: 978-91-85937-58-5

Printed in Singapore

Distributed in Europe by:

Institute for Security and Development Policy
Västra Finnbodavägen 2, 131 30 Stockholm-Nacka, Sweden
Tel. +46-841056953; Fax. +46-86403370
Email: info@isdpeu

Distributed in North America by:

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute
Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
1619 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel. +1-202-663-7723; Fax. +1-202-663-7785
E-mail: caci2@jhuadig.admin.jhu.edu

Editorial correspondence should be addressed to Dr. Bert Edström at: bedstrom@isdpeu

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
China’s Africa Diplomacy	9
Diplomacy Serving Ideology	9
Diplomacy Serving Political Ends	11
Diplomacy Serves the Economy	14
Connectivity and Integration: Diplomatic, Cultural, Economic, and Technical	17
Personal Diplomacy	17
Economic Ties.....	19
Technical Assistance and Technology Transfer	22
Cultural Connectivity.....	25
Whither the “Chinese Alternative”?	29
About the Author	31

Executive Summary

Globalization to date has been a primarily Western dominated and oriented process. Through the use of both hard and soft power, the West has occupied a leading role in connecting and integrating the diverse and vast globe. In the 21st century, the rise and re-rise of new and traditional power centers has signaled the emergence of “alternative globalizations,” challenging or at a minimum reducing the global dominance of Western influences. Namely, countries from the non-Western world such as China emerging on the global stage offering the world, or regions of the world, alternative policies and practices, including developmental models and international institutions.

China’s half a century of interaction with Africa beginning in the 1960s – China’s first major independent foreign policy operation outside Asia – offers a unique example of China’s growing global power and influence. The record of China’s relations with Africa constitutes both a lesson in the evolutionary development of Chinese foreign policy and China’s expanding and deepening global role.

China’s influence and role in Africa also raises the question whether the developing bond between China and Africa signals China’s influence as a potential alternative – the “China alternative” – to the existing Western dominated global culture and power structure.

China’s surge of interest and activities in Africa in the early years of the 21st century drew much international attention. Academic, journalist, and policy studies abound focused on China’s new foreign policy venture, including an emphasis upon China’s search for energy and other commodity resources. While there was no doubt of an immediate interest in and the need for Africa’s oil and abundant mineral resources, given its massive economic developmental requirements, China’s relations with Africa were founded on both a broader and deeper political and economic relationship.

The formation of China's African policy has been shaped by both domestic and external factors, with a close relationship between the two. Ideology, economics, and political considerations have all contributed to the formation of policy, depending upon the needs of the moment. In the 1960s and 1970s, Africa served as a battlefield between China and Taiwan over the question of sovereignty and who represented China, while in the 21st century economic issues were central, including securing access to African energy and commodity resources for China's economic development. In this sense, China's African policy has manifested a degree of flexibility and pragmatism.

To achieve policy objectives, China has been innovative in its utilization of foreign policy tools, both hard and soft. Economic tools have been at the forefront of Chinese-African relations; three forms have been central: official aid, commercial trade, and investment. Cultural tools, the establishment of Confucius institutes in Africa, to create and present a constructive and encouraging image of China, have also been employed.

Without question, China's stature and activism has been increasing in Africa. China-Africa interaction has developed into a major global partnership. The developing bond has signaled China's increasing global influence and China's ascendancy as a potential alternative to the existing Western dominated global culture and power structure.

Introduction

Globalization as we know it has been a primarily Western dominated and oriented process, led first by Western Europe beginning in the 18th and 19th centuries followed by the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries, popularly referred to by some “as 500 years of domination by Europe and the United States.” Through the use of both hard and soft powers, culture, economic, political, superior technologies, and military conquests, the West has occupied a leading role in connecting and integrating the diverse and vast globe, from Europe to Africa and Asia, from North to South America and beyond. In the process, the West in general and the United States in particular with strong economies, superior technology, and attractive popular culture ruled supreme, creating a predominantly Western oriented “world.”

In the 21st century, the rise and re-rise of new and former power centers outside the Western world, a consequence of their enhanced economic and social developments, have signaled the emergence of the phenomenon of “alternative globalizations,”¹ challenging or at a minimum reducing the global dominance of Western influences and the manifestation of an alternative to existing global institutions and practices. Namely, countries from the non-Western world, especially those with strong cultural traditions and developing economies, such as China and India, emerging on the global stage offering the world, or regions of the world, alternative development models, culture, economic, political, and otherwise.

Nowhere has been this development more evident than in the contemporary rise of China as a major global economic force and its new global/regional role as a leading political power. With its newly acquired economic wealth

¹ Peter I. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington, *Many Globalizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 12. As the authors state, this is not a new idea but an idea which has been revived by Tu Weiming, Shmuel Eisenstadt, and other scholars.

and political powers, China has extended and increased its presence globally, signaling the arrival of a new potential global power and offering new approaches and practices to domestic and international issues.

China's emerging global role and potential impact, or "the China alternative," has been especially evident in its relationship with the diverse and vast developing continent of Africa. Long subject to the global influences of the West, colonial and otherwise, Africa since the 1960s has been introduced, in phases, to "the China alternative," including China as an alternative force in international politics, model of development, foreign aid, trade and investment practices, the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other nations, policies on human rights, and other cultural, economic, political, and social approaches and policies.

China's nearly sixty years of interaction with Africa offers a unique study of China's growing power and influence and its impact over time upon Africa. The record of China's relations with Africa constitutes both a lesson in the evolutionary development of Chinese foreign policy and China's expanding and deepening global influence and role.

This study examines China's varied appeals over time to Africa, the function of Africa in China's foreign policy, the levels and forms of interaction, their extensity, intensity, and impact, between China and Africa. A question throughout the study will be to probe the validity of the concept and presence of "the China alternative," potential and real.

China's Africa Diplomacy

Diplomacy Serving Ideology

Contemporary Chinese-African relations date back to the late 1950s/early 1960s. In the nearly sixty years of relationship, three primary appeals have dominated China's policy toward Africa: economic, ideological, and political. In the early years, following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, down to the end of the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s, ideology served as the central issue in Chinese foreign policy. The era was characterized by diplomacy serving ideology.

Two hostile forces, the United States and the former Soviet Union, were the objects of China's ideological diplomacy. During the Cold War, China's foremost foreign policy objective was to break out of "international isolation," fostered by the "imperialist" United States beginning in the 1950s, followed by the former "revisionist" Soviet Union following the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict in the 1960s. Africa, at the height of the anti-colonial independence movement of the 1960s, became a major battlefield between China, the West led by the United States, and the former Soviet Union on which China sought to gain international support and recognition from the newly independent African states.² China described the battle in ideological terms as one against the forces of "imperialism, colonialism and revisionism."

The primacy of ideology in Chinese foreign policy was nowhere better demonstrated than in its ideological stand in relation to Africa, especially prominent during China's struggles with the former Soviet Union during the 1960s and 1970s.

A prominent ideological question in the Sino-Soviet conflict was: who were the true socialists, namely, supporters of African national liberation movements. China charged the former Soviet Union with seeking hegemony and

² Between 1960 and 1968, no less than 22 African states won independence.

being “counter-revolutionary” and seeking colonial domination and exploitation of African resources, while opposing African national liberation movements. For China, a direct consequence of the struggle was to further harden its ideological stand, which was to have mixed results with regard to its diplomacy.

China’s increasingly rigid ideological stand not only impacted its relations with the former Soviet Union but it also defined and limited its contacts and relationships with African states and political groups and parties. During the 1960s and the 1970s, China’s ruling Communist Party repeatedly rejected requests by African states and political parties to establish relations, based upon the latter’s stand toward the former Soviet Union.³ In short, diplomacy in the service of ideology while winning recognition from and establishing connectivity with select African states *also* limited China’s overall foreign policy objective of breaking out of “international isolation.”

China’s paradoxical ideological oriented foreign policy came to an abrupt end in 1977, following a joint review of China’s African policy by the International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴ The Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party accepted the recommendations of the review to separate China’s African policy from the past ideological orientation and the expansion of relations with all Africa’s governing political parties. This followed the closing of the Cold War and the ending of the Sino-Soviet conflict. With the beginning of the “opening and reform” policy in the 1980s, China’s diplomacy in general and towards Africa in particular assumed a more “pragmatic” approach, although some of the ideological rhetoric of earlier days remained.⁵ In 2009, China had established formal diplomatic relations with 48 African states.

³ Li Anshan, “On Changes and Adjustments in China’s Policy Toward Africa,” *Zhongguo Weijiao* [China’s Foreign Policy], No. 1, 2007, pp. 33–40.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See for example the opening address by Li Shenming, Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, at the international conference “Common Development of China and Africa”, Beijing, 18–19 December 2006. Li called for the

Diplomacy Serving Political Ends

China's diplomacy toward Africa also served vital political ends, especially the issues of sovereignty, unification, and international recognition. This is best illustrated in China's continuous battle with Taiwan, home of the Republic of China. At the time of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Taiwan represented China (the China mainland and Taiwan) at the United Nations and at other international organizations. On the African continent, Taiwan was recognized by two of the four independent African states in 1949; subsequently, Taiwan conducted a successful campaign to win the recognition of the new African states. Until 1970, with the exception of 1964 and 1965 (shortly after Zhou Enlai's celebrated visit to ten African countries), during the extended African anti-colonial and national liberation movement era of the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwan gained recognition from and maintained relations with a majority of the newly independent African states.⁶ Indeed, Taiwan was able to sustain the relationship, despite China's incremental increase in gaining recognition from the African states between 1949 and 1971. In 1970, for example, twenty-two out of the forty-seven independent African states maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan, with only fifteen recognizing China (five African states recognized neither).

The tide of African recognition in favor of China only shifted following China's admission to the United Nations in 1971. Meanwhile, from a high of twenty-two African states recognizing Taiwan in 1970, only four remained in 2009.

The significance of Taiwan in China's African policy lay in the political dimension, national and international. Diplomacy with Africa served funda-

unity, cooperation, and mutual dependence with the forces of "anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and anti-hegemonism." Li Shenming, "China and Africa: Strengthen the Solidarity and Cooperation," *XiyaFeizhou* [West Asia and Africa], No. 167 (March 10, 2007), pp. 5-7.

⁶ See Table VII, African Diplomatic Relations With The Two Chinas: Statistics, in Wei Liang Tsai, *Peking Versus Taipei in Africa 1960-1978* (Taipei: The Asia and World Institute, 1982), p. 28.

mental Chinese political interests and objectives, including issues of sovereignty, national unification, and global politics. China sought recognition as the “sole” legal government of China, and acceptance of the now well known “one-China” politically correct stand.⁷ The battle between the two adversaries on who represented China raged throughout the African continent, with each party employing a host of economic, political, and technical resources and tools. China’s triumph over Taiwan in Africa was achieved when it replaced Taiwan as the sole representative of China in the United Nations in 1971, with strong support from the African states;⁸ China’s political victory continued as a majority of the African states switched to recognizing China and as it supplanted Taiwan in other international institutions.

Prior to and since 1971, China has insisted that each Africa state with whom it establishes and conducts diplomatic relations adopt and adhere to the one-China policy. On the issue of sovereignty there was no room for compromise. This was well illustrated in the case of establishing diplomatic relations between China and South Africa.⁹ Taiwan, the Republic of China, and South Africa had enjoyed a long and friendly relationship, dating back to 1931, when consular linkages were first established. Subsequently in the

⁷ The subscription to this politically correct test has been extended beyond Africa. Following the spat with France over the Dalai Lama and Tibet in 2008, France reaffirmed its acceptance of the “one China” policy at the G20 in London in April 2009. Subsequently, the French Ambassador to China, Herve Ladsous, declared: “It has been consistent with our policy that there is only one China and Tibet is an integral part of the People’s Republic [of China].” *China Tibet Daily Online*, April 4, 2009, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6629960.html>.

⁸ After the vote in favor of China in the General Assembly, the Tanzanian representative to the United Nations is reported to have danced in the aisles. Reflecting on the event years later, Dr. Salim Salim said his only regret was that he did not bring his drums!

⁹ Ambassador Johannes J. Spies, “Experience and Impression on Diplomatic Engagement with the People’s Republic of China: A South African Perspective,” *New Impulses From the South: China’s Engagement of Africa*, Center for Chinese Studies, University of Stellenbosch, Matieland, South Africa, 2008, pp. 66–68. Ambassador Spies was formerly Director of Greater China at the South African Department of Foreign Affairs.

1960s and beyond, Taiwan and South Africa became major allies, in part based upon the shared perception of the "spread of communism in Africa," and Taiwan's embassy in Pretoria served as a key diplomatic command post for Africa.

The winds of change reached South Africa in the 1970s, as one by one the former colonies in Southern African won independence. Consideration was given to approaching China, while maintaining formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. According to Ambassador Spies, "China sent a clear signal (to South Africa) that diplomatic relations between the two countries would be impossible as long as diplomatic relations with Taiwan existed."¹⁰ South Africa adopted the "one-China" policy in December 1997; full diplomatic relations between China and South Africa were established 1 January 1998. China had won an important diplomatic/political victory, reaffirming its sovereignty while enhancing its global influence, and establishing connections with a major Africa state.

China's political relations with Africa have been primarily bilateral in character. Over the years, China has developed close single-stream relations with select African states, including Angola, a major supplier of energy resources, Egypt, the first African state to establish diplomatic relations with China in 1956, and Zambia, a mineral rich land-locked African state.

An early example of a strong relationship dating back to the 1960s, which continues to the present, is the bond between China and Tanzania, which has been described as a "partial informal alliance."¹¹ The "alliance" was founded upon a set of special circumstances. On China's side, it sought out African states which shared its ideology of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, were strong supporters of African national liberation struggles, and were engaged in socialist national development and reconstruction. Tanzania met all of the requisites, severing diplomatic relations with Great Britain over the Rhodesian issue in 1965, expelling American diplo-

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ George T. Yu, *China's African Policy: A Study of Tanzania* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1975).

mats from Tanzania in 1965, opposed “imperial aggression against Vietnam,” and sought economic freedom from “Western monopolists” and development of its national economy.

On Tanzania’s part, following its independence from Great Britain in 1961, it sought to create and secure support for an independent development and foreign policy path, rejecting the Western political, economic, and foreign policy models. China was considered an attractive developmental model and a willing foreign policy partner. The Tanzania political leadership, led by President Julius Nyerere, was greatly impressed with China’s national development, support for national liberation movements, organization and discipline and revolutionary spirit. President Nyerere was even supportive of the Cultural Revolution, considering it a means to ensure that the next generation would carry forward the revolution. Indeed, China was the model of a successful political, economic, and social revolution, a transformation which the Tanzanian leadership sought for its own society. Tanzania was open to linkages with and support from “alternative” political, economic, and social forces.

The Chinese-Tanzanian “alliance” served the political interests of both parties and beyond. As President Hu Jintao declared in Dar es Salaam during a visit to Tanzania in February 2009, since China first established diplomatic relations with Tanzania in 1961, Tanzanians had become “our all-weather friends” and that the “Chinese-Tanzanian relationship has become ‘a model for both China-Africa and South-South cooperation.’”¹²

Diplomacy Serves the Economy

Commenting on the function of China’s diplomacy during the 11th meeting of China’s National People’s Congress in March 2009, China’s highest legislative body, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi declared:

¹² “Chinese president vows to enhance ties with Africa,” *People’s Daily Online* (English edition), February 17, 2009, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6594>.

Economic development is the central task of China right now. The focus of our diplomatic work should be more than creating a favorable international environment for the country's economic growth, but also to directly serve the economy.¹³

The utilization of diplomacy to serve the economy was not in itself new to China, nor to the foreign policies of most nations, especially major powers. Since the introduction of the "reform and opening" policy of Deng Xiaoping in 1978, China's leadership has accepted the need for domestic economic reforms and engaging the world, developed and developing countries alike. Both were vital, including attracting foreign investments and technology, reconstructing and developing the manufacturing base, and acquiring and securing access to energy, mineral, and other resources. The economy was basic to China's reconstruction and China's diplomacy was to serve the economy.

Three primary forms of Chinese-African economic linkages have evolved: official aid, trade, and investment (to be discussed in the next section of the paper). While China continues to extend traditional official aid in the form of grants and interest-free loans which began in the 1960s, since the late 1990s and early 2000s, economic relations between China and Africa have shifted to trade, investment, and other commercial activities.

Contemporary Chinese relations with Africa date back to the 1960s, though it has been only since the "reform and opening" of China in the 1980s, followed by its successful economic development, becoming the global factory floor in the 1990s, that Chinese-African political connectivity attained new heights and Chinese-African economic integration became more engaged, bilaterally and globally.

In sum, Chinese-African relations developed in stages; over time it also added layers and varied forms of relationship, ideological, political, economic, and others. With each new stage of relationship, with each new form

¹³ "China's diplomacy serves economy: FM," *China View*, March 7, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/07/content_10961803.htm

of interaction, the bond between the two parties deepened. In the process of the developing relationship, China has offered Africa a potential “alternative” to its traditional and existing domestic policies, external relationships, and economic and social practices.

Connectivity and Integration: Diplomatic, Cultural, Economic, and Technical

China's African policy was built on policies and practices as well as deeds. The latter, the forms and substance of China's diplomacy, have been important in building and sustaining the relationship. I will examine four primary forms and substance of China's diplomacy which have contributed to and enhanced ties between China and Africa.

Personal Diplomacy

Personal diplomacy through visits by Chinese leaders and other groups to Africa has been a hallmark of Chinese-African relations. Official visits by the Chinese political leadership have been especially prominent, beginning with former Premier Zhou Enlai's grand visit to ten African countries during 1963–1964, to President Hu Jintao's visit to five African countries in 2009. Premier Zhou's visit represented the formal beginnings of Chinese-African relations; President Hu's visit further consolidated Chinese-African relations, personally reassuring China's unity and continued cooperation with and political and economic support of Africa.

The importance assigned to personal diplomacy is further demonstrated by the frequency and extent of such visits by China's leadership to Africa, unmatched by the leadership visits of any non-African countries.¹⁴ Since 1960, Chinese leaders at or above the ministerial level paid over one hundred and sixty visits to thirty African nations; President Hu, during his tenure as President of China, has visited Africa on four occasions, the latest visit being in February 2009. Neither has Chinese-African personal diplomacy been one way. During the same sixty year period, African leadership at or above the ministerial level paid nearly seven hundred visits to China, a symbol

¹⁴ Huang Zhaoyu and Zhao Jinfu, "China's Relations with Africa," *Contemporary International Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 1, January/February 2009, pp. 65–81.

and form of support for China. The exchanges “reveal the high level of trust” between China and Africa, according to a Chinese source.¹⁵ At a minimum, the intensity of the number of personal exchanges constitutes one further linkage which builds and strengthens ties at the elite level between the two parties.

Chinese-African elite relationships and the ensuing increased contacts between China and African countries have not gone unnoticed by other social strata of their respective societies. On the Chinese side, one consequence of the positive elite relationship has been the opening of African countries to Chinese businesses and migration.¹⁶ African responses below the elite level to engagement with China have been mixed. The growth of “China-towns” across Africa has brought low cost Chinese products *and* conflict between Chinese merchants and local African businesses.

The ambiguous non-elite African attitude toward China was best expressed as follows:

We welcome China’s engagement with Africa. We are looking to you [China] for trade, and for technical cooperation. But we are also looking to you to do what is right for the people [of Africa]... You need to support the people of those [African] countries. The current leaders will not be there forever.¹⁷

China has initiated personal diplomacy beyond the African political elite. Indeed, President Hu announced plans to “expand people-to-people ex-

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Emerging Chinese Communities in Africa,” *The China Monitor*, Issue 26, February 2008.

¹⁷ Philip Karp, “China-Africa learning on development – lessons for and from all involved,” *East Asia and Pacific on the rise*, The World Bank Group, June 3, 2008, <http://eapblog.worldbank.org/content/china-africa-learning-on-development-lessons-for-and-from-all-involved>.

changes" during his visit to Africa in 2009.¹⁸ Special visits to and seminars in China have been organized for African professionals, including artists, educators, journalists, medical personal, and middle range government officials. Scholarships are also available to students from Africa at Chinese universities. Clearly, China has sought to develop personal diplomacy beyond the elite level.

Economic Ties

Economic ties have been at the forefront of Chinese-African relations; they have been also the most innovative, adopting and changing according to China's capabilities and needs and Africa's varied developmental requirements. In discussing Chinese economic ties with Africa, three forms are central: official aid, commercial trade, and investment. China has deployed and employed all three extensively, singularly, in combinations, and with additional forms, depending upon time and place. Official aid has always linked China to Africa. In the early years of Chinese foreign policy, in 1960s and 1970s, aid was primarily deployed as an ideological/political tool, to win friends and influence people, without regard to direct economic benefits to China. No doubt, however, the estimated US\$ 2.4 billion plus Chinese official foreign aid extended to Africa from 1956 to 1977 "linked" China and Africa economically and otherwise.¹⁹

Since the 1980s, following the introduction of China's "reform and opening" policy, the benefits and forms of China's economic diplomacy have radically shifted. Chinese aid, for example, now benefits both Africa and China, namely, while aid serves political objectives of winning, influencing, and maintaining friendships, in providing tangible substance to China's

¹⁸ "Chinese president delivers key-note speech on Chinese-African ties", *Xinhua*, February 16, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-02/16/content_10828468.htm

¹⁹ George T. Yu, "The Tanzania-Zambian Railway: A Case Study in Chinese Economic Aid to Africa," in Warren Weinstein and Thomas H. Henriksen, eds., *Soviet and Chinese Aid to African Nations* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), pp. 117–44.

relations with the African states, official aid singularly or in combination with other forms of economic relations also directly benefits China. This includes providing access to new markets for Chinese products, a region for Chinese investments, and purchasing African commodities such as energy, lumber, and minerals for China's demanding domestic economy.

The more important shift in China's economic relations with Africa has been the change from official aid to trade, investment, and other commercial activities. In 2007, a new US\$ 5 billion institution, the China-African Development Fund (CADF), was established to assist Chinese businesses gain entry into the African market. In 2009, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce issued a guide book encouraging Chinese firms to increase investments in Africa and other developing countries.²⁰

As others have noted, China has become the quintessential "trading nation."²¹ China's trade has grown at an annual rate of 15–17 percent for almost 30 years; in 2008, China was the third largest global trading nation. Chinese-African trade has also witnessed a significant growth. Various referred to as "commercial diplomacy," "coalition engagements," and other terms to denote a state-business collaborative approach to achieve foreign policy goals, China has utilized trade as a tool to advance its global power and presence. Beginning with less than US\$ 5 billion in 1995, increasing to US\$ 10 billion in 2003, Chinese-African bilateral trade exceeded US\$ 100 billion in 2008, two years earlier than predicted.²² Despite the rapid growth,

²⁰ "China encourages domestic firms to invest overseas," *People's Daily*, April 10, 2009. <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90884/6634749.html>.

²¹ See for example David Zweig, "China and the Third World Economy: The Rise of a New 'Trading Nation'," paper presented at the Second Global International Studies Conference, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, July 23–26, 2008.

²² "Sino-African trade to hit \$100 bin in 2008, China predicts," *People's Daily*, September 3, 2008, <http://www.cqvip.com/qk/86823X/200817/28211303.html>; "China-Africa trade to soar," *Media Club South Africa*, September 8, 2008, http://www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=63&Itemid=126&5920306c3cd3b33555c41d0fdb96d16a=32b3bb49087386cb5ce3c01296d5203a. See also trade data from Martyn Davis, *The Drivers of*

Chinese-African trade accounted for less than 5 percent of China's total foreign trade in 2008. China ranked third in trade with Africa, after the United States and France.

The growth in Chinese-African trade was primarily the result of China's need for Africa's abundant oil and mineral reserves, to support China's consumer, industrial, and other developmental requisites. Oil made up the bulk of African exports to China, comprising some 80 percent of total exports, followed by logs, diamonds, cotton, and iron ore. (In 2008, 57 percent of Africa's oil was exported to the United States and Europe, with only 14 percent to China.)

The third leg in China's economic ties to Africa was investments, state and private, a new form of economic relations – a consequence of China's recent wealth. In March 2009, China's foreign exchange reserves reached nearly US\$ 2 trillion. Financial institutions such as the Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM Bank) were established to provide loans to finance infrastructure and other developmental projects in Africa. Especially important was the bank's role in financing Chinese investments such as oil and gas projects in Nigeria and mining projects (copper) in Zambia.

Other forms of Chinese investment were also initiated. In 2007, the state-run Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) purchased a twenty percent stake in South Africa's Standard Bank for US\$ 5.5 billion, the largest foreign direct investment (FDI) in South Africa. China's outward FDI to Africa increased from US\$ 75 million in 2003 to US\$ 520 million in 2006.²³ Through 2008, China's FDI in Africa was reported to have totaled US\$ 2 billion,²⁴ and increasing.

China's Engagement of Africa's Infrastructure, Presentation to the SAFCEC Conference, Fancourt, South Africa, October 6, 2008.

²³ Zweig, "China and the Third World Economy."

²⁴ This was the amount provided by China's Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun. See "China to maintain aid investment in Africa regarding of financial crisis," Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of South Africa, February 2009, www.Chinese-embassy.org.za/eng/znj/t5433142.htm.

Whether through official aid, trade or investment, it was clear that growing economic ties between China and Africa was mutually beneficial. It also furthered mutual dependency. Finally, for both China and Africa, the economic linkages represented “added” and “alternative” global ties.

Technical Assistance and Technology Transfer

Since the beginning of China’s relations with Africa, official technical assistance and technology transfer has been an integral part of the relationship. They have served a multiple of objectives, political, economic, and social, in a variety of economic and social sectors. The assistance and transfers have included projects/programs from agriculture to transportation, from industrial development to medical assistance, and from infrastructure development to management training. The projects have varied in financial and personnel commitments and levels of technology; they have also met with successes, breakdowns, and failures.

One of the earliest and largest Chinese technical assistance infrastructure projects was the US\$ 500 million plus Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA) of the 1960s.²⁵ A political decision with economic consequences designed to demonstrate China’s support for Africa’s national liberation movement and two frontline states, Tanzania and Zambia, the project would provide a transportation lifeline to the landlocked mineral rich (copper) Zambia (then surrounded on three sides by hostile forces, South Africa and Rhodesia to the south and Portuguese dominated Angola and Mozambique to the west and east) to export its commodities through Tanzania. Formal construction began in October 1970, and with Chinese financing, design, and construction equipment, the Chinese-Tanzanian-Zambian jointly built railway was officially completed in July 1976.

TAZARA was a successful technology transfer and infrastructure project; the rail project had been built with Chinese technology and equipment,

²⁵ George T. Yu, “The Tanzania-Zambian Railway: A Case Study in Chinese Economic Aid to Africa,” in Weinstein and Henriksen, eds., *Soviet and Chinese Aid to African Nations*, pp. 117–44.

with much Chinese human and material sacrifice.²⁶ However, by 2008 TAZARA was "on the brink of collapse," due to poor local management and maintenance and shortage of operating funding.²⁷

Since the early 2000s, Chinese built infrastructure projects in Africa have become numerous. For example, China was rebuilding, or was committed to the reconstruction of, Angola's airports, communication networks, dams, highways, power supply networks, railway seaports, and other projects.²⁸ Similar to TAZARA, construction and equipment was provided by Chinese companies, state firms in the former case, state and private in the latter instances.

Agricultural technical assistance and technology transfer was another program provided by China. Agricultural assistance evolved through three basic stages. In 1959, China initiated agricultural aid to Africa; until the early 1980s, aid mainly consisted of the official transfer of technologies and practices intended to promote African agriculture development. An adjustment in aid forms began in 1984, with an emphasis upon joint assistance projects, such as technical cooperation and joint management programs. A third adjustment was introduced in 1995. The new agriculture assistant program stressed participation of the private sector, among Chinese enterprises and

²⁶ During President Hu's visit to Dar es Salaam in February 2009 he paid tribute to and visited a cemetery "for Chinese experts who had worked and died in (Tanzania)." "Hu speaks highly of Chinese-Tanzanian ties," *China Daily*, February 16, 2009, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-02/16/content_7481351.htm. It is also known that during the construction of TAZARA the entire year's production of select Chinese factories manufacturing railway related equipment was shipped to Tanzania.

²⁷ "Tazara on the brink of collapse," *lusakatimes.com*, October 29, 2008, <http://Lusakatimes.com/?p=5121>. It was reported that only 3 locomotives out of 12 were operating and only 200 freight wagons out of 2,000 were working. Zambian copper was being exported via South African ports. The governments of Tanzania and Zambian government were considering privatizing the company, including sale to a Chinese firm.

²⁸ "Chinese ambassador: Chinese-Angolan ties excellent," *China View*, March 27, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/27/content_11079479.htm

between Chinese and local African partners, interest-bearing loans, trade, and joint financial cooperation.²⁹

China encountered numerous false starts in early attempts to assist African agricultural development. In Tanzania in the 1960s and 1970s, the establishment of state farms, construction of irrigation and hydroelectric dams, and building of a farm implements manufacturing company produced inconclusive results, including continuous decline in rice production on the state farms and financial losses due to under utilization of machinery at the farm implements plant.³⁰ In Guinea during the 1970s and 1980s, China's agricultural technical assistance and technology transfer produced mixed results. China failed in establishing a China-Guinea joint agricultural technical assistance laboratory, while achieving success in the development of a local fishing industry.³¹

China continues to stress agricultural assistance to Africa, while adopting new approaches and forms. One lesson learned was that while there were no technological difficulties, insufficient attention was given to African economic and social-cultural factors. More knowledge and understanding of Africa was needed, including the training of new Chinese-African "experts."³² To demonstrate China's continued commitment to agricultural assistance, at the 2006 Beijing meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, China agreed to dispatch 100 senior Chinese agriculture experts to Africa, and President Hu during his 2009 visit to Tanzania announced a new US\$ 17.6 million aid package to establish an agricultural demonstra-

²⁹ Zhang Xiang, "On the Study of Issues Relating to the Strengthening of China-African Agricultural Cooperation," in Zhou Guanghong and Jiang Zhongjin, eds., *Zhoufeizhou Qiufazhan Lunwenji* [Collective Papers on "Go Toward Africa, Seek Development"], (Chengdu: Sichuan People's Publishing, 2008), pp. 103–106.

³⁰ Yu, *China's African Policy*, pp. 78–80.

³¹ Yun Wenju, "Questions on Looking at Chinese Agricultural Assistance to Africa from the Perspective of International Development Assistance," Paper, 2000(?).

³² This was one of the conclusions of the December 2007 conference on Africa which produced the volume *Zhoufeizhou Qiufazhan Lunwenji*.

tion center and to finance investments in agriculture, especially to provide loans to import Chinese agricultural machinery.³³

China has also included among its technical assistance and technology transfer programs medical/health projects. Early in China's relations with Africa beginning in the 1960s, medical teams were dispatched to African countries to provide medical service, with a focus on rural areas. In Tanzania, teams of Chinese medical personal provide services to rural villages and hospitals. The teams varied from three to ten members, offering various types of treatment, ranging from gynecology, ear, nose, and throat specialists, to pediatricians and pharmacologists; the teams also offered health education classes. On the African continent, Sudan is reported to be the longest-standing recipient of Chinese medical assistance.

Chinese medical assistance has been welcomed in Sudan, Tanzania, and throughout Africa due to both the shortage of native medical personal and the rural focus of the programs. In the case of Tanzania, the government was concerned with the urban-rural medical imbalance and the European orientation of Tanzanian medicine; it was claimed that a root cause of the country's medical deficiencies was that their pattern of medical care and education of health personal were copied closely from the West.³⁴

China's medical assistance program provided a partial solution to an urgent African need *and* an "alternative" approach to Africa's development and practice of medicine and health care.

Cultural Connectivity

China has officially utilized the tools of cultural relations to "win friends and influence people," ranging from the arts, culture theme parks, education, entertainment, professional training, and people-to-people ex-

³³ "China, Tanzania leaders sign multi-million-dollar deals," *channelnewsasia.com*, February 16, 2009, http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_aisapacific/view/409283/1/.html.

³⁴ Jørn Korn, "Public Health in Tanzania," in Knud Eric Svendsen and Merete Teisen, eds., *Self Reliant Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1969).

changes.³⁵ On the one hand, China has sought to introduce and showcase Chinese cultural beliefs, customs, practices, and values, while on the other, to challenge and counter anti-Chinese attitudes and government policies. An objective of cultural relations has been to create and present a constructive and encouraging image of China, seeking to generate shared beliefs and common behavior.

China's cultural offensive has been both structured and semi-structured. In the latter instance, it becomes difficult to determine the exact "influence and impact" of the random display and sale of the *China Daily*, *Beijing Review*, and other Chinese publications in Africa, while in the former cases, it becomes equally complex to measure the success of traditional and newly initiated structured programs. China has not hesitated to employ a multiplicity of forms of cultural relations with Africa.

Traditional forms of Chinese-African cultural connectivity have included fellowships to African students to study at various Chinese universities, invitations to African professionals to visit China and participate in special workshops, training seminars for African professionals in Africa, and other forms of cultural/educational exchanges. Hosting African students at Chinese institutions of higher learning has been a continuous program, at times with mixed consequences. African students in China have engaged in numerous protests against "racial discrimination" and other social issues.³⁶

Officially, China has been unperturbed. The 2006 official paper on China's African policy called for further common development in culture, including education, health and science, student and people-to-people exchanges.³⁷ And at the 2006 Beijing meeting celebrating the 50th anniversary of Chi-

³⁵ Cheng Hong, "China culture to shine in Africa with theme park," *China Daily*, May 19, 2009. http://www2.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-05/19/content_7790458.htm.

³⁶ See for example news reports of African students in China demonstrating against "racism in China." *The Washington Post*, January 9, 1987, and *The New York Times*, April 17, 2009.

³⁷ See "China's African Policy," *Renmin Ribao*, January 12, 2006, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200601/12/eng20060112_234894.html

nese-African relations, attended by representatives from 48 African states, China announced a new program to train 15,000 African professionals and to increase the number of scholarships for African students in China from 2,000 to 4,000 by 2009.³⁸

A new structured Chinese culture program was founded by the Ministry of Education in 1987: the Chinese Language Council International, known as "Hanban." The program provided funding to foreign institutions to found a distinct unit, known as the Confucius Institute,³⁹ whose mission was "To help the world understand Chinese language and culture... [and] contribute to the building of a harmonious world." The first Confucius Institute was established in South Korea in 1987. In 2008, 271 institutes were operating globally.

Ten Confucius Institutes were operational in Africa in 2009, with an additional 11 planned.⁴⁰ The first institute in Africa was established at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, in December 2005. A new Confucius Institute was launched at the University of Liberia, Monrovia, in December 2008.⁴¹ It was reported that since the founding of the first institute in Africa,

³⁸ Department of Policy Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China, *Zhongguo Weijiao 2007* [China's Foreign Affairs 2007 Edition], (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2007), pp. 44–46.

³⁹ An explanation for naming the institute after Confucius, one of China's leading philosophers who was harshly condemned during the Cultural Revolution for his "feudal" teachings, was "Just as Germany's Goethe Institutes and Spain's Cervantes Institutes are named after dominant cultural figures from those countries, the Chinese learning institutions are named after Confucius, the leading representative of Chinese culture." "1st Confucius Institute for Africa Launched in Nairobi," *China View*, December 20, 2005, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-12/20/content_3943890.htm

⁴⁰ "Confucius Institutes help promote exchange, co-op between China and African countries, educators," *China View*, October 7, 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-10/07/content_10160650.htm. See also Liu Haifang, "Chinese-African Relations through the Prism of Culture – The Dynamics of China's Culture Diplomacy with Africa," *China Aktuell*, No. 3, 2008, pp. 9–44.

⁴¹ "Confucius Institute Launched at the University of Liberia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, December 19, 2008, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/errorpath/t527185.htm>.

2,000 African students had enrolled in 60 Chinese language classes; an additional 10,000 visitors had attended institute lectures, exhibitions, and performances.

Aside from introducing Chinese as a new language to Africans, the language was also perceived to provide an introduction to China and the world. As the Chinese Ambassador to Liberia, Zhou Yuxiao, is reported to have uttered at the opening ceremonies of the Monrovia Confucius Institute: “[...] it is of great importance for one to grasp a foreign language in the era of globalization...If one speaks Chinese, he will be able to communicate with nearly one fourth of the world’s population.”⁴²

⁴² Ibid.

Whither the “Chinese Alternative”?

China's rise has been matched by its heightened global activism. Since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, China's global reach has, incrementally, been both broadening and deepening; in the 21st century, China is ever present, whether in the developed or developing world and beyond (in space). This has been actively supported by China's growing wealth, industrial and technological developments, magnitude and multitude of cultural, economic, and political tools, and through international recognition as a major power.

Without question, China's stature and activism has been increasing in Africa. During the sixty years of relationship, and especially since the 1980s, China's interaction in terms of extensity and intensity with Africa has developed into a major global partnership. The developing bond has signaled China's global reach and influence *and* China's ascendancy, as a potential alternative, to the exiting Western dominated global culture and power structure.

Globalization is an undeniable process and force, but nation states, especially major nation states, still matter. China has become a nation state that matters. Through a focused endeavor, with changing policy objectives and the flexible utilization of a multiplicity of foreign policy tools over time, China has planted its footprint in Africa. China's extensive economic and social commitments, ranging from education to infrastructure development, from agriculture to medical assistance, has incrementally augmented Africa's connectivity to and integration with China and the globe *and* contributed to Africa's domestic and foreign development. During sixty years of continuous relationship, China has become a driving force in Africa.

However, China's sixty-year presence in Africa has to be measured against the backdrop of “500 years of domination by Europe and the United States.” Europe and the United States, especially the latter, have exerted and continue to exercise strong economic and political influences upon

Africa. In the 21st century, the United States has reigned as the globe's sole superpower, with the largest economy (despite the economic crisis that began in 2008), the largest and strongest military, and the leader of the democratic world. The combined influences and power of the United States and Western Europe have remained a principle force in Africa. The Western dominated process of globalization has permeated the globe, directly and indirectly.

But globalization has never been a single-path process, or only one way, from the West to the non-Western world. The presence of alternative globalization need not constitute a direct challenge to the dominant power(s); it is recognized that non-Western societies have a contribution to make and a role to play in national development and global politics. In a larger context, alternative globalization can be seen as constituting added value, an addition and/or alternative to current and existing institutions, resources, and practices. Consider, for example, China's economic and technological role in Africa. As Africa has acknowledged and the West has increasingly recognized,⁴³ China possesses the capacity, experience, and levels of technology to contribute to Africa's economic transformation. Namely, China, the "China alternative," has the potential to make a contribution to Africa's sustained development.

Zong Peiyan, former Chinese vice premier, commenting on China's role in the global economic crisis in 2009, said that China would shoulder its responsibilities to resolve the global economic crisis, but it could not save the world alone.⁴⁴ Neither could China transform Africa alone. The "China alternative" was one path, together with other paths, to Africa's modernity.

⁴³ See for example the conference on joint Chinese and British developmental cooperation in Africa, cosponsored by the Bureau of International Cooperation and the Institute of West-Asian and African Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Department for International Development, United Kingdom, *The Symposium of China-Africa Shared Development*, Beijing, December 2006.

⁴⁴ "China not capable of 'saving' the world alone", *China View*, April 17, 2007. <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/17/content-11200543.htm>.

About the Author

George T. Yu is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the Department of Political Science, University of Illinois. He served as Director of the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies at the same university from 1992–2004. He obtained his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley. He has published extensively on China's involvement in Africa, among other topics. He was in May 2009 Guest Researcher at the Institute for Security and Development Policy in Stockholm.