

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF AFRICA-CHINA ENGAGEMENT



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Folashadé Soulé (ed.)



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Foreword

Folashade Soule, University of Oxford and LECIAD, University of Ghana

In the last decade, having emerged as Africa's biggest trading partner, China ranks among the top five foreign direct investors, and as significant contributor for development finance, and its state-owned companies are major infrastructure contractors on the continent. Chinese demand for African oil, natural resources and agricultural commodities, has had a large impact on the performance of African economies over the past decade (Lin, Oqubay, 2019). Chinese investments in the infrastructure sector- roads, power, ports, harbours and new airports – have opened up opportunities for African producers to increase production and move goods to local, regional, and global markets relatively quickly, resulting in increased income to Africans" (Brautigam, 2009; Cheru and Obi, 2010). China's presence in Africa, however, is not novel. In the 1950s and 1960s, it focused on supporting African countries in their colonial and imperialism struggles, and in the post-Cold War period, a pragmatic pursuit of mutually beneficial economic cooperation has become the centrepiece of Chinese policy towards Africa. (Alden, Large, Soares de Lima,2009). Perceptions played an important role in Africa's interest in China. In contrast to poverty, diseases, lack of infrastructure, and conflict, which are the conventional views on Africa, China's perception of Africa as on the verge of developmental take-off is well-perceived on the continent by many African elites.

In this context of burgeoning relations where China's impact goes beyond economic engagement in the resource and infrastructure sectors and now exercises growing engagement in African security and peacekeeping operations; environment and public health; media relations and diaspora relations, the study of how African actors engage with Chinese actors in their structuring environments deserves even further investigation about how African actors, whether state or non-state can better shape the relationship. This special report on '*Shaping the Future of Africa-China engagement*' funded by the [CORA network](#), a research and policy network bringing together over 100 researchers, scientists, writers, and artists from across Africa and the diaspora.

The authors aim to investigate how Africa-China relations impact the political economy of African states, and how African actors both governmental and non-governmental organise and benefit or not from these relationships. The report is structured around four main thematic: (1) enhancing

governance frameworks in Africa-China relations ; (2) strengthening local agency in Africa-China negotiations; (3) redefining labor norms and practices in Africa-China projects and (4) reinforcing societal issues in Africa-China governmental engagement.

As an Africa-centered report, i.e sharing perspectives from the vantage point of African actors, the report's goal is to engage both scholars and African policymakers to rethink in how the Africa-China relationship can be better rebalanced in order to address its inherent structural asymmetries and benefit Africa more.

1. Enhancing Governance Frameworks in Africa-China Relations

**THE DIGITAL SILK ROAD AND EMERGING AFRICAN DATA
GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS: EVIDENCE FROM EGYPT**

By

Tin Hinane El-Kadi

London School of Economics and Political Science

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Chinese information communication technology (ICT) multinational corporations (MNCs) have built the backbone infrastructure used by millions of internet users across Africa and the world (Cisse, 2012; Oreglia, 2012; Gagliardone, 2019). The global presence of Chinese tech firms is set to increase with the Digital Silk Road (DSR), the digital component of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Introduced in 2015 by an official Chinese white paper, the DSR operates under a complex web of nonbinding soft law instruments such as Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) and policy documents. Like the BRI, the DSR has largely been an umbrella term for virtually any telecommunications or data-related business operation, or product sold by China-based tech firms (Greene and Triolo, 2019). With dozens of BRI projects put on hold due to the logistical disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the DSR has gained greater importance in Beijing's global projections.

The DSR aims to increase digital connectivity among BRI nations. On the physical infrastructural side, the DSR focuses on the building of fibre optic cables, 5G networks, data centres and smart cities. Firms like Huawei and ZTE lead this sub-sector thanks to their capacity to provide high-quality network equipment at much lower costs than their European and US competitors. On the digital platform front, social media apps like TikTok and Weixin (Wechat), Taxi-hailing apps such as Didi, and e-commerce platforms like Alibaba are facilitating communication and commerce between users across the world. The DSR also entails cyberspace with China's BeiDou launching a global satellite system, competing with the US' Global Positioning System (GPS).

Existing writings on China's global digital expansion have predominantly focused on the potential threat this could represent to the West's hegemony over the Internet (Chenley, 2019; Hillman, 2022). Western media headlines insist that the Internet is likely to become less open and more authoritarian with the prevalence of Chinese hardware and software. In this scenario, Beijing is set to reap the economic, political and intelligence advantages that once flowed to Washington. However, it is striking how little attention has been paid to what China's increased digital presence in other developing countries could mean for technological upgrading and development. In particular, as digital data is becoming an increasingly valuable asset for firms and national

economies, the question of how Chinese firms manage data generated abroad is of crucial importance for understanding the developmental effect of China's digital expansion on other developing countries.

Beijing has long recognised the economic value of data and counts some of the world's most stringent policies for the localisation of domestic data within its territory. In 2020, it officially introduced data as a fundamental national resource, a key factor of production alongside land, labour, capital, and technology (CCP, 2020). Inspired by the success of China's digital policies, several African countries have been trying to adopt similar strategies, supported by the influx of Chinese digital capital through the DSR. Yet, to date, little is known about the ways in which data is governed in China- built digital projects.

This paper contributes to filling this gap by asking how data-related projects along the DSR are shaping emerging data governance frameworks and development outcomes in host African countries. To tackle this question, the paper traces how digital data in DSR projects is collected, processed, and localised in the case study of Egypt. With its strategic location, connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe through the Suez Canal, Egypt holds a central position in China's BRI (Abdel Ghafar and Jacobs, 2019). In recent years, the country became host to several hallmark DSR infrastructure projects, including 5G networks, data centres, and smart cities built by Chinese ICT original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) (Kurlantzick, 2020). Of all Chinese tech firms, Huawei has made the most significant inroads into the Egyptian market by signing high-level partnerships with the government to become a prime partner in the country's efforts to build a thriving knowledge economy.

Through an analysis of Huawei-built data centres and smart cities in Egypt, the paper finds that the North African country has been engaged in *superficial* data localisation efforts, whereby data in strategic sectors is localised within national borders, but it is still managed by foreign multinationals due to local firms and institutions lacking processing capacities. While ongoing efforts to build digital infrastructure and localise data is a step in the right direction, leveraging the full developmental power of data requires not just territorial control over it but also effective control over the corporations that build, operate, and maintain the underpinning infrastructure,

regardless of the corporations' country of origin. The paper shines a critical light on the rose-tinted narrative dominating China's digital partnership with African countries, arguing that Chinese firms, like western competitors, are becoming custodians of locally generated data with significant implications for the future of African knowledge economies. Ultimately, digital sovereignty and development will remain elusive without the development of endogenous African technological capacities.

This paper draws on my ongoing doctoral research. Findings rely on document analysis, participant observation and over 40 in-country semi-structured interviews conducted between February and March 2022 in Egypt with employees, subcontractors, customers of Chinese tech firms, as well as their Western competitors, ICT experts, researchers, and government officials. Fieldwork provides empirical insights on how the DSR, often discussed in abstract terms, operates on the grounds, and helps unpack some of its tangible implications. This being said, the DSR remains notoriously difficult to study due to the challenge of accessing documents that are not publicly disclosed for various reasons ranging from commercial secrecy to national security.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: Section II reviews the theoretical debate on connectivity and development to help assess the potential developmental contribution of the DSR. Section III discusses China's data governance framework and its effects outside its borders. Section IV zooms on Sino-North African economic ties with a focus on the DSR's deployment in the region. Section V examines the grounded effect of Huawei-built data centres and smart cities on data governance in Egypt. It argues that *who* gets to collect, store, process and ultimately control data is key in determining *who* benefits from data-driven projects. Section VI concludes by summarising this study's findings and offering policy recommendations to help African governments better leverage China's digital presence for building knowledge economies.

2.0 THE DIGITAL SILK ROAD IN AFRICA: A DEVELOPMENTAL INITIATIVE?

Does the DSR create new opportunities for technological learning and innovation in Africa, or does it conversely hinder them? The dominant account in the theoretical economics literature suggests that increased digital connectivity leads to global economic convergence by improving efficiency

and boosting productivity (Aker and Mbiti, 2010; Bertot et al., 2010; Ndemo and Weiss, 2017). According to this view, access to digital technologies can lead to global convergence and change the position of developing countries within the global economy (Katz & Koutroumpi, 2012; Baldwin, 2017). This techno-optimistic view echoes the neoclassical or exogenous growth model, which perceives technological progress as external to the economic system (Solow, 1956).

The assumption underlying this model is that although digital disruption is to be expected, the market will deliver ameliorative and compensating effects to this disruption, resulting in overall positive outcomes (Mansell, 2014, p.11). Policies aligned with this model often recommend lowering barriers to entry to enable access to new technologies, which would stimulate growth in the developing world (Graham et al., 2014, p.336). From this perspective, the DSR is inherently developmental as it improves connectivity and brings new technologies to less developed economies.

Premised on this view, proponents of the BRI, including its digital component, argue that Beijing's initiative will reduce the marginalisation and underdevelopment of participating countries. In an article published in *Red Flag Manuscript*, the influential journal edited by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Wang Yiwei historicises globalisation into three major periods: Globalisation 1.0, led by the ancient Silk Road, globalisation 2.0 dominated by Western colonial and imperialist powers; and China's BRI as the third period of "inclusive globalization". The author argues that digital infrastructure will help improve the connectivity of developing countries to a more inclusive global trade and investment system shaped by the BRI (Wang, 2016). In a similar vein, Liu and Dunford (2016) describe the BRI as a clear departure from the neoliberal Washington Consensus that aims to build a fair and equal globalisation model. Others have argued that Chinese FDI provides an alternative source of capital, technology and skills that will be instrumental in fulfilling financial and technological gaps for other developing countries (Davies et al., 2008; Huang, 2016; Liu et al., 2018; Wang and Shen, 2021).

In contrast to this view, heterodox scholars have argued that digital technologies are not different from other technologies and that market mechanisms alone cannot ensure technological upgrading (Castells & Himanen, 2014; Wade, 2016; Mazzucato, 2018). Scholars from this tradition have

criticised neoclassical approaches for perceiving economic development as the mere outcome of incremental efficiency and productivity gains at the individual level (Graham & Mann, 2013). They argue that the challenge for developing countries is not to just boost efficiency in producing the same goods and services but rather to produce different types of outputs, namely, more technologically sophisticated outputs (Chang, 2002; Kaplinsky, 2005; Rodrik, 2013). This process is known as structural transformation, the move from activities with low margins into higher-value activities with greater technological premiums.

Recent empirical research has shown that connectivity alone does not yield the development outcomes assumed by the neoclassical model. Foster et al. (2018) show that without additional efforts to boost capacity and competitive advantage, improving connectivity does not inherently benefit African firms in global value chains. Mann and Iazzolino (2019) highlight the importance of looking beyond the ability of foreign-built digital infrastructure to increase efficiency and consider their role in restructuring the control over data and knowledge. They argue that infrastructure built by foreign technology corporations can harm low and middle-income countries by locking in their competitive technological advantage, further weakening their capacity to learn and innovate. Seen from this latest perspective, the developmental contribution of the DSR would depend on the role played by Chinese digital multinationals and platforms in stimulating technological upgrading and innovation in host economies. This would, in turn, depend partly on *who* gets to collect, process, and learn from the data generated along the DSR.

Critical political economy scholars have argued that China is the latest actor in a long line of self-interested powers whose expansion undermines long-term growth in other developing countries (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011; Antwi-Boateng, 2017). In this strand of the literature, the new silk road is perceived as an initiative driven by China's domestic needs that risks creating new dependencies while contributing little to development. Drawing on Leninist theories of imperialism, Carmody et al. (2021, p.6) argue that the mounting overaccumulation of capital has compelled the Chinese government to seek new investments overseas. Barry Naughton (2017, p.10) had previously described excess capacity consolidation as a "traditional activity" of the Chinese state since 1978, forcing the expansion of capital to new markets when the domestic economy slows down. This

process is what David Harvey (1982) termed the "spatial fix", the process of changing geographies of capital investment in long-gestation endeavours such as large infrastructure building (Sum, 2019; Zajontz, 2020). The BRI, including its digital dimension, is understood as a "vector of underdevelopment" as it further entrenches processes of profit extraction, exploitation, and the entrenchment of disarticulated economies, which may only result in the diversification of sources of dependency (Taylor and Zajontz, 2020, p.287).

An inherent concern in some of this body of scholarly work is that it tends to marginalise the agency of host countries and their capacity to shape economic and political outcomes from Chinese investments. Empirically grounded studies have deconstructed this assumption, showing wide variations between companies depending on local context, sectors, and ownership type, i.e., whether a company is private or state-owned, among others (Brautigam, 2009; Gonzalez-Vicente, 2012; Oya and Schafer, 2019; Calabrese and Tang, 2020). Moreover, the literature suffers from what has been described as the problem of "Chinese Exceptionalism" or "methodological nationalism", which treats China as a homogenous entity with a clearly defined project and assumes intrinsic characteristics that apply to all Chinese actors.

In the case of the digital sector, writings have pictured a monolithic "China, Inc.", carrying a master plan to conquer the global Internet (Hillman, 2021). However, a closer examination of dynamics on the ground shows a more complex reality. For instance, Huawei and Chinese-State owned ZTE are fierce rivals in Africa. The two Chinese firms have engaged in price wars to capture larger market shares. When Huawei first established its presence in the African market, its bidding price was up to 15% lower than that of Western competitors, something that allowed it to make significant inroads across the continent; yet, when ZTE entered the African market, it offered even cheaper prices that were 30%-40% lower in order to outcompete Huawei (Shen, 2017).

There is a dearth of empirical work looking at the role played by the DSR in the development of African knowledge economies. Recent literature has focused on the contribution of Chinese firms in transferring knowledge and technology to host countries. In fieldwork-based research on Huawei's role in human capital development in Nigeria, Agbebi (2018) finds that the Chinese firm has contributed to skill-building through its numerous training programmes, including training

activities targeted toward its local employees, suppliers, customers, and university students. In contrast, Tugendhat (2021) finds in a study looking at Huawei's training centres in Nigeria and Kenya that Huawei's presence falls short of offering meaningful opportunities for knowledge transfers that could promote technological upgrading. He argues that international equipment vendors limit by design the scope of the knowledge they are willing to share with local employees and actors.

These studies bring valuable insights into understanding the developmental implications of Chinese investments in African digital economies. Yet, this emerging literature tends to adopt a conceptualisation of knowledge transfer as unidirectional – going from foreign multinationals to local economies through vertical and horizontal linkages. While this is a valid model, it fails to capture the idiosyncratic characteristics of the digital industry. The question of learning and knowledge transfer in the digital sector may also occur in a reversed way, from local economies to tech multinationals through the collection, processing and usage of digital data, a highly valuable resource in the digital age. As the economic value of data becomes ever more significant, questions about how today's versatile and expansive data system is being governed hold significant developmental implications. What follows discusses China's data governance framework before examining the role of China in (re)shaping African data governance frameworks and its effect on the development of the digital economy by focusing on the Egyptian case study.

3.0 CHINA AND DATA GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS

Over the past two decades, sharp divergences have emerged between countries over data governance frameworks – the rules, norms, practices, and infrastructures governing the collection, storage, transfer, use of, and access to digitalised information (i.e., data) (Erie and Steinz, 2021). The United States has been the leading actor shaping the global data governance regime in favour of a free global flow of data. US Internet firms, who have long dominated the sector and who drive great commercial interest from access to digital data, have actively lobbied against the spread of data localisation policies (Selby, 2017). Data localisation laws, that is, laws requiring that data is hosted within a specific jurisdiction, tend to upset dominant ideas about how the cyberspace should work. Based on the neo-classical model, the theoretical argument used to advocate in favour of the

free flow of data holds that data localisation reduces efficiency and innovation opportunities offered by the digital economy.

Yet, if we understand economic development as structural transformation, then it matters very much *who* implements the system, *who* owns the infrastructure, and *whose* learning and innovation are being encouraged from the digital data generated on the ground (Mann, 2018). Data governance frameworks that facilitate the flow of data out of poor countries into the expert hubs of the US or other advanced economies do little to promote data-driven development in host countries (ibid). Through data localisation, states can consolidate the position of domestic firms and strengthen local digital ecosystems.

In this vein, data localisation policies have been used to not only protect citizens' privacy but also to advance nations' ICT industries in the face of the US dominance over the sector (Azmeah and Foster, 2016). The European Union adopted the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which came into effect in 2018 (Hoofnagle et al., 2019). The GDPR does not ban the movement of European data outside the EU but only allows completely free movement of European personal data to states the European Commission labels as "adequate". China has introduced much broader data localisation requirements. The Cybersecurity Law, Data Security Law (DSL), and Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) have been the main policies restricting cross-border data flows out of China (Creemers, 2021). Data requiring domestic localisation is broadly defined as anything that could threaten national security. Data generated from government communications, information systems, energy, water, transport, finance, health care and other public services are all mentioned as sectors requiring local data storing (SCMP, 2021).

Combined with other interventionist measures, including technology transfer and joint venture requirements, data localisation has arguably allowed the emergence of a booming innovation scene in China and the rise of domestic internet giants like Huawei, Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent (BAT) (Chen, 2015; Fu, 2015). It is estimated that the country's digital economy contributes to over 6% of GDP (Zhang and Chen, 2019, p.4). In the e-commerce sector, Alibaba alone counts over 11 million SMEs, which have created an estimated 30 million jobs over the past decade (Ibid, p.10).

These policies are also behind the rise of Huawei, which became in 2012 the world's leading ICT equipment manufacturer, over-taking Swedish Ericsson in revenue (Lee, 2012).

The success of the Chinese model has inspired other developing countries. With the rapid rise in digitisation since the Covid-19 pandemic, several African countries have adopted data localisation strategies. It is estimated that roughly 33 African governments adopted data flow regimes that subject data to contractual safeguards, prior authorisation, or mandatory localisation (Sylla, 2022). Countries like Egypt, South Africa, Chad, Senegal, Tunisia, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe have all adopted conditional flow regimes for data protection purposes, with some taking stricter data localisation measures than others (Kugler, 2021). Notably, in an attempt to achieve greater data sovereignty Senegal was the first African country to replicate the Chinese data governance model that requires all servers to be located within a country's borders (Olander, 2021). The West-African state moved all government data and digital platforms from foreign servers to a Huawei-built data centre in Senegal. The data centre was financed through a 46 billion CFA francs (70 million euro) Chinese loan (Van der Made, 2021).

It is likely that the DSR, and the considerable investments in digital infrastructure it brings, will further accelerate the adoption of China's data governance framework abroad. Erie and Steinz (2021) explain China's influence on other countries' data strategy through what they describe as the "Beijing effect". They theorise three mechanisms through which this effect operates: First, China *unintentionally* diffuses its data governance model because foreign governments *willingly* mimic its approach with the promise it bears to bring data sovereignty and rapid digital development. Second, China influences global data frameworks through its tech firms which are playing an increasingly important role in international digital technology standard-setting bodies. Finally, by providing digital infrastructure to host countries along the DSR, Beijing is shaping the conditions under which these countries transition towards digitally mediated economies and societies. The authors argue that China, unlike the EU and the US, has not relied on legal instruments to directly influence other countries' data governance regimes (Erie and Steinz, 2021, p.21). Nonetheless, through the DSR, Chinese companies are supplying the digital infrastructure that underpins emerging data governance regimes.

While all these mechanisms certainly play a role in spreading Beijing's approach to data governance to other developing countries, important questions remain unanswered in the existing literature concerning the extent to which the reproduction of China's Internet model is leading to developmentally desirable outcomes. Are data localisation initiatives along the new silk road allowing local governments to harness the economic value of data? More fundamentally, is the DSR creating opportunities in host African countries for technological learning and innovation? Or is it creating new types of dependencies hindering the capacity of African economies to fully benefit from the so-called data revolution? After providing an overview of China's economic presence in North Africa, focusing on hallmark DSR projects in the region, this paper will tackle these questions by analysing the grounded effects of Huawei-built data centres and smart cities in Egypt.

4.0 SINO-NORTH AFRICAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND THE DSR

From Mao Zedong's Three World theory to Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative, China and North Africa have developed and sustained strong relations rooted in a shared experience of colonial domination (Pairault, 2017; El Kadi, 2021). Like elsewhere on the continent, economic relations between China and North African countries picked up in the early 2000s after China adopted its famous 'going out policy' (走出去). Between 2004 and 2020, Sino-North African trade grew from \$4.9 billion to \$33 billion.¹ Yet, closer scrutiny of the numbers indicates that all North African countries register a considerable trade deficit with China. For instance, in 2020, Egypt imported over \$13.6 billion in goods from China but only exported \$905.9 million in return. Economic exchanges between China and North African countries reproduce patterns of unequal trade whereby North African countries predominantly import finished goods from China while exporting natural resources and low-value-added products to the Asian giant.²

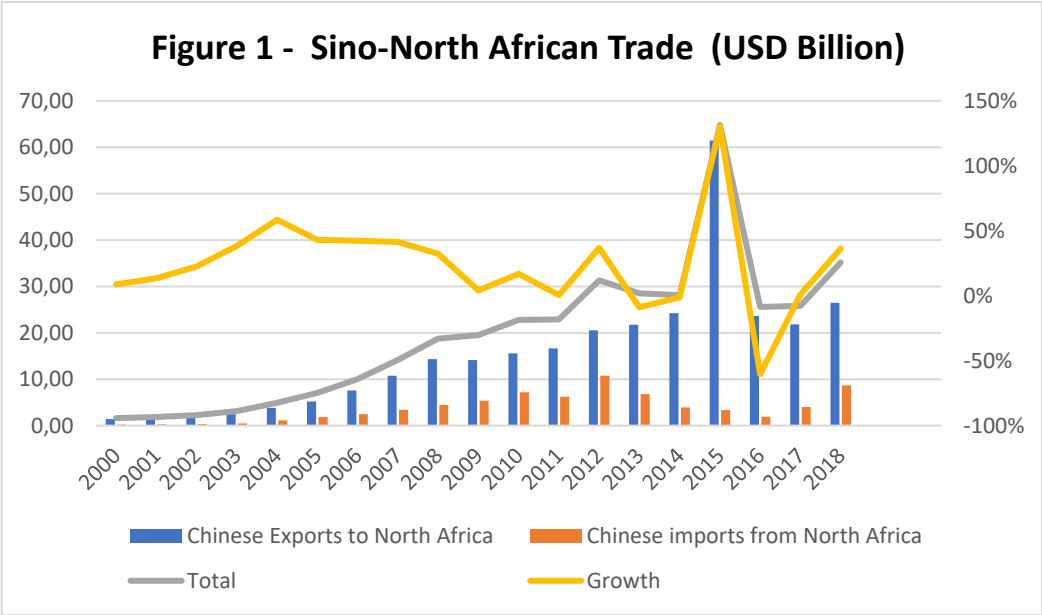
¹ Data collected from World Integrated Trade Solutions accessed at:

<https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/EGY/Year/2017/TradeFlow/Import>.

² "What Do (countries) Export to China? (2019)," Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2019, https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/dza/chn/show/2019/.

Over the past decade, with the announcement of the BRI in 2013 and the Chinese government’s 2016 Arab Policy Paper, China has shown renewed interest in the region. Beijing has, through this last policy document, stressed its intention to increase technology transfer by establishing a collaboration network and encouraging academic exchanges and R&D activities with countries in the region (MFA, 2016). All the five North African countries have signed memorandums of understanding to join the BRI, and the region is home to a myriad of BRI projects (El Kadi, 2021).

The digital space is one of the most notable aspects of recent China-North African partnerships. The 2015 announcement of the Digital Silk Road, Beijing’s Internet Plus Strategy, launched the same year, along with the above-mentioned 2016 Arab Policy Paper, have defined China’s actions in North Africa. North African countries have varying political economies, but all share middle-income status and have in common growing numbers of tech-savvy young people, a relatively high rate of internet penetration, and proximity to the EU market, making the region a strategic hub in China’s global digital expansion.



Source: Compiled by the author using data from the China Africa Research Initiative, Johns Hopkins University (n.d.), at <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-china-africa-trade>

At the same time, North African governments are eager to upgrade their backbone network infrastructure and accelerate the digitalisation of their economies. Like elsewhere on the continent, after rapid socio-economic progress in the aftermath of independence, the 1980s and 1990s were characterised by rapid deindustrialisation and a rise in inequalities across North Africa. The region's economies are now stuck in low-added value sectors and primary-commodity exports (Azmeah et al., 2020). The Middle East and North Africa are characterised by high chronic youth unemployment, which is believed to be 30% as of 2017 (Kabbani, 2019). Significantly, 2017 World Economic Forum research found that 40% of the region's university graduates were unemployed. More than ten years after the widespread uprising against autocratic governments and lack of job opportunities, the area has not undergone any significant change.

The economies of North Africa must undergo structural transformation to generate long-term growth and create quality jobs for the millions of unemployed young people in the region. Local governments have crafted digital development strategies meant to increase internet connectivity, upgrade employees' skills, and create thriving knowledge economies. The DSR, with the price-competitive digital infrastructure it provides, could present a chance to close the digital gap and support the development of North African digital economies.

In recent years, the region witnessed a surge in new partnerships that paired North African governments and Chinese tech firms—from e-commerce giants to surveillance equipment sellers. In 2018, China Satellite Navigation Office and Arab Information and Communication Technology Organization (AICTO) inaugurated the first overseas centre of China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) in Tunisia (CHCNAV, 2018). The centre organises joint research, testing activities, and workshops that emphasise the strengths of Beidou. It aims to help train satellite navigation scientists and develop the digital economy across the region (ibid). Beijing also offers scholarships to students across the region specialising in navigation systems.

Table 1 - Notable DSR Projects in North Africa

Project	Location	Year
BeiDou Navigation Satellite System Centre	Tunis, Tunisia	2018
Tangier Tech City	Tangier, Morocco	2018
Huawei Mobile Factory	Algiers, Algeria	2019
Open Lab	Cairo, Egypt	2017

In Morocco, China is engaged in the construction of Tangier Tech City, a \$10 billion smart city stretching over 2,000-hectare. Upon completion, the city will constitute China's most prominent industrial platform in Africa, with around 200 Chinese companies specialising in sectors such as aeronautics, ICTs, and agri-tech (Africanews, 2018). This project is a joint venture between the Chinese group Haite, and BMCE, one of the kingdom's two leading banks, and the Tangier-Tetouan regional government. According to BMCE's president and CEO, Othman Benjelloun, the smart city is expected to create 100,000 jobs, house 300,000 people, and strengthen Morocco's trade relationship with the Asian giant (ibid). However, several pitfalls have been raised since the project was signed. A conflict around the city's ownership led the Chinese constructor to quit the project in 2018. In the end, the smart city's size was considerably reduced, and the China Road and Bridge Corporation took over the project from Haite (GCR, 2019).

Algeria is the only African country counting a Huawei manufacturing plant and just one of two in developing countries with Brazil. The decision to set up the factory was reached after lengthy negotiations with the Algerian government, which placed a ban on the import of mobile phones in 2018 to promote domestic production (Rabhi, 2019). The factory was a joint venture between Huawei and AFGO-Tech, an Algerian tech company. The factory started with a production capacity of 15,000 mobile devices per month, though it later increased its output to 30,000 devices

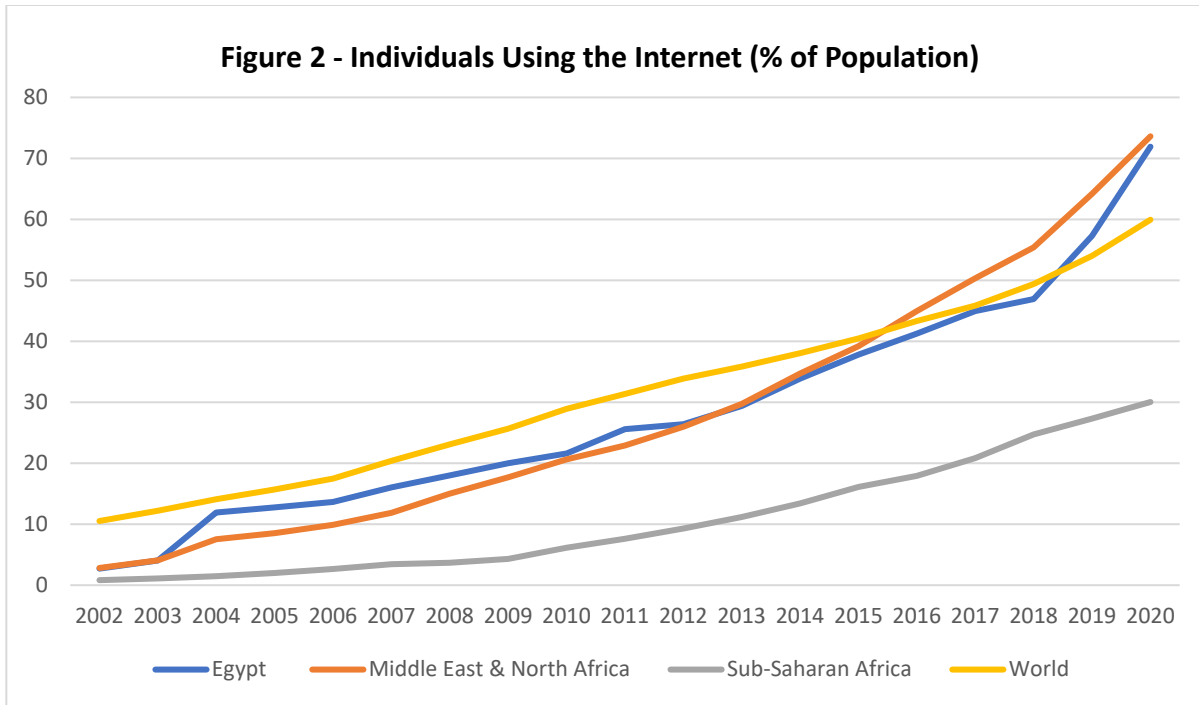
per month. But fieldwork interviews indicated that the factory stopped production in 2020 due to a conflict over the rate of local technological integration.³

Egypt, one of China's closest partners in Africa and in the MENA region, has emerged as a key market for Chinese tech firms and for Huawei in particular. The Shenzhen-based tech firm has earned several contracts to assist Egypt in its digital transformation. One of Huawei's flagship initiatives in the country is the Cairo OpenLab. Launched in 2017, the lab was, at the time, one of just eight worldwide and only the second in Africa, following the opening of a similar facility in Johannesburg (Huawei, 2017). Importantly, Huawei has been the key supplier of several data centres and smart cities' equipment to the North African country. The next section examines how these two highly strategic types of digital infrastructure are impacting Egypt's data governance and the implications this may bear for the development of the country's digital economy.

5.0 THE DSR AND EGYPT'S EMERGING DATA GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

In light of the drive for developing countries to exercise their agency to build knowledge economies, the Egyptian government has adopted a series of policies akin to digital industrial policies. The government introduced the ICT 2030 agenda, a national strategy designed to build a knowledge-based society and a thriving digital economy (MCTIC, 2016). The agenda focuses on developing ICT infrastructure, promoting digital inclusiveness, and fostering innovation. The strategy calls for launching new initiatives to maximise the value of data, upgrade existing infrastructure, build capacity, and expand the number of technology parks and smart cities (Ibid). The DSR is perceived by the Egyptian government as a golden opportunity to speed up their transitions to knowledge economies and escape the middle-income trap while creating quality jobs for millions of unemployed people in the region. Egypt has maintained a tradition in training high calibre IT engineers and have positioned themselves as leaders in ICT services delivery. Local firms also engage in the production of ICT equipment and technologies and local universities have maintained research capacity.

³ Interview with factory line manager, Algiers, Algeria, 28 December 2022.



Source: Compiled by the author using data from the World Bank Data, Individuals Using the Internet (% of Population), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>

The Beijing effect is palpable in Egypt’s attempt to shape its data governance framework. Egyptian authorities adopted in 2018 a much-contested cybercrime law that substantially resembles China’s in the sense that it prioritises national security over privacy rights (Sen, 2021). Two years later, the Egyptian parliament voted its first Data Protection Law, specifying several rules and restrictions controlling the handling of data (PWC, 2020). Considering the efficacy of China’s data governance model in strengthening data sovereignty while producing robust digital development, Egypt’s data protection law introduced requirements for data processing, handling of sensitive data, and cross-border transfer of data. Yet, it does not entail strict data localisation requirements like those applied in China but mentions the need for a license authorising such transfer of data. The general rule is that data must be transferred to a jurisdiction that offers at least an equivalent level of protection to that provided under Egyptian law. In this sense, Egypt’s data also replicates the EU’s GDPR, often seen as the "gold standard" of data protection globally. This being said,

interviews with ICT experts revealed that the country is moving towards the full localisation of data in strategic sectors such as government, energy, and finance.⁴

Besides regulatory influence, Egypt has also turned to Chinese tech firms to build its digital infrastructure. The North African country has signed high level partnerships with firms like Huawei to assist it in its digital transformation. The choice of Huawei is not merely tied to the Chinese firms' price competitiveness and its access to Chinese funding, but also to the idea that Chinese firms can help reproduce China's digital success. Huawei has concurrently castigated itself as a partner of choice for Egypt's digital transformation. In 2017, Mr Xu Guoyu, Huawei's Vice President of Industry Marketing and Solutions declared that: "Huawei serves local regions through its global expertise, talents, technologies, and customer business successes. As a result, Huawei contributes to industry ICT ecosystem development locally" (Huawei, 2017).

What follows moves beyond public relations statements to scrutinise the deployment and effect of Huawei-build data centre and smart city projects in Egypt. It finds that the technological gap between Egyptian firms and Huawei has put the Chinese firm in a better position to access, process and extract value from data, limiting the ability of the Egyptian economy to rip the full benefits of the data revolution. I argue that effective data localisation requires not only ensuring territorial control over it but also oversight over the corporations that build, operate, and maintain the infrastructure.

5.1 Data Centres

A data centre is a facility that hosts technology for the storage of and access to data and applications. In other words, it "is a physical facility that organisations use to house their critical applications and data" (Damicis, 2022). Building data centres can generate technology spillovers, employment and growth, as they are embedded in an ecosystem of firms from Internet exchanges and cloud service providers to fibre optic suppliers. As data centres have traditionally been scarce in Egypt, the lion's share of the country's data was stored in European or American data centres.

⁴ Interview with ICT engineer, Cairo, 02 March 2022.

In recent years, however, Egyptian authorities have attempted to promote the country's data sovereignty and have engaged in building a number of data centres aimed to store strategic data within its territory.

Huawei is supplying the data centres that support the Egyptian government efforts to increase data localisation. Huawei was selected to construct data centres for several Egyptian ministries, state agencies, and research institutions, including Egypt's National Research Centre (NRC), affiliated with the Ministry of Scientific Research (Huawei, 2021). In the energy sector, Huawei provided its *FusionModule2000* solution, a new generation of data centre using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) services (Ahram, 2020). In 2019, Huawei signed a contract to establish the first systems for cloud computing and artificial intelligence in Africa in partnership with Telecom Egypt (Egypt Independent, 2019). More recently, Telecom Egypt and Huawei announced a partnership to launch Huawei's state-of-the-art cloud content delivery networks (CDN) in Telecom Egypt's new international data centre in Cairo's Smart Village (Oltnews, 2022). The new global data centre will connect more than 60 countries and offer services to local and foreign clients (Telecom Egypt, 2022). It is set to offer Egypt improved hosting options and has the capacity to grow to meet exponential hosting demand.

These projects have been framed as win-win partnerships, helping Egypt to meet its nationally designed digital development agenda while giving Huawei business opportunities in what is Africa's third largest market. According to Mr Vincent Sun, Huawei Egypt's CEO, Huawei is fully prepared to "support economic development in line with the Egyptian government's vision towards developing the ICT industry in Egypt." (MCIT, 2022). Much of Huawei's narrative surrounding the projects emphasise concepts such as "harnessing the power of business" to foster connectivity and "promoting innovation to close data gaps". In this sense, the DSR, via the tech firms that drive it, is envisioned through a techno-optimistic lens, with the assumption that constructing data centres will necessarily generate economically desirable outcomes for the host economy.

Nonetheless, these data centres are not designed to operate by themselves or by local firms. DSR deals often come in the form of turnkey projects requiring the continuous presence of Chinese firms. Several interviews with Egyptian engineers working for Huawei enterprise, the division of

the tech firms in charge of establishing and managing data centre and cloud services, indicated that Huawei maintains access to the data stored in its data centres as they often continue providing maintenance services after delivering the infrastructure.⁵ A new hire working in Huawei's Cairo office explained that beyond fixing issues that may occur on the cloud, his job consisted of extracting data from servers and providing analysis of its content and patterns to customers. Customers include the Egyptian government, large-scale energy firms, and mobile operators, among others.⁶ As such, Chinese contractors build, operate and maintain digital infrastructure, enabling them to become intermediaries of locally generated data in host ecosystems. With more technological capacity to process the data, Chinese actors like Huawei get to rip the benefits of Egyptian data at the expense of local firms and institutions.

While Egypt's data localisation efforts are arguably more beneficial to the local economy than policies that encourage the flow of data abroad, the way data localisation is taking place is not fostering the expected domestic technological learning and innovation. One should take into account the significant difference between those who *own* data and those who have the technological capacity to use it (both within and across countries). If local Egyptian institutions and firms can currently keep a greater share of the country's strategic data within national borders, their capacity to analyse, process and extract value from it remains limited. At the same time, foreign corporations, Chinese and non-Chinese, are taking a privileged position, by controlling digital infrastructure and accessing the data it hosts.

To be clear, Egyptian authorities have successfully bargained for the localisation of some cutting-edge technologies with their Chinese counterparts. Far from imposing a one-size-fits-all blueprint on the North African country, Huawei has adjusted Egypt's various digital development goals, including the goal of localising a greater share of its data domestically. However, the deployment of data centres is not empowering local actors but is instead promoting Huawei's position in the Egyptian market with the risk of further deepening existing inequalities and trapping the host

⁵ Interviews with Egyptian ICT engineers working for Huawei, Cairo, Egypt, from February to March 2022.

⁶ Interviews with Huawei engineer, Cairo, Egypt, 02 March 2022.

economy in new forms of technological dependencies at the bottom of the global knowledge economy.

5.2 Smart Cities

China has become a world leader in smart cities. Though the concept of smart city remains foggy, a smart city can largely be defined as a city that can monitor and integrate the functionality of critical infrastructure like roads, airways, railways, communication power supply, etc., leveraging the power of big data analytics and artificial intelligence (Joshi et al., 2016). Smart Cities aim to improve urban governance and promote technological innovation. To date, Huawei alone has provided over 160 smart cities in more than 100 countries around the world (Huawei, 2022).

One of the most significant aspects of the Beijing effect in Egypt may be the spread of smart cities and surveillance technologies along the DSR. Huawei signed an agreement with the Egyptian Housing and Building Research Center (HBRC) and the Engineering Consultants Group (ECG) to transform Egyptian cities into smart cities (Invest-Gate, 2021). In accordance with the terms of the MoU, parties are set to develop partnerships to speed up the upgrading of existing infrastructure and services to the latest technological standards. This smart city deal also aims to promote joint innovation between Huawei and Egyptian firms and institutions. To do so, Huawei will provide its Cairo-based Open Lab as a platform for R&D to develop applications that can support smart city roll-out in Egypt (ibid).

Another notable collaboration in the field of smart city development is with Tatweer Misr, an Egyptian real estate company. With this partnership, the Egyptian firm aims to use Huawei's advanced technologies and expertise to establish sustainable smart cities (Zawya, 2022). In a press release announcing Tatweer Misr's collaboration with Huawei, Ahmed Shalaby, the CEO of the Egyptian firm, explained that Huawei would provide a variety of IoT-enabled software products and services, including an integrated platform that connects to sensors, data analytics, Video Management Systems (VMS), and a platform that monitors all actions. The platform will allow Tatweer Misr access to data-driven analytics that will support assessing their residence behaviours (ibid).

Flexibility, customization, and services tailored to local demand have been cornerstones of Huawei's localization in Egypt. The Chinese tech giant adjusted in this case to the will of Egyptian partners to develop smart cities. Commenting on the partnership, Michael Li, Huawei Northern Africa Enterprise Business Group's President, commented that "Together with our partners, Huawei is helping its customers reach the ultimate goals of Smart City projects by building intelligent cities, enriching the residents' lives with technology, and boosting the economy." (ibid). This win-win rhetoric portraying unproblematic knowledge sharing tells us little about how these smart cities operate on the ground. Closer scrutiny of partnerships underpinning these projects raises concerns about *who* gets to collect, process, and learn from the data generated by smart cities' equipment. This partnership, like others in this sphere, brings together a technological leader with a deep understanding of complex digital and technological product interactions and advanced engineering and analytical expertise with firms that lack data processing abilities and comprehension of the way some of these platforms function.

While it is still unclear how data is handled, in a context of weak regulation and significant asymmetry in technological capabilities between local firms and Chinese tech multinationals, it is safe to assume that Huawei will be well-placed to access the emerging data and mobilise it for future commercial gains. Similarly, to data centres, the operation and maintenance of smart cities require the sustained intervention of Chinese tech companies, who are increasingly positioning themselves as custodians of African data.

Beyond the economic implications, smart cities – with the surveillance technologies they entail – bear significant political and geopolitical risks. Smart cities are attractive to the Egyptian government, given its concerns for stability. Since the Arab Spring in 2011 and the series of protests that followed the military coup in 2014, the Egyptian regime has become wary of revolts erupting in its cities (Pratt and Rezk, 2019). Chinese technologies are particularly interesting to Egyptian authorities for their sophistication and the ability to centralise different digital solutions such as facial recognition technologies to solve 'problems' of urban governance. One may think of the telecommunication network as a vast but diffuse surveillance infrastructure capable of generating big data about social and economic life (Mann, 2018).

In this case, China is unintentionally diffusing its model because the Egyptian government *deliberately* mimics its approach to digital technologies and data governance, as theorised by Erie and Streinz (2021). While there is no empirical evidence of Chinese tech firms imposing Beijing's data governance model on Egypt, Egyptian authorities are inherently drawn toward the Chinese model for its capacity to ensure stability and economic development. The aforementioned 2018 Egyptian cybercrime law is widely perceived as a step toward reproducing China's Internet model. Over the past few years, Cairo has restricted access to hundreds of websites, most of which belonged to media groups (RSF, 2018). Members of civil society and journalists reported being spied on both online and through surveillance cameras in Egypt's mushrooming smart cities (Al-Monitor, 2019). Scholars have longed warned that privacy rights are being brushed aside under the banner of a vague idea of "development" (Taylor et al., 2014). Risks are certainly heightened in contexts of weak institutional checks and balances.

Meanwhile, whereas the Egyptian police, military, and intelligence services are seeking to expand their intelligence-gathering capacities through Chinese technology, they may be subordinating themselves to an even greater data-gathering operation orchestrated by China's superior surveillance system. Since the vast bulk of infrastructure built along the new silk road is financed through loans provided by China's main 'development financiers', most notably, the China Development Bank (CDB) and the Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM), some have suggested that loans provided to expand surveillance infrastructure are reversing the ancient adage of "heaven is high, and the emperor is far away" (Qian, 2019), deepening the surveillance capacity of the Chinese state (Stevens, 2019).

The danger of relying on Chinese surveillance technologies for Egypt's own cyber sovereignty have been somewhat concealed by China's advocacy for data sovereignty in various global digital technology standard-setting bodies, a key mechanism driving the Beijing effect. Yet, an investigation published by le Monde showed that confidential data from the Chinese-built African Union headquarters was diverted every night from Addis Ababa to Shanghai (Le Monde, 2018). Of course, China is by no means the only power involved in using the Internet for spying. US intelligence services have accessed the data of millions of citizens across the world through the

help of US tech giants. Ultimately, data sovereignty will remain an elusive goal without building endogenous technological capabilities.

In sum, while the Egyptian government attempt to pursue a sovereignty-centric approach to data governance in partnership with Chinese tech-firms is primarily driven by internal dynamics, the implications of this shift are at best mixed. The picture that emerges when examining DSR projects such as data centres and smart cities is that under the banner of improved connectivity, Chinese firms – as providers of digital infrastructure – may be increasingly holding privileged positions to access, harness, and profit from data generated in host countries. DSR infrastructures are evolving under a particular idea of development that emphasises inclusion within new asymmetric structures rather than a framework that promotes the structural transformation of African nations. This represents a significant challenge for digital catch-up and the future of African knowledge economies. Furthermore, without the technological capacity to oversee these digital projects, the DSR bears significant political and geopolitical implications for Egypt and other African countries.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper examined the grounded effect of the DSR on data governance framework in Egypt through an analysis of Huawei-built data centres and smart cities in the country. It finds that Egypt has been engaged in what could be described as *superficial* data localisation efforts, whereby data in strategic sectors is localised within its territory but this process is taking place without producing transformative economic outcomes as local firms lack the capacity to process data and extract value from it. While the DSR may, at first glance, appear as an initiative that encourages digital development in host developing countries, its effect could be generating a mixture of infrastructure, hardware, software, and processes that allow Chinese firms to access locally generated data and harness it to their advantage.

For years, several development institutions have highlighted that the only way for developing countries to exercise effective economic “ownership” over data may be to restrict cross-border flows of important personal and community data (UNCTAD, 2021). Yet, this study's findings suggest that harnessing the developmental power of data requires going beyond mere territorial

localisation to also build the capacity to monitor the corporations that construct, operate, and maintain the infrastructure that hosts it.

The case study of Egypt shows that the aim of achieving data sovereignty for African countries trying to transition towards knowledge economies, will remain difficult to achieve without efforts to build and upgrade domestic technological capabilities. The large commercial incentives that multinational firms have in maintaining control over Africa's data and the asymmetrical power structure between foreign firms and local ones mean that attempts to change current frameworks may be difficult. This is further complicated by the techno-optimistic discourse employed by large tech multinationals about the great benefits of 'increased connectivity' at a competitive cost. But, as argued in this paper, economic development is not simply about *access* to new technologies and incremental improvements in efficiency gains, but it is about the capacity of local economies to mobilise knowledge and resources to *produce* goods and services with greater technological intensity. Justifying greater use of foreign-built digital infrastructure and services without effective technology transfer mechanisms allows both Chinese and non-Chinese tech corporations to gain from existing technological inequalities to develop long-term commercial assets.

Beyond the economy, the DSR holds significant political consequences. China's model of internet governance is attractive to leaders in authoritarian regimes. China's success in achieving digital development while maintaining stability has made its model popular in many countries. Beijing, however, seems to adjust to different local political and social preferences. By comparing how Chinese ICT actors and ideas interacted with two democracies – Kenya and Ghana – and two autocracies – Ethiopia and Rwanda –, Gagliardone (2019) has shown that China's intervention in Africa's information societies is driven by the idiosyncratic preferences of African states rather than those of Beijing.

African governments are drawn to the promise of sovereignty over their data and the potential reproduction of China's success in developing its digital economy. This effect may be amplified by China's advocacy for data sovereignty in various global data governance institutions and reinforced by Chinese companies' increased role in providing digital infrastructure. However, African countries' demands for digital development and sovereignty are doomed to fail without

more capacity to effectively control these corporations and without strengthening domestic technological capabilities to ensure that local firms and institutions have the capabilities to process and extract value from the emerging data.

Without pro-active policies, the DSR risks merely diversifying sources of technological dependency and exacerbating existing digital inequalities. To reverse current trends, BRI countries ought to adopt a set of digital industrial policies that supports technology localisation. What follows provides policy recommendations that could be applicable to other African countries beyond Egypt.

- **As data increasingly becomes a strategic asset, African governments ought to adopt more systematic and interventionist approaches to truly leverage the value of data and help digital transformation.** This may entail requirements for data processing and analysis to be undertaken by local firms and institutions. One way of achieving this would be by requiring consortium bidding between local and foreign firms for projects such as data centres and smart cities. Tender winners would have to divide the tasks between them with clearly set terms for technology transfers to develop local capabilities in handling existing platforms and analysing digital data.
- **Besides boosting investment in human capital and investing in indigenous R&D capabilities, governments would gain from implementing policies that protect and support the growth of local firms, facilitating their integration into complex knowledge networks.** Learning from China's own development experience, policies could ensure that emerging tech champions have sufficient financial resources and buffers from fierce international competition to succeed in capturing domestic markets and joining and upgrading within global value chains.

Greater regional collaboration could help smaller economies maximise the gains from global digital initiatives like the Digital Silk Road. The idea of a regional digital policy, such as the one regulating the European Digital Single Market, may be useful for smaller developing nations (Azmeah et al., 2020). Egypt and other neighbours can strengthen their bargaining power with large tech multinationals by promoting regional integration to increase data market scale. Moving beyond fragmented bilateral commercial agreements with China and its tech giants would help level the playing field for all African nations and ultimately enhance local agency to shape and grow inclusive knowledge economies.

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**PEOPLE-CENTRED ENGAGEMENT: GHANAIS' PERSPECTIVES ON GHANA -
CHINA SECURITY RELATIONS**

By

Sulley Ibrahim, PhD

Conflict Research Network West Africa, Ghana Office, Accra

ABSTRACT

Ghana and China diplomatic relations have evolved, although much of the studies on these relations has focused more on economic interactions between the two countries. This paper turns to a generally overlooked issue – security relations between the two countries – exploring how Ghanaians feel and appraise China security relations. It draws on the linked concept of security-development to analyse insights drawn from existing publications and semi-structured interviews that involved security sector policy analysts, lawmakers and university professors. The findings show a general support for Ghana to engage China to secure its peaceful development, with special emphasises on people-centred human security issues. Ghanaians are yet considerably concerned that unlike China, Ghana is less likely to benefit from security engagements with China. The paper traces these concerns to China superpower status and indifference towards domestic issues of foreign countries. The indifference apparently creates a condition of ‘no-official’ China at the societal level, allowing illicit activities linked to private Chinese citizens to polarise perceptions about China. China’s superpower is perceived as a threatens, depriving Ghanaian elites the autonomy to engage China more critically. The paper concludes with reflection on how both countries can mitigate these challenges to better optimise security relations.

Keywords: Ghana-China Relations, China Security Relations, Security-Development, Human Security, People-Centred Engagement.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Although Ghana's contact with China pre-dates the post-colonial state (Ayerigah, 2020; Amoah, 2021), formal diplomatic relations between the two countries developed only in the post-colonial state. Ghana and China entered into bilateral relations in the 1960s (Frontani & McCracken, 2012). These relations have since evolved and produced robust debates, but much of the studies that produce these debates (e.g., see Sojková, 2017; Pasquali & Wei, 2021) often address economic interactions between the two countries. Both countries yet interact diplomatically across different spheres of international influence, including security engagements (Osei-Hwedie & Kurantin, 2020; Ayerigah, 2020). For example, Ghana's 7,600 square-metre Defence Ministry Office Complex was built with US\$5 million Chinese grant, out of the estimated cost of US\$6.5 million (Ghanaweb.com., 2007; Asante, 2017). The police intelligence headquarters in Accra (Carrozza & Sandness, 2022), as well as the 'Beijing Barracks', which is currently in-use by the national army was constructed with Chinese aid (Ghanaweb.com., 2007). Indeed, between 2000-2008, Ghana imported 46% of its stockpile of weapons, amounting to \$112 billion, from China (Carrozza & Sandnes, 2022).

These insights showcase how Ghana engages China in security cooperation, which although revolves largely around state dimensions of security, including strengthening the national army for strategic territorial protection and police service for the maintenance of law and order in society. This raises the question of whether Ghana engages China on people-centred dimensions of security, and if so, how are these engagements felt and appraised at the societal level. This paper turns to this gap, by exploring how Ghanaians feel and appraise China security relations. The paper contributes to current debates in Africa-China peace and security engagements (see Benabdallah, 2015; Bayes, 2020). These studies often show how China has strategically repositioned itself as a powerful international security ally in Africa (Benabdallah & Large, 2020; Osei-Hwedie & Kurantin, 2020). China named peace and security as a priority area in the 2018-2021 cycle of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, demonstrating the extent of its intention to depend on security in its engagements with Africa in the years ahead (Bayes, 2020).

China's strategic security relations with Africa have yet been described as gradual and piecemeal (Bayes, 2020; Alden, 2014), although deliberate, often involving systematically calculated moves (Carrozza, 2021; Klinger, 2020). China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti and sent Chinese first peacekeeping contingent to the UN-sanctioned peacekeeping mission in Sudan (Benabdallah, 2018). The siting of the Djibouti base emerges as strategically aimed at ensuring 'the security of China's maritime lines of communication and shipping routes across the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb' (Benabdallah, 2018, p.6). China's strategic moves are hence aimed to enhance its emergent superpower status both in Africa and in global politics and also sustain domestic economic growth (Acker, et al., 2020).

The paper however moves away from re-analysing how China engages Ghana as mostly pertains in existing China-Africa studies (for exceptions, see Oduro-Frimpong, 2021; Odoom, 2021; Frontani & McCracken, 2012). The paper explores Ghanaians' perspectives, rather than Chinese perspectives and hence offers new insights into how people feel and appraise China presence in their societies and therefore in their lives, livelihoods and lifestyles. It draws policy lessons for efforts to improve China-Ghana relations, focusing on societal issues more than elite-centred state security concerns. The paper draws on the linked concept of security-development to highlight benefits and threats but also identify alternative ways both countries can better optimise security friendship. The methodology is qualitative, involving semi-structured interviews conducted with security sector policy analysts, university professors and lawmakers between August and November 2022. Structurally, the next section presents a review of the literature, highlighting security-development linkages in Africa-China engagements. The third is a brief overview of Ghana-China engagements, laying a firm foundation for a comprehensive appreciation of the follow-up empirical results in section four. The paper concludes with research and policy outlines in the fifth section.

2.0 CONCEPTUALISING AND ANALYSING CHINA'S SECURITY ENGAGEMENT

The paper takes the linked concept of security-development to encapsulate issues of security as inclusive of issues of development and issues of development as inclusive of issues of security. Issues often discussed as security issues are mutually inclusive of issues often discussed as development issues (Benabdallah & Large, 2020; Jolly & Ray 2006). Benabdallah (2015) stressed that security concerns are not just matters of military and law enforcement systems as pertains in state-centric security studies; they also concern economic development and environmental sustainability. Carrozza (2021) related the concept to the promotion of economic growth and improvement in social and political stability. Benabdallah and Large (2020, p. 3) stressed that 'development produces security and peace' which, in turn, helps sustain development. The security-development intersection concerns people and community and as such embodies human security, a concept which frames security in terms of freedom from want and fear and to live in peace and dignity (UN Development Programme [UNDP], 1994). Freedom from want may highlight access to nutritious food and healthcare while freedom from fear involves protection against abuse and violence (Jolly & Ray, 2006).

The security-development concept is such that it emphasises development as a process by which lives, livelihoods and lifestyles of people are improved (UNDP, 1994). It links these emphasises with security by relating security to how people can exercise such development choices freely (ibid). This may include how people pursue their livelihoods, such as going to farms and selling in the markets without fear of state repression, armed robbery and/or communal violence. Jolly and Ray (2006) hence described human security as 'people-centred' approach in that its proponents rather take people, instead of states, as the primary referent object (or unit) of analysis.

In this paper, I approach human security in terms of 'people-centre engagement'. This includes a focus on how Ghana engages China to address issues related to communities and people. This relates with views of human security as protection of people "from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily lives, whether in homes, jobs or communities" (UNDP, 1994, cited in Jolly & Ray, 2006, p. 1). The paper further regards the nexus as context specific. This is because the

welfare, wellbeing and safety concerns of communities and peoples can vary across time and space (Benabdallah, 2018). This approach reflects China engagements in Africa. Benabdallah and Large (2020) observed that China showcases its involvement in the construction of critical development infrastructure, such as road and railway networks in Africa as a commitment to helping address inequality and social exclusion which often underline communal violence and political instability. The paper focuses on issues linked to people and communities; however, it occasionally highlights state security elements, especially activities of the army, police, immigration and navy systems in Ghana. These bodies are traditionally responsible for territorial protection and maintenance of law in communities (Ayerigah, 2020; Osei-Hwedie & Kurantin, 2020). Their actions therefore have implications for the security of people and communities. The presence of China in these bodies, to illustrate, could spark speculation of China seeking to restructure Ghana security to suit its interests, although it can also prompt popular confidence in which China is showcased as helping Ghana to sustain its peaceful development.

For example, Osei-Hwedie and Kurantin (2020) drew on the nested security-development concept to analyse how China engages Ghana on peace and security relations. These authors focused on Chinese perspectives, but in doing so they also observed China's own unique history of socio-economic development explains how it engages Ghana. This history shows China prioritises economic prosperity as the bedrock to sustainable peace and political stability. China highlights how it successfully lifted millions of its citizens from poverty within the shortest time in recorded history to awe Africa, enabling it to engage Ghana with Chinese values of peace and security. This also means that China engages Africa, drawing on its own unique cultural inspirations and value-systems.

Asante (2017) also observed that Chinese perspectives are derived from the generalised doctrine of 'Beijing Consensus.' Amoah (2018) described this doctrine as a home-grown philosophy which developed from Chinese cultures of peaceful neighbourliness. Amo-Agyemang (2021) yet described Beijing Consensus as 'essentially [a] contested concept', in that its boundaries are 'perceptive and not seen to be used by Chinese elites', although this allows for 'flexible and differentiated understanding' among its users (ibid, p. 123). Analysts of Chinese models hence

usually contrast Beijing Consensus with Washington Consensus (Sojková, 2017). Washington Consensus is posited as a liberal model of the West, led mostly by America, Britain and France (Asante, 2017). Washington Consensus however treats ‘nearly all developing countries’ in the same way, unlike Beijing Consensus, which ‘stresses the necessity for a new approach to development based on each nation’s unique challenges’ (Amo-Agyemang, 2021, p.124).

The way Africa engages Western countries on issues of security and development however can also be observed in how it engages China. Osei-Hwedie and Kurantin (2020) noted that both Chinese and Western security-development debates in Africa have links with the United Nations’ human development report of 1994. This report and its debates treat security and development as inseparably intertwined, such that development challenges, such as poverty, corruption and environmental degradation cannot sustainably be mitigated without equivalent efforts to prevent violence and promote safety and wellbeing of people and communities (Carrozza, 2021). Hence, Enuka (2010) described China-Africa engagement as ‘multifaceted’, encapsulating in trade and economic interests but also in efforts to project international superpower status. This is also due to China’s exponential domestic economic growth and industrial expansion which now requires huge energy and natural resources to sustain (Hanauer & Morris, 2014).

The natural resources that China requires are particularly unavailable to it domestically but are available to it externally in Africa (Ayerigah, 2020). This prompts China to deepen positive relations with Africa, in a hope for favourable access to Africa’s large deposits of gold, oil, diamond, timber and fisheries (Acker, et al., 2020). China’s strategic supports thus often include monetary aid and debt reliefs (Eom, et al., 2018) but also scholarships and training opportunities for Africa students and security officers (Niu, 2014). China’s investments in Africa’s critical infrastructures, including military and police buildings as well as in telecommunication installations in turn, leads to positive ratings of China (Klinger, 2020; Osabutey & Jackson, 2019). This also differs from the West which hardly engages in the direct provision of infrastructural projects (Carrozza, 2021). Interestingly, however, China’s security-development engagement generally ‘lacks a focus on governance’ issues, such as the protection of human rights and governance transparency (Benabdallah & Large, 2020), unlike Western engagements that keenly

prioritise such issues (Sojková, 2017). China emphasises economic prosperity as ‘central to overcoming sources of armed conflict and achieving peace’ (Benabdallah & Large, 2020, p. 7). Yet, China portrays indifference towards domestic issues of foreign countries though China recognises domestic grievances linked to inequality as drivers of armed conflict (Parepa, 2020).

China indeed emphasises friendship without conditionalities, unlike leaders of Washington Consensus (Asante, 2017; Sojková, 2017) but China also expects its allies to endorse its one-China policy which claims Taiwan and Hong Kong as indivisible parts of China (Amoah, 2021; Eom, et al., 2018). These contradictions have also generated both optimism and pessimism about China in Africa. For example, Odoom (2021) observed that current research on China in Africa is distressed with stereotyped imaginaries. These images often depict China as a benevolent yet authoritarian power, while portraying Africa as a weak actor possessing limited agency and strategic autonomy to resist China in any significant way. This perspective implies Africa engages China largely as ‘a rule-taker subject’ whereby it unwillingly obeys and powerlessly adapts to perspectives of China (Parepa, 2020). This paper will substantiate these contradictory insights, highlighting how Ghanaians feel and appraise China security relations.

3.0 GHANA’S ENGAGEMENT OF CHINA: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Ghana-China relations continue to evolve with robust debates but much of the debates can be analytically evaluated broadly in terms of first- and second-generation security cooperation. State-centred security dimensions feature prominently in the first-generation, which roughly began in the early 1960s. The second-generation retains elements of the first-generation, but it is mostly characterised by people-centred issues. This period evolved mostly around the late 1990s and has since become more dominant in current interactions. Each of these two analytical periods also show two core engagements, suggesting Ghana-China security cooperation has evolved with four chronological phases. I take these issues separately as follows:

3.1 First-Generation Ghana-China Security Cooperation

While Chinese traders, mainly from Hong Kong, had reached the Gold Coast (now Ghana) by the 1940s (Ayerigah, 2020), it was not until after independence in 1957 that Ghana and China established diplomatic relations (Amoah, 2021; Sojková, 2017). Ghana-China official engagement emerged in the early 1960s and stayed more stable up to the late 1960s. The first phase of these engagements is characterised by emphasises on shared ideology and political solidarity (Frontani & McCracken, 2012). Both countries had emerged from the oppressive and degrading practices of colonialism. Ghana had gained independence in 1957 from Britain while China was once held as a Japanese colony (Ayerigah, 2020). These common colonial experiences subsequently united leaders of the two countries against aligning their nations with either the West or East blocs which had ensued from post-World War II Russia-America Cold War rivalries (Amoah, 2021). This friendship particularly began with a state visit of Ghana's first President Kwame Nkrumah to China in 1961 which resulted in Ghana establishing a diplomatic mission in Beijing in 1961 and China reciprocated by establishing the Chinese mission in Accra in 1962 (Amoah, 2021). President Kwame Nkrumah further launched strategic international debate to canvass support for China's seat at the United Nations Security Council, resulting in China eventually replacing Taiwan at the Council (Ayerigah, 2020). This made Ghana the first Sub-Saharan Africa country to openly endorse one-China policy, which features instrumentally in present China-Africa relations (Amoah, 2021).

Ghana subsequently became a major recipient of Chinese security aid, especially military training, education and knowledge transfer activities (Frontani & McCracken, 2012). This also exposed Ghana to severe mistrust and hostility of the West, especially the US, which culminated in America's Central Intelligence Agency allegedly abetting a coup to overthrow Nkrumah's government in 1966 (Hersh, 1978; Quist-Adade, 2021). The coup resulted in close to 1,600 deaths (Quist-Adade, 2021) and collapsed the nascent Ghana-China friendship as the coup plotters immediately portrayed a posture which suggested Nkrumah had stayed long in power precisely because of China's security support (Amoah, 2021). It stalled Ghana-China relations up to the early 1980s.

The second phase of the first-generation engagements began in the mid-1980s, following the state visit of President Rawlings to China in 1985. The Chinese leadership requested this visit (Ahwoi, 2020), although it came when Rawlings' military leadership had leaned towards communist ideas which resonated with China (Frontani & McCracken, 2012). Thus, Rawlings was 'welcomed as a real revolutionary hero' in Beijing, Rawlings travelled with researchers from academia as well as lawyers, and navy and policy commanders as expert advisors (Ahwoi, 2020, p. 50). This engagement resulted in Ghana signing bilateral trade cooperation with China, including grants to construct development projects, such as the national theatre in Accra, a rice irrigation project in Ashanti, a biogas plant in Accra, and above all, a barter trade agreement (ibid). This effectively returned China to Ghana. This return also included Chinese state-run companies which came to construct China-sponsored projects (Graham, 2021; Pasquali & Wei, 2021) and influx of Chinese private citizens to engage commercial activities in Ghana (Amoah, 2021).

The use of natural resources as collateral for Chinese loans subsequently became a major component of Ghana-China engagement. President Kufuor (2001-2008) collateralised cocoa beans for Chinese loan to construct the Bui electro-power dam in 2007 (Graham, 2021). This was meant to contain an emerging energy crisis (ibid). President Atta Mills (2009 - mid-2012) also exchanged oil for Chinese development loan to construct a gas plant at Atuabo in the Western Region in 2010 (Ahwoi, 2020). The most recent barter exchange has been the so-called bauxite-for-infrastructure deal that President Akufo-Addo (2017-) signed in 2018 (Carrozza & Sandnes, 2022). This deal has ensured China mine bauxite minerals in the Atewa heritage forest which is located in the Eastern Region in exchange for the construction of critical infrastructure projects for Ghana (Nkrumah & Bekoe, 2021).

The trend of exchanging natural resource wealth for Chinese loans also exposed relations of the two countries to critical concerns. A case in point is the barter trade of the bauxite in the Atewa forest for infrastructure. The forest is believed to sit on a 26,000-hectare land with more than 900 million metric tonnes of bauxite, manganese and iron combined and valued at more than US \$500 billion (Kpodo, 2018). China's state run Sinohydro company is expected to earn at least 5% of this wealth for 15 years in exchange for constructing the priority projects for Ghana, at a cost of U.S.

\$2 billion which is also part of a US\$19 billion loan China's state granted to Ghana (Myjoyonline.com., 2021). The deal requires Ghana to pay back the loan with refined aluminium instead of money which popular discourse suggests China acted more smartly than Ghana since money loses value, unlike aluminium, which rather appreciates (ibid). The deal moreover raises environmental security concerns, in that the mining will destroy not just habitats of rare plant and animal species but also the destruction of the forest vegetation is most likely to expose the country to climate change related disasters (Purwins, 2022). It is within these grievances, and especially how both countries, collectively and independently, address(s) them that new directions have emerged.

3.2 Second-Generation Ghana-China Security Relations

Second-generation Ghana-China security relations retain the first-generation elements, including high-level state visits, exchange of natural resources for China loans and influx of Chinese private citizens to Ghana in search of commercial opportunities. For example, except President Mahama (mid-2012 - 2016), all presidents have visited China since 2008. President Agyekum Kufuour (2001-2008) visited China in 2008 while President Evans Atta-Mills (2009-2012) did so in 2010 and Nana Akufo-Addo (2017 -) in 2018. Elites of both countries have continued to celebrate their historical solidarities which thrust the two countries into friendship in the 1960s. China celebrates Ghana-China friendship as the pilot that drives 'China-Africa friendship'⁷ while Ghana continues to engage China in joint military and navy exercises, seeking to transfer knowledge and expertise to its navy, military, immigration and police institutions (Asante, 2017).

The present relations of Ghana and China are yet characterised by two important phases. First, both countries have become increasingly transactional, especially on the part of China. China's business-minded posture is such that it relates effectively with Ghana's different political parties

⁷ Retrieved from:
https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbd_665378/202103/t20210313_9717136.html.
(Accessed June 5, 2022).

(Nkrumah & Bekoe, 2021). Hence, leaders of the centre-right New Patriotic Party (NPP) with a pro-liberal capitalism orientation relate effectively with China as much as elites of the centre-left National Democratic Congress (NDC) whose ideas already resonate with China's communist ideas (Ahwoi, 2020). Amo-Agyemang (2021) stated that 'elite consensus' enables Ghanaian elites to negotiate deals with China without significant hindrance from their divergent political orientations and hence elite consensus constitutes 'the most important political process' which drives contemporary Ghana-China engagements (p 116). China's policy of non-interference further gives Ghanaian elites 'more freedom and autonomy to define ... policy priorities and alternatives' (ibid, 125). This suggests Ghanaian elites engage China with strategic autonomy, such that they can decide and act freely on their own terms without compromising the interdependent relations they have forged with China over the years.

The second phase on the other hand is characterised by threats to the apparent serene relations occurring at the elite level. This phase involves increased contentious views about China's presence in Ghanaian communities. The phase is such that Chinese private citizens are more likely to be caught engaged in artisanal gold and logging timber illegally, unlike other foreign nationals without African decent (Odoom, 2021; Pasquali & Wei, 2021). Also, Chinese private investors are more likely to be involved in petty trading in blatant violation of local content laws which reserve such economic activities for local populations (Asante, 2017). These activities often have local and national elites as collaborators, which also contributes to dent public confidence in the ability of state actors to deal with such illicit activities. A case in point is how Aisha Huang, a Chinese national who gained notoriety for illegal mining and was deported by state authorities without conclusive court trial in 2018, was re-arrested in Ghana in 2022 for engaging in illegal mining once again (Arhinful, 2022). Official immigration service statements indicated she had returned to Ghana illegally, although the President could not yet tell whether she was actually deported in 2018 despite acknowledging in 2019 that Aisha's 'deportation' without the conclusive court trial was a 'mistake' (Schandorf, 2022). The President's Senior Minister even linked Aisha's 2018 deportation with the strategic efforts made to ensure China honour the Ghana-Sinohydro deal in which Ghana exchanged the Atewa forest's bauxite for infrastructure projects from China (ibid). Aisha is even alleged to have dined with top-level political and military elites few days to her re-

arrest in 2022 (Admin, 2022). She is also reported to have had in her possession compromising sex tapes of top-level elites, which the secretary to the government's taskforce against illegal mining, believes releasing them as part of her court defence could amount to crime since such relationships might have been forged consensually (Sogah, 2022).

These inconsistencies have fostered public perceptions that state authorities have somehow been complicit in Aisha Huang's presence and activities in Ghana. For example, Aisha has been described as a Chinese state agent with a strategic mission to wage economic war against Ghana (Admin, 2022). This view showcases her indiscriminate illegal gold mining and timber logging not only as meant to destroy farmlands and river bodies, but these destructions are strategically aimed to render Ghana water and food insecure (ibid). This vulnerability is believed to offer China, a major trading partner of Ghana (Pasquali & Wei, 2021), a unique opportunity to offer food and water aid, and as such, increase Ghana's dependence on China development assistance (Admin, 2022). The Director of Academic Affairs & Research at the renowned Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, Kwesi Aning, for example, allegedly dismissed claims of Vladimir Antwi Danso, Dean of the Ghana Armed Forces Staff and Command College, that Aisha is unintelligent to be suitable for a state spy (ibid). For Aning, Aisha is not just an intelligent person, but she has been strategically engaged by the Chinese state to destroy Ghana's cocoa industry, which contributes significantly to the national economy (Myjoyonline.com, 2022). The destruction of water bodies and cocoa trees by Aisha's illegal mining activities threatens not just cocoa output but also the quality of cocoa beans that Ghana exports, which also coincides with China's increased efforts to produce cocoa domestically (ibid). Aning described the destruction as giving China a strategic advantage over Ghana in the international cocoa market (ibid).

These contestations invariably dent China's popularity at the societal level, a trend that is supported by Afrobarometer (2021) reports in which Ghanaians who said China's model of development is the best for Ghana in 2014/2015 were 15%. This did increase to 19% in 2019/2021, but it was still far less than Ghanaians who rated the US's model as the best for Ghana despite the support for

US's model stagnated at 37% for the two periods.⁸ Ghanaians even attributed China with 48% influence on the country's political and economic development, unlike the US that scored 56%.⁹ These descriptive viewpoints may be too broad and also ignore the traditional influence the US has had on Ghana; unlike China whose return is fairly recent - as late as the 1980s. The qualitative empirical data, as discussed in sections below, however, lend a general credence to the less optimistic views of China at the societal level.

4.0 EMPIRICAL STUDY: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section draws on insights obtained from semi-structured interviews involving a small sample (n=6) of participants. The sample comprised lawmakers (1), security sector civil society advocates (3) and university professors (2). The lawmaker has over two decades of engagement as state security officer, including participation in abroad peacekeeping missions of the United Nations. The civil society actors are often engaged as security analysts and hence practice their profession as experts in security sector governance. Their professional backgrounds span human security and foreign policy, migration, business and security, as well as security and public safety. The university professors are into active teaching on issues related to China, especially Chinese economic engagements at the societal level. The interview guide (e.g., see in Appendix A) was distributed to each participant in advance to enable them to prepare adequately. The interviews were conducted by the author personally between August and November 2022. The overall empirical evidence shows a general support for Ghana to engage China for a peaceful development, although several instances also suggest that unlike China, Ghana is less likely to benefit from security friendship with China. The following sections offer more details to these contradictory concerns.

⁸ The question was: 'In your opinion, which of the following countries, if any, would be the best model for the future development of our country, or is there some other country in Africa or elsewhere that should be our model?' (e.g., see p. 6 & 7, respectively for China and US responses).

⁹ The question was: 'Do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following countries on [your country] is mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say?' (e.g., see page 9).

4.1 Importance of Security Engagement with China

The overall view is that it is important Ghana engages China for a peaceful development: by ‘cooperating with global giants like China on the issue of peace and security is a good idea because Ghana stands to benefit.’¹⁰ How Ghana benefits particularly relates with the way ‘China has in time past supported some national security and law enforcement agencies with resources.’¹¹ These resources often include joint military and navy exercises but have also included armour sales, technological innovation and educational exchanges as highlighted in the previous section. Ghana is however encouraged to engage China on ‘all aspects of peace and security, as it is all about hard military security at the moment.’¹² This means Ghana should not engage China on military, navy and immigration issues alone, but also prioritise people-centred issues, such as jobs, safety and welfare.¹³

Other perspectives even articulated that engaging China on issues of peace and security signals ‘to other global powers that Ghana is not there just for the taking but its sovereign interest is key.’¹⁴ In this case, by engaging China, Ghana demonstrates to its other global partners, especially the US which already has a quasi-military base in the country, how its sovereign interests cannot be ‘put in the pocket of one superpower.’¹⁵ Hence, it is only good that Ghana ‘engages any country that has the wherewithal to help improve its security.’¹⁶ These illustrations commonly endorse and encourage Ghana to openly engage other countries, not just China alone, for a secure development. There are however concerns that Ghana ought to be mindful that multiple international security engagements also have downsides and hence engagements with China ‘is sure likely to attract significant hostility or mistrust from the big boys in the West who are always wrestling with China in the international arena.’¹⁷ This means engagement with China and its global competitors, such

¹⁰ Interview, security analyst, specialist in Security & Public Safety, August 10, 2022.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Interview, security analyst, specialist in Migration, Business & Security, August 11, 2022.

¹³ Interview, security analyst, specialist in security & public safety, August 10, 2022.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

as the US at the same time ought to be strategically undertaken, such that it does not expose Ghana unnecessarily to unhealthy rivalries of these countries.

Other illustrations, such as seen below, however, pointedly believe Ghana is most likely to acquiesce to China's strategic objectives: 'China is investing so much in Ghana, so its assessment would be whether Ghana have the right security architecture [including military, police, navy and immigration system] to protect its investments.'¹⁸ This means China would always evaluate Ghana capabilities and willingness to protect its investments and citizens and act according to such evaluations: 'if China believes Ghana can protect its investment, it will strengthen Ghana's security, but if it believes Ghana does not have what it takes to protect its investment, China can actually meddle in our security to create the kind of security that it believes would protect its investments.'¹⁹ These types of interference may include China making suggestions to re-shape Ghana's security systems, including the police service which is responsible for societal security, in ways that enhance the welfare of Chinese nationals resident in Ghana. It may also engage Ghana in joint military and navy drills, but these types of exercises could be aimed at protecting China's interests, including ensuring free flow of Chinese goods and persons along Ghana marine, air and land borders.

Therefore, engagement with China is 'a diplomatic act' and hence 'if Ghana does not act smart enough, it would actually think that it is in-charge, but China would be in-charge of Ghana security and that in itself would be a national security threat.'²⁰ This means self-interest of nation-states explain many of the issues that countries engage one another and hence China's willingness to invest in Ghana's security area could be due its own interests. This also implies Ghana needs to always evaluate China motives for the kind of investment it makes in the security sector. This evaluation could then prompt it to avoid taking supports that have negative repercussions for the country's long-term political stability, a point shared in this manner: 'diplomatic relations always ensure each country gets the best out of the relationships. It is expected to be a mutual relationship

¹⁸ Interview, lawmaker, specialist in law making & enforcement, August 3, 2022.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Interview, lawmaker with speciality in law making & enforcement, August 3, 2022.

but the most powerful invariably will always dominate and push things down the vulnerable's throat.'²¹

Because self-interest of nation-states constitute the core dynamic of international engagements, 'China will always try to look at its global perspectives as emerging superpower', which also means 'whether the engagement enhances Ghana security or not would depend on how Ghana evaluates China's help to strengthen its security.'²² This thought encourages Ghana to devise strategic goals and engage China based on such goals, because, 'while Chinese activities in Ghana may not always follow the text, strategy matters in China's relations. China engages Ghana based on a well-thought-out policy.'²³ Thus, Ghana's engagement with China must likewise be 'anchored on a clear strategy - Ghana needs to think and coordinate strategically to maximise its relationship with China, especially by focusing on long-term, integrated goals at all levels.'²⁴ The point is China cannot be engaged casually as a benevolent actor because while 'China projects itself to as a good friend; it is up to Ghana to be smart and ensure China engages the country without destabilising tendencies.'²⁵ These views imply both China and Ghana must identify share threats to their mutual security friendship.

4.2 Impediments to Ghana Benefiting from China Security Relations

The major threat facing Ghana-China future engagements lies more directly in the involvement of some Chinese nationals in illicit activities and the way this involvement contributes to fostering anti-Chinese sentiments. The pattern of this threat also suggests both countries have yet to fully appreciate the ambiguity of the threat and hence tackle it strategically. The (il)legality of some

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Interview, university professor, specialist in China & development in Africa, November 2, 2022.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Interview, lawmaker with speciality in law making & enforcement, August 3, 2022.

Chinese involvement in alluvial mining is related as revolving around the ambiguity of Ghanaian mining laws, such as:

small-scale mining is reserved for Ghanaians, but the law also allows foreigners to be involved technically and financially by providing mine support services. Thus, some Chinese enter the small-scale mining sector as goods and services providers but later on partner with Ghanaians who front for their applications to acquire land concessions. Through these alliances many of the Chinese come to acquire valid small-scale mining concession rights, although some of them also operate without valid visas and work permits.²⁶

This illustration shows that the local law of small-scale mining in Ghana is ambiguous, although it also shows it explicitly limits foreign participation to supply of mining goods and services. This avenue is however exploited by Chinese and local businesspeople in ways that enable Chinese to own mining concessions and mine illegally even as some of them may possess invalid visa and other immigration documents. These ‘activities of Chinese miners’ not only foster ‘anti-Chinese feeling in affected regions’ but also the effect of these negative sentiments threatens to negatively impact Ghana-China relations.²⁷

The engagements of Chinese private investors in artisanal mining emerges even more complex, as another perspective stated: ‘Chinese are not only involved [in illegal gold mining more than any other foreign national without Africa decent] but also arrests of foreign nationals, including Chinese, always involved the retrieval of lethal weapons.’²⁸ These ‘weapons are often claimed to be used for self-protection as the precious nature of gold exposes miners to consistent attacks.’²⁹ However, ‘it is unknown whether these weapons are licensed, procured legally and handled by competent people.’³⁰ This means Chinese illegal gold mining activities threaten water bodies and

²⁶ Interview, university professor, specialist in China & development in Africa, November 2, 2022.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Interview, university professor, specialist in Chinese economic engagement, October 14, 2022.

²⁹ Interview, university professor, specialist in Chinese economic engagement, October 14, 2022.

³⁰ Ibid.

farmlands³¹ but can also provide opportunities for organised crime and proliferation of lethal small arms and light weapons in mining communities.

Other perspectives, such as seen below, hence patently suggested that Ghana-China security relations seem more of a threat to Ghana:

China has literally taken advantage of our inability to be transparent, feed ourselves, take care of ourselves and come in providing something that looks like support but at the end Ghana gets nothing. There is a whole province in China where the indigenes come to Ghana as paupers and go back home as millionaires all because they come to extract gold illegally, causing destruction to the ecosystem, water bodies, crops - cocoa and pineapples. They dig everything out to dig the gold ... wherever they dig gold, there are a lot of anarchy, chaos, killings and destruction of properties ... I do not have the records, but what is shipped out of Ghana to China illegally is about 10 times of what leaves Ghana in the official way.³²

Not only these instances of chaos, crime and destructions fuel anti-Chinese sentiments at the societal level, but also the illicit mining activities are complicated by illicit involvement in petty trading, which was pointed out as distressful for Ghana-China relations as such:

The Chinese person comes here, earns illegally and goes back home and never gets punished by the Chinese government. If European person engages in that, you are sure s/he will be punished at home. You never hear China talk about money laundering. Chinese traders are more likely to go to some of our markets here, see the market kings and queens and put a hundred thousand dollars on the table and within minutes the agent in China picks the money and it goes into the Chinese market. Is the Chinese government not aware of this money laundering?³³

These insights mean petty trading activities of Chinese private citizens can also be sites for the proliferation of criminal economic activities, especially money laundering. The insights however imply that unwillingness of Ghanaian elites to enforce laws and be transparent explains some of the illicit activities typically linked to Chinese nationals in Ghana. It holds China also accountable for some of the illicit activities of its citizens as China barely penalises its citizens who commit

³¹ Interview, lawmaker with speciality in law making & enforcement, August 3, 2022.

³² Interview, security analyst, specialist in migration, business & security, August 11, 2022.

³³ Ibid.

criminal acts outside their home country. This means both countries ought to guard their relationship with transparency protocols that offer deterrence for their citizens with tendencies to engage in illicit economic activities. More concretely, ‘China needs to take some responsibilities for actions of some of its citizens. Otherwise, Ghana will one day arrest a Chinese and it creates a diplomatic challenge,’³⁴ or rather ‘if Chinese miners are killed by Ghana security forces, I am sure the Chinese government will not sit and watch without taking action.’³⁵

The burden-sharing, nonetheless, is such that ‘Ghana should take 90% responsibility since illegal Chinese miners do not know where the gold is, and even if they did, they would not just walk into the forests and villages and start digging and destroying water bodies unaided.’³⁶ Ghana’s share of the burden therefore begins with enforcement of laws related to illicit economic activities, or rather ‘the general weakness in state to prioritise and regulate small-scale mining accounts for the arrival of foreigners into the sector which is reserved for Ghanaians.’³⁷ The problem however is not about lack of ‘stronger legal and regulatory framework for small-scale mining’ as ‘there exist stringent laws and commensurate punishment for offenders.’³⁸ Rather, it is ‘the lack of proper enforcement of the law in Ghana’ which unfortunately ‘has been a problem across all governments.’³⁹ Thus, both countries should prioritise issues that affect their mutual relationship, especially at the societal level, which also implies Ghana needs to engage China to address people-centred dimensions of security.

4.3 People-Centred Security Mitigates Shared Threats

Different perspectives showed Ghana and China can strategically optimise security friendship, but only provided they approach security engagement as inclusive of efforts to address everyday

³⁴ Interview, security analyst, specialist in foreign policy & human security, August 12, 2022.

³⁵ Interview, university professor, specialist in Chinese economic engagements, October 14, 2022.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

human concerns of people and communities. These include access to health and food but also safety, wellbeing and the promotion of happiness. In other words, ‘peace and security issues are not only when you supply fighter jets and ammunition or when there is war. Peace and security begin when people understand the essence of co-existence, ... not when you give armoured tanks, and that is what China has been doing for all this while. China should refocus on doing more on soft security, safety and peace.’⁴⁰ This articulation means Ghana needs to engage China on people-centred elements of security, such as reducing poverty and hunger and creating jobs. These elements are deemed to be necessary for efforts to sustain peaceful co-existence among local populations but also between resident Chinese citizens and their host communities.

The call for a focus on people-centre human security concerns yet appears to face a threat from China’s policy of indifference towards domestic issues. This posture seems to have apparently created a condition of ‘no official’ China at the societal level and allowed for contentious views about China to distress Ghana-China relations. To illustrate, ‘you can easily tell how much the British and American governments spend on sponsoring some civil society organisations to run peace and security programmes. You hardly find China sponsoring civil society in these areas of peace and security.’⁴¹ These comparative insights implicitly showcase the depth of influence that Washington Consensus have had on Ghanaian civil society, including providing them with alternative ways to evaluate and determine a useful foreign influence. It pointedly shows China’s non-interference policy poorly allows it to engage directly with civil society. This view links with another perspective which stated that China’s posture of ‘I do not want to interfere’ in domestic issues of foreign countries could allow its poor relations with Ghanaian society to deteriorate and ‘get out of hand.’⁴²

China is therefore called upon to engage civil society, which operates as intermediary agency between government and citizens. This engagement is expected to enable China to appreciate and identify cooperative ways to mitigate local grievances that it often expects national elites to

⁴⁰ Interview, security analyst, specialist in migration, business & security, August 11, 2022.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Interview, security analyst, specialist in foreign policy & human security, August 12, 2022.

mitigate despite such elites are often complicit in such grievances. The core of the call for China to engage directly with society includes attention to people-centred issues, such as working with Ghana in its ‘countering terrorism’ efforts.⁴³ This call is also interestingly contrasted with counter terrorism strategy of the West which is believed to have ‘created more terrorists than actually getting rid of them.’⁴⁴ This means China could be engaged to combat terrorism ‘differently’ but this would involve a strategic focus on improving ‘human security concerns,’ including ‘putting investment in youth unemployment and combating marginalisation.’⁴⁵ In other words, without the provision of soft (human) security, there cannot be secure development.⁴⁶

The focus on human security is however believed to be successful provided Ghanaian leaders ‘engage China with the right mindset’, which includes dealing with China devoid of ‘personal interest’ and ‘limited knowledge about China.’⁴⁷ This is seen as important because ‘our leaders have thus far not related with China ‘with the right mentality’⁴⁸ while ‘China knows not only how corrupt some of our leaders are but also takes advantage of the situation.’⁴⁹ Ghana should therefore engage China by drawing on

the expertise of civil society, researchers, especially those schooled in China and are fluent in Chinese Mandarin language, because what these experts can tell China, our state actors may not want to say it. Our state actors will then listen and wait for these experts to talk on their behalf.⁵⁰

The illustration above calls on Ghana to develop national protocols and cadre of experts to lead the state when negotiating deals with China. This insight seems important since China has become more business-minded and engages Ghana irrespective of the political party in power. Drawing on expert knowledge, instead of political knowledge of elites – could safeguard Ghana against decisions that may arise from personal ambitions of state leaders. These efforts can include

⁴³ Interview, security analyst, specialist in foreign policy & human security, August 12, 2022.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Interview, lawmaker with speciality in law making & enforcement, August 3, 2022.

⁴⁷ Interview, security analyst, specialist in migration, business & security, August 11, 2022.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

‘people-to-people engagements in which Ghanaian citizens and Chinese migrants regularly meet as shared stakeholders of the menace of illegal mining and petty trading.’⁵¹ In effect, Ghana-China security friendship needs to be restructured such that it encourages burden-sharing and incorporates people-centred (human) security issues. In this way, both countries can approach threats to their security friendship as collective problems, requiring collaborative efforts to mitigate. Indeed, the ‘people-centred’ approach to human security concept helped uncover these insights and is hence implicated.

4.4 Implication for Human Security Concept

The empirical insights implicate the human security concept which guided the paper’s approach to the security-development linkage. The insights reaffirm security-development issues as concerns for all citizens, not just states and elite actors (e.g., see UNDP, 1994; Jolly & Ray, 2006). Thus, benefits, threats and alternative ways of optimising China security relations cannot be treated as the exclusive reserve of state actors. The view that unlike China, Ghana is less likely to benefit from security friendship with China particularly challenges existing studies in which Ghanaian elites are often showcased as strategic actors in their engagement of China (e.g., see Amo-Agyemang, 2021).

It alternatively amplifies views that unlike Chinese elites, Ghanaian elites are more likely to be enticed by ‘temporal opportunities’ associated with China engagements and thereby leave due diligence to chance when engaging China (Amoah, 2021). This implies Ghanaian elites have been less critical in their engagement of China which is not only felt in people perceptions but actually reported with concrete instances, especially at the level of society. Also, the call for a focus on people-centred engagements implies Ghanaian hope for inclusion of their voices in the way state elites often engage China on their behalf. These insights should however lead future studies to

⁵¹ Interview, university professor, specialist in China & development in Africa, November 2, 2022.

comparatively explore the explanatory factors responsible for differences in elite and non-elite perspectives on China.

China's security-development projects are often reported to be aimed at alleviating people and communities from such issues as poverty, disease and indignities (Amoah, 2021; Asante, 2017; Frontani & McCracken, 2012). The people-centred human security lens yet observed a great disrepute about China's presence in Ghanaian societies. This challenge was linked to China reliance on national elites to address popular concerns about its presence in communities and in the process ignore the complicities of elites in these grievances. This insight still call for future studies to critically explore why China's contributions to help improve lives, lifestyles and livelihoods of people have yet to translate in widespread popular approval and support for its presence in communities, despite these communities that are often the beneficiaries of China security-development projects, such as roads, hospitals and educational scholarships.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper has demonstrated how Ghanaians feel and appraise China security relations with their country. While there is a general support for Ghana to engage China to secure its peaceful development; this support is yet countered by views in which China, unlike Ghana, is believed to benefit the most from security friendship with Ghana. Several reasons were advanced to explain this contradiction, although China's superpower status and indifference towards domestic issues of foreign countries emerged more instrumental. The indifference is such that China often expects national elites to address local concerns about its presence in communities. In the process, it ignores how such elites could be complicit in activities that generate China-centric grievances. The indifference apparently creates a condition of 'no-official' China in Ghanaian societies, allowing for illicit activities of some private Chinese investors and their local collaborators to polarise perceptions against China. This threat is compounded by feelings that China deploys its superpower to disempower Ghanaian elites, reducing them to compliant supporters of China interests.

5.1 Policy Outline for Ghana

1. **Maintain Open Foreign Policy.** It is important Ghana maintains open foreign policy. This will allow it to associate positively with China without compromising relations with other countries. It will also enable other countries to contribute to its peaceful development, not just China. The open foreign policy should however entail clearly stated national strategic goals that are clearly prioritised and seen by society in the way elites engage China. Thus, Ghana should engage China and any other country not as a ‘rule-taker subject’ where it unwillingly obeys and powerlessly adapts to the perspectives of such countries (Parepa, 2020). It should rather engage with a clearly defined strategic autonomy whereby it can collaborate, emphasising clearly stated national goals without compromising interdependent relationships it has developed over the years with other countries, including China.
2. **Have China Commit to ‘Soft’ Security.** Ghana’s engagement of China should focus on securing the peaceful development of country. This requires a shift towards addressing issues of impoverishment and environmental degradation, especially those caused by illegal gold mining and other illicit activities that have links with Chinese activities. This will however require Ghanaian elites to ensure China appreciates popular concerns about its presence in society and incorporates these concerns to reform aspects of its foreign policy behaviours that foment contentious views. This includes ensuring China appreciates the likelihood of food insecurity and climate change threats emerging from environmental degradation caused by illicit activities linked to Chinese private citizens in Ghana. This is important as the profit earned from such illicit private investments are repatriated to expand China’s domestic economy. Engaging China on ‘soft’ security issues can also include promoting regular people-to-people engagements, both in Ghana and in China. This engagement may involve meetings of civil society groups of both countries as shared stakeholders of problems arising from China-Ghana relations.
3. **Establish National Consortium on China.** This outfit should comprise of national cadre of experts, drawn from different segments of society, but more especially from civil society and academia. The relationship between the two countries have become more transactional, especially on the part of China. Ghana should recognise this growing trend and ensure that the elite consensus that has

emerged among its elites (e.g., see Amo-Agyemang, 2021) is deliberately informed by expert advice of nationally inclined consortium of experts. This body could help the country devise protocols that are jointly verifiable & enforceable in Ghana and in China.

5.2 Policy Outline for China

1. Vary Indifference Posture Towards Domestic Issues of Foreign Countries. China should review its policy of non-interference towards domestic issues of foreign countries. This policy seems to (mis)lead China to portray a posture of indifference towards societal issues, and in the process, creates a situation of ‘no official’ China at the level of society. Illicit activities that take place in this vacuum involve both Chinese private citizens and local collaborators. China’s policy expects national elites to address these concerns, although local elites are often complicit in these illicit activities. As such, local populations tend to attribute these activities to the Chinese state and in the process draw China’s name into disrepute. China should recognise these grievances as shared threats, requiring efforts from both countries to mitigate.
2. Have Direct Engagements with Civil Society. China should have a strong presence in civil society as ‘agency’ between people and state. The paper showed how China has a troubled presence among civil society, especially in the area of peace and security propagation. China should close this gap and allow its engagements with state actors to be felt and critically interrogated at the level of civil society. This is important, moreover, because the civil society space constitutes a critical avenue where government policies are debated and made to reflect popular concerns of national development. China thus needs effective presence in this space not only for its perspectives to be appreciated but to enable it to also shape popular perceptions about its engagements with state actors that is often believed to be opaque and corruptible.
3. Recognise and Address Misgivings about Superpower Status. The type of illicit activities linked to China at the societal level are human security in nature as they relate directly to everyday human concerns, including concerns about environmental degradation due to illegal artisanal gold mining. This threat has generated different misgivings which commonly suggest China deploys its emergent superpower status to ‘bulldoze’ non-power states such as Ghana to accede to its strategic objectives. China should recognise and address sources of these misgivings by engaging Ghana in collaborative ways. This could include the two countries jointly signing and committing to working

with a legally enforceable framework. This should have checks and balances and provides avenues for independent verification by civil society in both countries. It could have penal sanctions, such as visa restrictions for Ghana and China citizens who collaborate to engage in activities that drag relations of the two countries into disrepute.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

CORN-CORA_JULY22-Q_Interview Guide - Ghana on China Security Cooperation

1. People say peace and security is the backbone of development. Ghana has been engaging China in effort to develop the country. Do you think the way Ghana engages China enhances the peace and security of the country, and can you briefly explain why so, please?
2. Do you think Ghana should prioritise issues of peace and security in its engagement with China in effort to develop our country, and can you mention any of these issues, please?
3. What do you think Ghana stands to benefit most by engaging China in promoting the peace and security of the country, and can you briefly explain why, please?
4. What challenge(s) do you think threatens or can threaten Ghana efforts to engage China in promoting peace and security in the country?
5. What issues do you think Ghana needs to consider as most important in engaging China to promote the peaceful development of our country?
6. As researchers, sometimes we may think we have asked all the important questions, but sometimes we also realise that our respondents have most critical issues that can turn things around and would wish to share with us. So, in conclusion, are there other issues or recommendations that you think we need to consider in trying to appreciate how Ghana engages China in promoting the peace and security of our country?
7. Please, I will like you to introduce yourself, in terms of the work you do, educational background and all that.

Thank very much for your welcome, support and thoughts. We greatly appreciate it!!

2. Strengthening Local Agency in Africa-China Negotiations

**LIMITED LOCAL AGENCY? LOCAL COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES
IN CHINESE FUNDED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN KENYA**

By

Oscar M. Otele

Senior Lecturer

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Nairobi

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the extent of the local agency in the Chinese funded infrastructure projects in Kenya. It contributes to a growing literature on understanding the extent of African agency and relations with China during the formulation and implementation of infrastructure projects. The existing scholarship on African agency tends to focus at the national level, mainly how Africans and their Chinese counterparts coalesce in the negotiation and post-negotiation phase. Less common in the scholarship are dynamics occurring at the local level. The paper fills the gap by comparing dynamics in the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) Project (Phase One) and the Garissa Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Project (GSP) in Kenya. In both projects, local agency seems limited when exercised on its own. Local agents are activated by local political and administrative elites/champions. It was established that the extent of local agency in the GSP was greater than in the SGR, creating more space for the locals to benefit even if the benefits fell below their expectations.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In August 2012, the cabinet chaired by former President Mwai Kibaki approved the development of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) Project linking the coastal city of Mombasa to Malaba with connectivity to Kisumu, a lakeside city in the western side of Kenya. Financial negotiations and implementation of the SGR was undertaken in phases with Phase One covering from Mombasa to Nairobi (480 kilometres) whose construction began in 2013, ended in May 2017, few months to August 2017 elections. China Road and Bridges Corporation (CRBC)—a subsidiary of China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) Ltd.—was awarded the tender in line with Chinese railway regulatory design standards. When Uhuru Kenyatta ascended to power in March 2013, he fast-tracked financial negotiations seeing Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visits Kenya in May 2014 where memoranda of understandings on the SGR was signed. Subsequently, China’s Export-Import (Exim) Bank approved a credit facility worth \$ 3.2 billion for the completion of Phase One of the SGR representing 85 per cent of the contract amount of \$ 3.804 billion.⁵²

Still in 2012, Kenya’s Ministry of Energy (MoE) and People’s Republic of China (PRC) provincial government of Jiangxi conceptualized the Garissa Solar Project (GSP).⁵³ It was agreed by representatives on both sides that funds would be sourced from China’s Exim Bank and the implementation would be done by China Jiangxi Corporation for International Economic and Technical Cooperation (CJIC).⁵⁴ The Exim Bank provided \$ 135 million.⁵⁵ The procurement process was not subjected to an open tender because the project entailed bilateral negotiations between the government of Kenya and government of People Republic of China (PRC). A feasibility study was conducted in 2013. However, it was not until 2016 that the project construction kicked off.⁵⁶ The delays were occasioned by initial disagreement between Kenya

⁵²Wissenbach, Uwe, and Yuan Wang (2017). African politics meets Chinese engineers: The Chinese-built Standard Gauge Railway Project in Kenya and East Africa. *Working Paper No. 2017/13*. China Africa Research Initiative, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC. <http://www.sais-cari.org/publications>.

⁵³ Interview, Ministry of Energy 12 May 2022.

⁵⁴ Interview, Ministry of Energy 12 May 2022.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Energy, Cabinet Secretary Charles Keter launches 50MW solar power plant for Garissa.

⁵⁶ Interview, REREC, 23 May 2022.

Rural Electrification Agency (KREA) (renamed now as Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Corporation [REREC]) and Kenya Power Lightening Company (KPLC)- the national utility over tariffs. Located in Garissa County, and occupying about 85 hectares of land, the GSP was designed to serve neighbouring counties of Tana River, Mandera, Lamu, Wajir, Marsabit, Kitui and Turkana. The project construction commenced in early 2017 and the CJIC entered into agreement with Jinko Solar company for technical support and supplying of solar panels. Afterwards, Jinko Solar facilitated installation of the solar panels.⁵⁷ During the feasibility stage, KREA sub-contracted the technical supervision to Maknes Consulting.

Understanding how formulation and implementation of the two projects is contextualized within the debates on China's engagement in Africa. On one hand China is discussed as a development partner eager to spur African development path through infrastructure.⁵⁸ On the other hand, China is presented a neo-colonial master offering unstainable debts detrimental to Africa's economic growth.⁵⁹ In this debate, increasingly, the role of African agency, that is the extent to which African actors control the engagement with their Chinese counterparts has taken centre stage. The existing scholarship on African agency tends to focus at the national -level, mainly how Africans and their Chinese counterparts coalesce in the negotiation and post-negotiation phase. Less common in the scholarship are dynamics occurring at the local level. The paper fills the gap by comparing expression of the local agency in the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) Project (Phase One) and the Garissa Solar Project (GSP) in Kenya. More specifically, the paper focuses on the interaction with local stakeholders, expectations of local communities, commitment by Kenyan and Chinese actors, benefits to the local communities and utilization of grievance mechanisms. The paper hypothesized the extent of local agency was premised on the extent to which legal and regulatory framework

⁵⁷ Newswire, C.P., 27 September, 2012. JinkoSolar cooperate with CJIC to develop Kenya's largest solar power plant. *Cision PR Newswire*.

⁵⁸ See Deborah Brautigam, Tang Xiaoyang and Ying Xia (2018), 'What Kinds of Chinese "Geese" Are Flying to Africa? Evidence from Chinese Manufacturing Firms', *Journal of African Economies* 27, 1, pp. 29–51; David Dollar (2016), 'China's Engagement with Africa: From Natural Resources to Human Resources', The John L. Thornton China Center at Brookings, N.W., Washington, D.C.

⁵⁹ Patrick Bond and Ana Garcia (2015), 'Introduction', In *BRICS: An Anti-Capitalist Critique*, Patrick Bond and Ana Garcia, eds, Pluto Press, London, pp. 1–14.

allowed local actors to articulate their concerns during formulation and implementation of the projects.

Applying a qualitative approach, this paper draws from secondary data on Kenya-China relations and primary data with purposively sampled key informants carried out from 2015 to 2022 to shed more light on central issues defining the interaction between Chinese elites, Kenyan elites and civil society in the formulation and implementation of the SGR and the GSP. The selection of the two case was informed by data accessibility and their significance.⁶⁰ Participants included Kenyan government officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Treasury, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Ministry of Energy, Kenya Railway Corporation, Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Corporation (REREC), representatives of local communities, civil society organizations and academics familiar with China-Africa relations. Participants were identified on the basis of their experience and expertise in dealing with the Chinese in Kenya, in studying Kenya-China relations and knowledge of Kenyan policy environment in respect to Chinese engagement in different sectors. Empirical data focused on how local agency exercised at the inception and implementation of the two projects, specifically the interaction between Chinese actors and local communities, benefits the locals obtained from the interaction and resultant challenges.

The paper is structured as follows: Section one begins by providing the state of art on existing literature on African agency with a view of demonstrating the gaps in the expression of local agency. Section two presents the legal and regulatory framework underpinning the formulation and implementation of infrastructure projects. Section three compares the expression of local agency in both projects. Section four explain the variation in the expression of local agency and the last section conclude and offer policy implication.

⁶⁰ Mathew Miles and Michael Huberman (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Sage.

2.0 STATE OF THE ART

Railway sub-sector is one of the infrastructure sub-sectors that China has increased its presence in recent times. Focusing on African agency, some authors focus on the positionality of African political elites in Chinese funded railway projects casting the spotlight on the role of both formal and informal structures in fast-tracking the project. Uwe Wissenbach, for example traces the evolution of the SGR (Phase One) from its initial design and links quick implementation of Mombasa-Nairobi route to the hierarchical authority played by President Uhuru Kenyatta.⁶¹ The author observes that the formal structure around the presidency had the ability to solely deal with any disputes, adjust to any uncertainty and utilize state resources to overcome property rights concerns. However, its completion in a record time came with additional costs of undermining governance principles and lack of coordination among the neighboring states featuring in the original design.⁶² Rodea and his collaborators look at urban formal structure and how they impact on the governance of Ethiopia's new rail system.⁶³ The study found that it is “a techno-political alliance” in Addis-Ababa that influences urban development and speedy implementation of the railway infrastructure.⁶⁴ Wang and Wissenbach explore the influence of informal networks on Kenya's newly launched SGR project. To illuminate whether patronage systems support accountability or not, the authors found that clientelism produced mixed effects on project management and accountability, depending on the extent of inclusivity of patron-client network. In the context where traders and local people were incorporated into patronage system, “the patron–client networks held the project management accountable”, but conducive to corruption where the systems incorporated elites at the expense of traders and citizens.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Uwe Wissenbach (2019), ‘Kenya's Madaraka Express: Decisive Chinese Impulse for African Mega Infrastructure Projects’, In *Duality by Design: The Global Race to Build Africa's Infrastructure*, Nuno Gil., Ann Stafford and Innocent Musonda, eds, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 315–48.

⁶² See also Wissenbach and Wang, ‘African Politics Meets Chinese Engineers’.

⁶³ Philipp Rode., Terrefe Biruk and de Cruz Nuno. F (2020). ‘Cities and the Governance of Transport Interfaces: Ethiopia's New Rail Systems’, *Transport Policy*, 91: Pp. 76-94.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Yuan Wang and Uwe Wissenbach (2019), ‘Clientelism at work? A Case Study of Kenyan Standard Gauge Railway Project’, *Economic History of Developing Regions*, 34 (3), Pp. 280-299.

To illustrate how Chinese engagement in the rail sub-sector is responding to African concerns, some authors adopt “a corporate social responsibility (CSR)” approach to examine the extent of standard setting among Chinese economic actors involved in the implementation of railway projects.⁶⁶ Tan-Mullins observes that CSR could be one of the ways in which Chinese companies could take advantage to address the negative externalities linked to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Using data from Kenya and Ethiopia, the author demonstrates that Chinese companies such as China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) are increasingly showing interest in setting governance standards by involving relevant stakeholders in order to increase transfer of local content. However, successful implementation of CSR is not an easy task as it involves understanding the needs of diverse stakeholders. Carrai on her part found that Chinese firms involved in railway projects in Kenya and Ethiopia had some little knowledge about CSR, however they are often challenged by lack of adequate local enforcement mechanisms. Instead of imposing higher standards, these firms prefer not to clash with “local regulations and practices”. Although Kenya and Ethiopia, had localization strategies for employing local workers, labor disputes still emerged because of mistreatment, low wages, and varied interpretations of labor law on the part of Chinese and local representatives. In Kenya, Chinese SOEs readily adjusted to demands of involving more locals in the construction works, while in Ethiopia, the Chinese SOEs unwillingly adjusted to inclusion of local workers. In both countries, “Chinese SOEs tended to follow local environment regulations, in some cases adding sophistication...[as it reported] that local regulations were a significant reasons to attend to social and environmental performance, compliance with local laws and demands was seen as essential to reducing operational risks, environmental and labor disputes, and punitive measures”.⁶⁷

Unlike the railway sub-sector, solar energy infrastructure sub-sector has received less treatment in the literature. An early study on China’s involvement in Kenya’s solar energy explored the

⁶⁶ May T. Mullins (2020), ‘Smoothing the Silk Road through Successful Chinese Corporate Social Responsibility Practices: Evidence from East Africa’, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 29 (122), Pp. 207-220; Maria A. Carrai (2020) ‘Corporate Social Responsibility along the Chinese Financed Railway Mega-Project in East Africa’, China, *Law and Development, Research Brief* No.3/2020; Maria A. Carrai (2021), ‘Adaptive governance along Chinese Financed BRI Railroad Megaprojects’, *World Development* 141 (16).

⁶⁷ Carrai, ‘Adaptive governance along Chinese Financed BRI Railroad Megaprojects’.

partnership between Beijing Tianpu Xianxing Enterprises and Kenya's Electrogen Technologies in the manufacturing of solar panel.⁶⁸ Tsidiso Disenyana was optimistic that the solar panel will address the energy deficit in the country, however there was concerns, especially low quality of solar panels compared to those produced in European markets. Lucy Baker and Wei Shen look at China's involvement in South Africa's wind and solar PV industries, and how the engagement is influenced by China-South Africa trade relations, China and South Africa energy policy and regulatory frameworks, global trajectories in renewable energy markets and the emergence of trade disputes, especially in the case of solar photovoltaic (PV). The study established that Chinese firms were attracted to South Africa's wind and solar PV market due to several push and pull factors motivated by commercial interests with limited state intervention. Push factors included a number of challenges in domestic and international market and the prominence of China's Belt and Road Initiative, while pull factors included the launch of South Africa's renewable energy independent power producers' procurement program. More recently, Padmasai Bhamidipati and his associates examine the extent the extent of co-benefits created between China and Africa countries in renewable energy projects using cases of the Adawa wind project (Ethiopia), the Bui dam hydropower project (Ghana), and the Garissa Solar Photovoltaic (PV) (Kenya).⁶⁹ Although there existed "bounded benefits", with some new job opportunities, linkages and training for the locals, they were limited. The extent of the local agency in the Chinese funded infrastructure projects is yet to be fully explored.⁷⁰ Chiyemura demonstrates how local agency is limited among Ethiopian non-state actors because of the government strong control on policy and implementation of wind energy infrastructure.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Tsidiso Disenyana (2009) Harnessing Africa's sun: China and the development of solar energy in Kenya, *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 16 (1), pp. 17-32,

⁶⁹ Padmasai Bhamidipati, Cecilia Gregersen, Ulrich Elmer Hansen, Julian Kirchherr and Rasmus Lema (2022), "Chinese green energy projects in sub-Saharan Africa", In *Building innovation capabilities for sustainable industrialization, renewable electrification in developing economies*, Rasmus Lema, Margrethe Holm Andersen, Rebecca Hanlim and Charles Nzila, eds, Routledge, London and New York.

⁷⁰ For exception, see for example, Padmasai et al, "Chinese green energy projects in sub-Saharan Africa".

⁷¹ Frangton Chiyemura (2020). Contextualizing African Agency in Ethiopia-China engagement in wind energy infrastructure financing and development. *Innovation Knowledge Development, Working Paper No.88*, The Open University, Milton Keynes, U.K.

3.0 LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK ON RELATIONS OF PROJECTS WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 has provisions which offer local stakeholders decision space in the formulation and implementation of infrastructure projects which could be interpreted to give effect on how the processes could be beneficial to the local stakeholders. Article 1 of the Constitution places people at the centre of decision-making.⁷² This means that every decision involved in the formulation and implementation of any infrastructure project ought to reflect the needs and aspirations of people of Kenya. It follows that the affected local community should have a voice to ensure that the infrastructure project responds to the local needs and aspirations. Article 10 (2) of the Constitution further elaborates on national values and principles of governance.⁷³ Public participation is one of the principles of governance espoused in the Constitution. The involvement of the local community especially in the infrastructure projects that directly affect their lives is important. The involvement assures benefits to the local community.

The Local Content Policy provides the framework for developing local content legislations and regulations. Objective seven of the policy protects the interests of the local community residing near the infrastructure projects. It provides for the access to employment, procurement opportunities and contracts to the locals.⁷⁴ The Community Land Act, 2016 aims to ensure proper utilization of community land. Section 35 of the Act requires community land to be sustainably used to ensure benefits for the local community. It further states that benefits emanating from investments done on the community land should be shared equitably.⁷⁵ It follows that through proper consultation with the local stakeholders when handling community land would ensure local benefits are realized. Therefore, where the implementation of the infrastructure project cuts across the community land, the Act anticipates that there should be proper consultation. The Act provides for a community assembly with representation from all diverse groups from the community.

⁷² Article 1, Constitution of Kenya (2010).

⁷³ Article 1, Constitution of Kenya (2010).

⁷⁴ Objective 7, Local Content Policy.

⁷⁵ Section 35, Community Land Act (2016).

The Local Content Bill, 2018 is expected to cut across all sectors and provide the legal framework for developing sector-specific local content regulations and guidelines. The local content bill has been hailed as a roadmap towards the realizing of a local content law in Kenya. The Bill envisions employment, knowledge and skills transfer to the local community.⁷⁶ Foreign companies are called upon to train locals and improve their skills in order to enhance the capacity. Foreign companies are required to prioritize locally produced goods in order to build local economies, however with the permission of the concerned cabinet secretaries foreign companies are allowed to outsource goods and services that are not found locally.⁷⁷ Foreign companies are expected to submit local content plans to the local content committee detailing the benefit to the local community in the course of the project implementation.⁷⁸ Therefore, these legal and regulatory framework provides a solid foundation for ensuring that local stakeholders are engaged in the formulation and implementation of the SGR and SGR. In the section, the paper discusses the extent to which the legal and regulatory framework allowed local actors to articulate their concerns during formulation and implementation of the projects.

4.0 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LOCAL AGENCY

The analysis centres on the struggle over land acquisition and fair compensation and quest for the inclusion of local content.

4.1 Struggle Over Land Acquisition and Fair Compensation

In the case of the SGR, it was expected that the construction of the SGR would generate considerable interactions between KRC, the National Land Commission (NLC), CRBC, and the devolved units of Mombasa, Kilifi, Kwale, Taita-Taveta, Makueni, Machakos and Nairobi, and the local communities. Crucially, KRC recognized that the construction of the SGR must involve the devolved units and community stakeholder in exchange for community land. Local politicians

⁷⁶ Section 25, The Local Content Bill, (2018).

⁷⁷ Section 43 (2), The Local Content Bill (2018).

⁷⁸ Clause 18, Local Content Bill of 2018 (2018)

were particularly vocal on the land issue arguing that the “local communities in the affected areas relied on agricultural farms and that their displacement will affect their livelihoods”.⁷⁹ In October 2014, a high court suspended the construction of the SGR following a petition by a local politician in Makueni County government over claim that the locals were not properly compensated.⁸⁰

Local communities settled along the planned railway line were not informed about the expected benefits and the displacement plan. Instead, the newly elected county governors seeking to consolidate their regional authority took advantage of the situation to incite the locals. The county politicians came up with narrative in support of the local land claims so to enhance the chances of persuading NLC and KRC. In Mombasa County- the source of the SGR- the land issues were flagged by Governor Hassan Joho, a leading opposition figure in the coastal region. CRBC accused Joho for interfering with land acquisition process.⁸¹ Similar sentiments were echoed by Mohammad Swazuri, the head of the NLC accusing local politicians for inciting the locals over land compensation.⁸² Joho pushed for moral argument, opining that land compensation should factor in the historical context of “ancestral interest” of the local communities.⁸³ Land ownership dispute is a historical political issue between migrant communities issued with title deeds by the government, and the traditional local community without possession of title deeds, the tension between the groups posed considerable threat to the construction of the project.

To underscore the importance of local resistance against the SGR because of dissatisfaction over land acquisition and compensation, President Kenyatta had to personally intervene in the matter. The President championed for quick completion of the project; therefore local resistance was perceived as a threat. During the cabinet sub- committee meetings on the SGR construction, the President “asked the Minister of Land to explain what had been done to clear the land...if there

⁷⁹ Interview, officer, Mombasa County Government, 19 February 2020.

⁸⁰ “Construction of Kenyan Standard-gauge line suspended”, *International Railway Journal*, October 2014.

⁸¹ Daniel Tsuma Nyassy, “Hands off railway project, firm tells county officials,” *Daily Nation*, June 22, 2015, <http://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mombasa/Mombasa-Standard-Gauge-Railway-CRBC/-/1954178/2761446/-/ymg5ooz/-/index.html>

⁸² Daniel Tsuma Nyassy, “Swazuri tells off politicians on rail project,” *Daily Nation*, July 2, 2015, <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Swazuri-tells-off-politicians-on-rail-project/-/1056/2773434/-/nt5k5uz/-/index.html>

⁸³ Wang and Uwe, p. 18.

was a problem, the president would give a direct order to the CEO of the National Land Commission regarding the land acquisition and compensation”.⁸⁴ Determined to remove any obstacles during the construction phase, President Kenyatta ordered the concerned authority to ensure that local land disputes were addressed expeditiously. A local vocal politician remembered the event when the President visited Makueni County:

“When he [Kenyatta] got off the plane, I think someone had briefed him about the court case. He was furious. People are afraid of Uhuru Kenyatta... the president said very angrily: ‘how can you stop a presidential project?’ So, I explained the issues we were facing. Kenyatta said: ‘This seems to be a simple issue.’ He then called on the Minister of Land and said: ‘I need this issue solved in seven days with a report.’”⁸⁵

Although CRBC was justified to claim that land acquisition and compensation fell squarely within the ambit of NLC and KRC, the fact that it was an interested party in the interaction between the local communities and the two national agencies, serves to demonstrate challenges CRBC encountered during the construction of the project. Eventually, the local communities were compensated and settled in their preferred locations, but the benefits were activated through the intervention of President Kenya who not only championed the completion of the project, but also did not want to grant political leverage to local politicians opposed to the project.

While in the case of GSP, before even the project commenced, KREA conducted civic education in the areas about the GSP and its purposes. This informational power offered the local community tacit strategy to engage with KREA/CJIC as the provided information prepared the locals in terms of what they expected. Given that the project’s construction would affect pastoralists and agriculturalists in the area, local administration opined that pastoralists and farmers be adequately compensated.⁸⁶ In addition to land compensation, the locals expected the creation of more social amenities and small infrastructure projects like feeder roads.⁸⁷ Later on as provision of electricity increased, they expected “more industries to be established, thus improving the economic fortunes

⁸⁴ Cited in Yuan Wang, ‘Executive agency and state capacity in development: Comparing Sino-African Railways in Kenya and Ethiopia,’ *Comparative Politics*, 54, 2(2022), p. 20.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.21.

⁸⁶ Interview, local chief 2 June 2022.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

of Garissa County”.⁸⁸ The anticipated benefits of the project created a positive outlook about Chinese presence in the area. However, there was disappointment, when KREA officials made it clear that the electricity would also serve the neighbouring counties.

KREA experienced challenges acquiring land with back-and-forth negotiations with the local communities and land activists. Given that some parcels of land were communally owned, implied that “legal ownership status and documents have to in place. It was therefore agreed between the local community, leaders and KREA that the project would continue even as [the] legal ownership documents and compensation mechanism are worked out”.⁸⁹ In early 2017 CJIC constructed the boundary wall for the project which later created a sense of exclusion among the neighbouring pastoralists community used to free movement.⁹⁰ The presence of Chinese workers created a perception of fear among the local communities.⁹¹ In May 2017, the construction work was temporarily stopped when a group of locals protested towards the boundary wall alleging that some of their expectations with regard to local development were yet to be made. To manage the situation, KREA employed a local liaison person who subsequently held meetings with local stakeholders in a bid to manage local expectations.⁹² Consequently, both KREA and CJIC committed to undertake corporate social responsibilities aimed at improving physical and social infrastructure in the area. A local representative committee comprising elected leaders, representatives from local civil society organizations and representatives from the local community was established to link the local stakeholders to KREA and CJIC.⁹³ The committee negotiated project benefits on the behalf of the local community. In subsequent meetings, the committee outlined priority areas for local community development, including the construction of a road to ease access to the farm and facilitate transportation of agricultural goods; construction of a primary school, a health centre, a health dispensary, a piped water, reliable electricity supply,

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Macharia Kamau, “Sh. 13.5 billion Garissa solar plant be commissioned in two weeks”, The Standard, 11 September 2018, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/business/news/article/2001295283/sh135b-solar-plant-ready-in-two-weeks> (access 24 June 2022).

⁹⁰ Interview, local chief, 2 June 2022.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Interview, REREC 28 May 2022.

⁹³ Ibid.

formal employment and renovation of offices for local administrative units.⁹⁴ However, with time, the local community shifted their priority. The locals “changed their versions, responses and position with regard to what their needs are, what...they seek and what activities should be focused on”.⁹⁵ Following changes in the leadership after August 2017 elections, the reconstituted committee negotiated for different project-related benefits.⁹⁶ This shifting priority areas implies that local community development was influenced by local politics. It was reported that “given that the local member of the county assembly, member of the national assembly and the governor were not re-elected in 2017, the new leadership came with their own interests in a way reorienting project activities. However, the room for negotiation was not completely closed”.⁹⁷ To KREA and CJIC, the project became an arena for local politicians to advance their interests. Given the restrict timelines both organizations had to strike a balance between meeting the local development demands and preventing delays in the completion of the project.

4.2 Quest for the Inclusion of Local Content

The contents of the SGR loan agreement remain a mystery.⁹⁸ Informants at the National Treasury reported that the financial instrument included mutual agreement concerning the supply of local materials and job opportunities for the locals.⁹⁹ At the national level, CRBC, the Ministry of Transport and KRC in conjunction with the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA)- a pressure group- showcased some of the existing opportunities that local contractors could utilize during the construction of the SGR.¹⁰⁰ However, the inability of KEPSA to mobilize the entire spectrum of private sector actors, implied local suppliers were not adequately informed about the existing

⁹⁴ Interview, member of county assembly 27 May 2022.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Interview, REREC 28 May 2022.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Although Roads, Transport and Public Works Cabinet Sectary, Mr. Kipchumba Murkomen had promised to publicize the SGR contracts, only the preferential buyer credit loan agreement on the SGR between the Republic of Kenya and the Exim Bank was released.

⁹⁹ Interview, Officers, The National Treasury July 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Uchukuzi, *Standard Gauge Railway: Forging new frontier in railway development in Kenya and the region.* (Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Nairobi, 2014), p.8.

opportunities.¹⁰¹ Utilization of strategies like lobbying by other pressure groups like the Regional Mega Projects Coordination Council (RMPCC) and Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) facilitated local suppliers engagement in subcontracting and logistics.¹⁰² Materials such as cement and crushed stones were sourced from the local devolved units, thereby building local economies.¹⁰³ However, due to unfavourable local tax regime and lack of political will, local suppliers struggled to keep with up their Chinese competitors.¹⁰⁴ Further, local suppliers were frustrated by politically connected oligarch in the logistics industry.¹⁰⁵ Over the time, local jobs during the construction of the SGR was approximately at 38,000 ¹⁰⁶, although there was no explicit strategy on this. Local politicians connected with national elites saw patronage opportunities, thereby acting as intermediaries to the unemployed locals.

While in the case of the GSP, opportunities for local employment benefits were verbally agreed between KREA and CJIC at the inception of the project.¹⁰⁷ On several occasions, as negotiations were ongoing with the with local representative committee, KREA reiterated the need to employ the locals in the project, thereby raising their expectations given that there were a few opportunities outside pastoral and agricultural activities. The Chairman of KREA promised “at least 1000 local jobs”¹⁰⁸, in addition to “setting up a mini-city in the middle of a desert with over 1000 workers”.¹⁰⁹ Other source indicated that the project intended to produce “2000 jobs”.¹¹⁰ These high numbers

¹⁰¹ Interview with a former KEPSA Official, Nairobi, 8 August 2020. This division in KEPSA sometimes resembles Kenyan division politics where private sector actors take sides along ethnic groups.

¹⁰² Wang and Wissenbach, ‘Clientelism at work?’, p.10.

¹⁰³ Wissenbach and Wang ‘Local politics meets Chinese engineers’, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Apurva Sanghl and Dylan Conte Johnson (2016), ‘Deal or No Deal. Strictly Business for China in Kenya’, *Policy Research Working Paper*, 7614, World Bank Group, p.35-36; See also “Tax ‘ambush’ threat to SGR as Chinese contractor rejects local cement, steel”, *The East African*, 31 January- 6 February 2015, p.10; “Kenya allocates \$77m to end VAT rail row”, *The East African* 7-13 February 2015, p.5.

¹⁰⁵ Wang and Wissenbach, ‘Clientelism at work?’, p.12.

¹⁰⁶ Wissenbach and Wang, ‘African politics meets Chinese engineers’, p.19.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Babalwa Bungane, “Kenya: Construction of solar farm gets green lights, ESI Africa”, <https://www.esi-africa.com/renewable-energy/kenya-construction-solar-farm-gets-green-light/> (access 24 June 2022)

¹⁰⁹ Babalwa Bungane, “REA approves \$ 1.2 billion for a 55mw solar power project”, <https://www.esi-africa.com/renewable-energy/kenya-rea-approves-1-2bn-for-a-55mw-solar-power-project/> (access 24 June 2022).

¹¹⁰ Solar Magazine, “50MW Photovoltaic power plant project in Kenya: Largest in East Africa”, <https://solarmagazine.com/50mw-photovoltaic-power-plant-project-in-kenya/> (access 25 June 2022).

led to unrealistic expectations of local employment benefits. In reality, during the early construction phase in 2017, only 50 to 70 of the locals were employed on the need basis.¹¹¹ The locals were recruited as masons, carpenters, manual lifters, guards and drivers, and were compensated poorly compared to their Chinese counterparts.¹¹² The locals participated in low-skill works such as putting up the office buildings, perimeter wall, transportation and coordination of equipment on the site.¹¹³

The Chinese supervisors guided the local workers without much verbal communication. The locals were employed as casuals; thus they did not enjoy medical benefits besides lacking wage guarantees. It was reported that “it [was] impossible to get semi-skilled and skilled laborers in Garissa, manual laborers only; semi-skilled [came] from other towns and cities in Kenya”.¹¹⁴ Given that efficiency was key in project completion, CJIC did not want to engage the locals they perceived as lazy, instead relying more on machines.¹¹⁵ For example, JCB digging machines was used to install solar mounting structures during the early phase of the project construction. Fewer employment opportunities compounded with communication challenges caused local protests in mid-2017. It was reported that the local community wondered “why only a hundred laborers, and why not three hundred or more” employed.¹¹⁶ Thus, limited slots available and high technical skills needed for the job frustrated local expectations. But, local politicians were still hopeful that there would be more “formal employment for local people in the operational phase of the project”.¹¹⁷ Given that the CJIC’s work was limited to the construction, KREA managed local employment benefits at operational level.¹¹⁸ It was reported that CJIC trained Kenyans “to do the maintenance and operations of the project but technical work outsourced to a consortium of specialist

¹¹¹ Padmasai Bhamidipati and Ulrich Hansen (2021), “Unpacking local agency in China-Africa relations: Frictional encounters and development outcomes of solar power in Kenya”, *Geoforum*, 119 (2021), pp. 206-2017.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Interview, member of county assembly 27 May 2022.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Interview, REREC 28 May 2022.

engineers”.¹¹⁹ Upon project completion, four Chinese and five Kenyan employees were hired to oversee the operations of the project on contractual terms.¹²⁰ President Kenyatta promulgated the project in December 2019. In conclusion whereas the local expectations were not met, opportunities for formal employment opened at the operational phase.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The above two cases obviously different in their technical nature but is useful to bring the outcome together for the purpose of understanding reasons for variation. It was established that the extent of local engagement in the GSP was greater than in the SGR creating space for the locals to benefits far below what they expected. The variation in the local engagement, benefits and challenges could be attributed to weak institutional regime and political championship.

5.1 Weak Institutional Regime

The projects talks were conducted in an environment of weak institutional regimes or what Bruno Silvestre calls ‘institutional void’,¹²¹ but the void was wider in the case of SGR compared to GSP. To be precise Kenya Railways initial engagement with the SGR came three years after its launch when the MD was requested to provide technical advice on the feasibility study. In the report of feasibility study, Nduva Muli, the Managing Director (MD) of Kenya Railways laments how the corporation was neither involved in developing the terms of references nor engaged in the study as equivalent entity.¹²² In addition, KRC did not have access to progress reports and communication between the Ministry of Transport and CRBC. This institutional void created space for Chinese investors and Kenyan policy elites to bypass key stages of project inception, such as public participation. As such KRC was not in a position to inform the local community about what they expected from project making land acquisition and compensation a nightmare. While in the

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Rebecca Hanlin (2021), ‘Critical Project: Initial Results. *IREC, Working Paper. 4 Report*, Nairobi.

¹²¹ Bruno Silvestre (2015), “Sustainable supply chain management in emerging economies: Environmental turbulence, institutional voids and sustainability trajectories”, *International Journal of Production Economics*, 167, pp. 156–169.

¹²² Report on CRBC’s feasibility study MSA-NRB railway project: Comments by Kenya Railways, letter from Nduva Muli, managing director of KRC, to Cyrus Njiru, permanent secretary of ministry of transport, 4 April 2011.

GSP, although REA was on the periphery during the initial engagement between the Government of China's Jiangxi province and Kenya's Ministry of Energy, KREA had access to progress reports and communication between the MoE and the Chinese province.¹²³ Consequently, when the project started, KREA had adequate information to persuade the locals about the importance of the project.

Although the relay of the information somehow worked against KREA, as the locals became aware of the projects and increasing their expectations, it contributed to the project's buy in, thereby lowering opposition from the locals on controversial issues like land acquisition and compensation.

5.2 Political Championship

The analysis also suggests the role of presidential championing- “the actions of individuals in top political positions who endeavor to overcome or circumvent the obstacles that frustrate the efforts of other actors in the delivery of public goods”¹²⁴- for a project significantly influenced local engagement and resultant benefits. Discussion around the two projects happen almost around the same time. As conceived, the projects were expected to contribute to Kenya's economic growth. However, President Kenyatta paid more attention on the SGR compared to GSP. It took three years for GSP to begin construction after the completion of the feasibility study.¹²⁵ However things were different in the case of the SGR. During Kenyatta's initial visit to the SGR construction site he reviewed completion timeline from 60 to 32 months.¹²⁶ Construction began in December 2014 and shortly visited sections 3 and 6 in January 2015. He later signed KRC's visitor book, noting “keep up the good work. Let's all ensure we complete the works on time by June 2017”.¹²⁷ The project was completed on 31 May 2017 and passenger service began on 1 June 2017. Fast-tracking of the SGR was driven by election scheduled in August 2017. The completion deadline was fixed at two months to 8 August 2017, the election day, when Kenyatta asked Kenyans to renew his presidential

¹²³ Interview, REREC 28 May 2022.

¹²⁴ Oran R. Young (1991), “Political Leadership and Regime Formation: On the Development of Institutions in International Society,” *International Organisation*, 45, pp, 281-308

¹²⁵ Interview, Rural Electrification Agency, 23 May 2022.

¹²⁶ Duncan Miriri, “Kenya Inaugurates Chinese-built Railway Linking Port to Capital,” *Reuters*, May 31, 2017.

¹²⁷ China Road and Bridge Corporation, Social Responsibility Report 2016 on Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway Project (CRBC, 2016).

contract. Before election, to cement his first term performance, Kenyatta was interested in delivering the largest infrastructure project since the country attained independence in 1963. Launching the SGR a few days before the official campaign period, Kenyatta used the SGR as a campaign tool. Raila Odinga- the opposition leader cautioned Kenyatta against using “the SGR as a campaign agenda...[the] project is for Kenyans”.¹²⁸ The corollary of political championship was that the interests of the locals were not adequately addressed. The executive ignored court injunctions that sought to address injustice felt by the locals in various locations. Lack of political championship in the case of GSP caused delay in its completion, though the extent of the local engagement was greater compared to the SGR.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Arising from the findings and conclusion, the paper makes three pertinent policy recommendations:

- The new government should immediately enact the Local Content Bill 2018 to maximize possible transfer of capacity and knowledge from Chinese firms to Kenya firms in local systems of production. In addition, if the above Bill is enacted, regulations should be formulated to guide strategies that would target opportunities in the course of project implementation. In the past, there have been too much attention directed at completing the project as opposed to processes. A laissez-faire approach through which the two projects were implemented constrained local jobs, local suppliers and literally no engagement with a local research institute or university. Being pioneering projects in their sub-sectors, KRC and KREA missed the opportunities to transfer skills and knowledge and strengthen the linkages of local industries.
- In the context of macroeconomic policy framework, the current government should strengthen tax laws to enable local firms compete fairly with their Chinese counterparts.

¹²⁸ Rawlings Otieno, “Raila: We will jail those who inflated SGR Cost,” *The Standard*, May 31, 2017.

- Require all loan contracts for major infrastructure projects to be publicly disclosed and included in a publicly accessible database.
- Design robust protocols that reflect future commercial value of land, to ensure fair and inclusive land acquisition and relocation processes.
- Include civil society and community representatives in project planning processes from the inception stage, in order to avoid protests and other delays mid-way through the project timeline.

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NYA MBESSA MERLIN BRICE - CORA_AFRICACHINA

L'EXPLOITATION MINIERE CAMEROUNAISE A VISAGE CHINOIS: LE CAS DE LA COMMUNE DE KAMBELE.



Source : M. B. M. Nya

RESUME

Le Cameroun est doté d'importantes ressources naturelles encore largement sous-exploitées c'est-à-dire 40% comme le cobalt, l'oxyde de zinc, le diamant et l'or notamment. Avec une grande volonté du gouvernement de libéraliser le secteur minier dans les années 2000 qui en a fait un pilier stratégique pour l'atteinte de ses objectifs de développement à l'horizon 2035, on assistera à une ruée de nombreux industriels dans les zones à fort potentiel miniers du pays. Le présent article qui porte sur l'exploitation minière camerounaise à visage chinois à Kambélé vise à faire ressortir le rôle des acteurs locaux pour le renforcement de la présence des exploitants chinois dans la commune susmentionnée. S'appuyant sur une approche qualitative et construit autour des théories comme l'interaction stratégique et le transnationalisme, il apparaît que la communauté riveraine ne bénéficie pas des retombées de la rente minière.

Mots clés : Kambélé, exploitation minière, Cameroun, Chine.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Logé au fond du Golfe de Guinée, le Cameroun est un pays riche en ressources aussi bien humaines que naturelles et minières¹²⁹. Ces dernières, ont fait de lui l'objet de convoitises de plusieurs nations "Emergentes" parmi lesquelles la Chine. Ainsi, il est à noter que malgré l'établissement formel des relations sino-camerounaises en mars 1971, ce n'est qu'à partir de 1999, lors de la réunion inter-agences à Pékin qu'une stratégie (*zouchuqu* littéralement "aller dehors") a été mise en place pour renforcer et diversifier la présence croissante des entreprises chinoises sur le continent africain présentant des opportunités adaptées aux besoins et savoir-faire chinois¹³⁰. Coïncidant avec l'engagement pris par l'Etat camerounais au début de l'an 2000 de reformer sa politique minière dans l'optique de faire de ce secteur le pilier de l'économie camerounaise des prochaines décennies, et, plus tard en 2007, à l'occasion de la visite d'Etat du dirigeant chinois Hu Jintao, P. Biya, pour attirer les investisseurs chinois déclara :

« C'est donc pour moi, une fois de plus, comme je l'ai fait en janvier dernier à Beijing, l'occasion d'inviter, à travers vous, les sociétés chinoises à venir nombreuses investir au Cameroun. Je pense notamment aux hydrocarbures et à l'exploitation minière, qu'il s'agisse du pétrole, du gaz ou de minerais¹³¹. »

L'on assistera alors au déploiement des entreprises minières chinoises¹³² avec une multiplication des projets d'exploration et de production dans les principales zones à fort potentiel minier du pays¹³³. Notre étude qui s'est déroulée de mai 2022 à mai 2023, couvre la région de l'Est et précisément la localité de Kambélé dont le potentiel aurifère a été estimé à 100 tonnes d'or, de

¹²⁹ Le pétrole estimé à 200 millions de baril, les ressources forestières de haute qualité environ 22 millions d'hectares, 300 essences dont au moins 70 sont exploitables et des produits agricoles d'exportation (cacao, coton, café, caoutchouc, bananes, tabac, huile de palme, ananas, thé, etc.). Le pays détient également des réserves encore peu exploitées de gaz naturel (réserves estimées à 135.1 milliards cu m), de minerai de fer, de bauxite, de cobalt, d'oxyde de zinc, d'or et de diamants, plus de détails sur : A. Smith, *Evaluation stratégique environnementale et sociale du secteur minier au Cameroun*, Londres, Adam Smith International, document principal Tome 1, janvier 2016.

¹³⁰ F. S. Diaby, "Les stratégies des entreprises chinoises en Afrique : quels objectifs, quelle coopération ?", Thèse de doctorat/ph.D en Sciences Economiques, Université de Nice Sophia Antipolis, Juin 2014.

¹³¹ *Cameroun Tribune*, Yaoundé, N° 8780/4980, mercredi 02 février 2007, p. 3.

¹³² Cf. annexe 1.

¹³³ Précisément des régions de l'Est, du Sud, du Centre, du Nord et de l'Adamaoua.

diamant et de pierres gemmes¹³⁴, où sont installées ces sociétés. Ce qui, confirme l'idée selon laquelle s'il existe une notion omniprésente dans les rapports interétatiques, c'est bien celle de l'intérêt qui est à sauvegarder et plus loin, comme l'a si bien souligné Guy Carron de la Carrière: "la principale matière première des relations internationales est visiblement devenue économique"¹³⁵.

Bien qu'à Kambélé l'exploitation minière chinoise soit assez récente et ne cesse de s'intensifier, elle provoque des controverses, notamment par rapport au trafic d'influence des opérateurs chinois sur les administrateurs sectoriels (et bien au-delà) du Ministère des Mines et des populations locales, la paupérisation ambiante des riverains, les rapports tendus entre mineurs à petite échelle et entrepreneurs miniers chinois. Cependant, l'Etat camerounais dans son partenariat avec la Chine a incité cette dernière à lui octroyer des prêts et à financer les projets miniers.

Le but de ce travail est de montrer que la percée des opérateurs miniers chinois dans cette cité aurifère est le fait des autorités nationales et locales¹³⁶. Ainsi, ledit sujet pose le problème du rôle des élites servant d'intermédiaires drainant des ressources chinoises (humaines, matérielles et financières) pour l'exploitation du potentiel minier de Kambélé. Ainsi la question principale qui guide cette réflexion peut être posée : comment les acteurs nationaux et locaux participent-ils au renforcement de la présence d'entrepreneurs miniers chinois à Kambélé ? De celle-ci, découlent d'autres interrogations subsidiaires: Quel est le dispositif juridico-institutionnel qui régit l'activité minière au Cameroun ? Dans quelle mesure peut-on affirmer que les sociétés minières chinoises qui exercent à Kambélé contribuent à son développement économique et social ? Mieux encore, leurs actions sont-elles conformes avec la Responsabilité Sociale des Entreprises (RSE) et donc les exigences du contenu local ? L'autorité et les populations locales sont-elles simples spectatrices du non-respect de la législation camerounaise en matière d'exploitation minière

¹³⁴ E. E. Fouda, *Transparence et fraude environnementale dans le secteur minier au Cameroun : Cas de l'exploitation artisanale semi-mécanisée à l'Est et dans l'Adamaoua*, Cameroun, Publish What You Pay, juin 2019, p. 18.

¹³⁵ C. D. L. C. Guy, "Omniprésence économique", in, B. Dario, C. Ariel, C. Frédéric (dir) et al (eds), *Politique étrangère : nouveaux regards*, Paris, PFNSP, 2002, p. 243.

¹³⁶ Elites politique, administrative, financière ou autorités traditionnelles qui se retrouvent généralement membres du parti au pouvoir.

commis par les investisseurs chinois ?, Enfin, comment peut-on améliorer la gestion de cette activité à Kambélé qui est le reflet de celle qui se déroule dans les autres localités du pays ?.

L'approche qualitative basée sur des entretiens, la collecte, la confrontation, l'analyse et l'interprétation des diverses sources durant l'enquête participative permettra de clarifier ces interrogations.

De plus, l'interaction stratégique permet de comprendre les relations entre les autorités nationales ou élites locales et opérateurs miniers chinois qui sont interdépendants. Elle met un point d'honneur sur les relations de pouvoir d'influence et de comportement stratégique qu'adopte chaque agent pour la concrétisation de ses objectifs à Kambélé.

A cette dernière, a été joint le transnationalisme qui, quant-à lui, favorise la maîtrise de l'importance des forces transnationales (entrepreneurs et opérateurs miniers chinois) dans le processus de renforcement de la coopération sino-camerounaise.

La littérature existante sur l'exploitation minière au Cameroun, révèle des spécimens importants parmi lesquels le code minier¹³⁷ et le document sur la Stratégie Nationale de développement qui représentent deux référents de vision technique et politique. Le premier faisant office de loi, réglemente à travers ses dispositions l'activité minière sur toute l'étendue du territoire de la République du Cameroun. Le deuxième quant-à lui, retrace les lignes directrices devant orienter les efforts de développement pour l'atteinte des objectifs fixés dans la Vision 2035. Pour ce faire, le gouvernement a parié sur le secteur minier en mettant en œuvre les grands projets d'extraction de première génération qui visent à transformer le Cameroun en un des plus importants pays miniers d'Afrique à travers la production, la transformation et la commercialisation de ses ressources minières.

Lingfei Wang, Dominique Endamana et al¹³⁸ ont proposé une réflexion sur l'expansion des investissements asiatiques dans l'exploitation artisanale minière et à petite échelle précisément dans la vallée de la rivière Lom à proximité de la ville de Bétaré-Oya. Il en est ressorti que sur les huit entreprises présentes sur le site, la Chine en détient la majorité avec quatre, la Corée deux et

¹³⁷ Loi n°2016/017 du 14 décembre 2016, portant code minier.

¹³⁸ L. Wang (dir), D. Endamana et al (eds), "Investissement asiatique dans les mines artisanales et à petite échelle au Cameroun rural", [En ligne], consulté le 14 août 2022 à 12h, disponible sur : <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2014.07.011>.

le Cameroun deux¹³⁹ également. Ils ont constaté que les entreprises coréennes contrairement aux chinoises forment plus d'employés locaux et que leurs populations étaient mal intégrées aux communautés africaines locales. Ils vivent dans des enclaves, s'approvisionnent de l'extérieur et dépensent très peu d'argent pour les produits locaux¹⁴⁰. Diderot Nguépjou¹⁴¹ de son côté, après avoir parcouru les déterminants de la coopération sino-camerounaise, relève que la Chine est passée du simple statut d'acteur diplomatique périphérique à celui d'influent déclassant ainsi certains partenaires traditionnels dans les affaires d'Etat. Il attribue ce succès à l'intense activité diplomatique et à l'important engagement économique chinois au Cameroun qui est multisectoriel partant du commerce à la santé en passant par les infrastructures et la culture pour aboutir dans le secteur minier. L'auteur avance que la pénétration chinoise dans le champ minier camerounais pourra changer sa dynamique ; et préconise que le Cameroun introduise des investissements durables pour les communautés affectées afin de compenser les pertes et améliorer le niveau de vie¹⁴², et ceci pour endiguer les risques de conflits au niveau local.

En outre, pour Eric Voundi¹⁴³ les divergences de points de vue sur l'extractivisme, les enjeux de développement local, et, les tensions sur les externalités nocives et les problèmes de l'exploitation minière sont les trois focales qui provoquent les controverses et entachent le secteur minier à l'Est-Cameroun. L'auteur constate également que l'extractivisme minier dans la région ci-dessus mentionnée est marquée par l'artisanat minier massif et informel¹⁴⁴. Toutefois, il conclut que pour parvenir à un développement paisible des communautés locales dans le sillage de l'exploitation minière à l'Est du pays, il est important d'appliquer la transparence autant dans l'exploitation minière que dans la gestion des conflits entre parties prenantes, procéder à la répartition juste des retombées de l'exploitation minière et de l'atténuation des impacts environnementaux négatifs.

¹³⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁴¹ D. Nguépjou, "La spatialisation de la présence chinoise au Cameroun : le cas du secteur minier", [En ligne], consulter le 18 août 2022 à 10h56 min, disponible sur : <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2017.06.004> 2214-790X/.

¹⁴² Ibidem.

¹⁴³ E. Voundi, "Extractivisme minier dans l'Est-Cameroun et controverses socio-environnementales : quelles perspectives pour un développement paisible des communautés locales ?", *Revue Belge de Géographie*, N°2, 2021.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

D'après le rapport final de mars 2020 le principal minerais exploité au Cameroun est l'or¹⁴⁵. Afin de renforcer les capacités institutionnelles et l'intégration de l'exploitation minière dans le développement local et régional, ainsi que l'amélioration de la contribution du secteur minier au développement durable, le rapport recommande un groupement associatif qui porte ses intérêts et préoccupations devant l'administration¹⁴⁶. De même, la répartition des revenus miniers devrait être effectuée sur la base du principe de péréquation afin de garantir le respect du principe constitutionnel de solidarité nationale et favoriser l'égalité entre les Collectivités Territoriales Décentralisées, ce qui permettrait la prise en compte des régions dans la politique de développement du secteur minier¹⁴⁷. Par ailleurs, la mission ayant réalisé le rapport mentionne l'irrégularité ou l'absence de redistribution de la quote-part des revenus miniers revenant aux populations locales et les difficultés de monétisation de l'or collecté¹⁴⁸ comme obstacles ne favorisant pas leur épanouissement.

Subséquentement, en 2019, le secteur extractif a généré pour l'Etat des revenus budgétaires de 703,91 milliards de FCFA (1 199,23 millions d'USD) contre 568,32 milliards de FCFA en 2018, soit une hausse de 23,86% expliquée principalement par l'augmentation en 2019 des transferts de la SNH-Mandat au Trésor public et de l'Impôt sur les Sociétés¹⁴⁹. Ce rapport ITIE rappelle que le Trésor public continue d'avoir le monopole sur le recouvrement de toutes les recettes de l'Etat, et que les paiements directs infranationaux au sens de l'exigence 4.6 de la norme ITIE ne sont pas applicables dans le contexte du secteur extractif au Cameroun¹⁵⁰. Avec l'apparition de la Covid-19, sur le plan de la production, le Cameroun n'a pas enregistré de variation significative avec 26,6 millions de barils produits en 2020 contre 26 millions de baril en 2019¹⁵¹.

Enfin, Aurélie Mokam et Cyrille Tsikam¹⁵², dans leur étude d'impact de l'exploitation aurifère sur la population de Kambélé, ont noté que plus de 66% de celle-ci dépend économiquement de

¹⁴⁵ PRECASEM, Etude relative à l'élaboration d'un cadre d'utilisation des revenus miniers et des carrières au niveau local, Rapport final, Yaoundé, mars 2020, p. 314.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 122-126.

¹⁴⁹ République du Cameroun, Rapport ITIE 2019, novembre 2021, p. 20.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁵² A. Mokam, C. Tsikam, "L'impact de l'exploitation artisanale de l'or sur les populations de Kambélé, région de l'Est Cameroun", [en ligne], consulter le 09 juin 2022 à 23h31 min, Disponible sur : <https://ucac-icy.net>.

l'orpaillage. Cependant, si pour la grande majorité des personnes interviewées, cette activité permet une certaine auto-indépendance financière le gain journalier variant de 17000 à 34000 FCFA¹⁵³ ; il n'en est pas de même sur le plan sanitaire car elles souffrent fréquemment d'hernie, de paludisme, de pneumonie, ou de maladies de la peau etc. Ceci ramène ainsi le taux d'impacts négatifs à 86% et ceux positifs à 18%¹⁵⁴. Au regard de ce sombre panorama, les auteurs proposent aux différents acteurs clés de la chaîne minière de Kambélé une série de mesures pouvant favoriser l'amélioration des conditions de vie et de travail des orpailleurs.

De ces différents rapports, se dégagent deux tendances : l'une qui remet en question les politiques de gouvernance dans l'exploitation minière dans la région de l'Est-Cameroun compte tenu de l'impact positif mineur qu'elle engrange pour les populations locales, et, l'autre qui renforce l'idée selon laquelle la présence asiatique, en occurrence chinoise, dans les sites miniers du Cameroun est déterminée par l'acteur chinois négligeant par-là la capacité d'action des autorités nationales. Cet article se démarque de la littérature existante dans la mesure où il s'inscrit dans la littérature naissante sur l'agence africaine et les relations avec la Chine¹⁵⁵. Autrement dit, il analyse la mécanique utilisée par les élites locales dans l'objectif d'attirer les opérateurs miniers chinois à Kambélé pour capter la rente des ressources de l'exploitation minière et met en avant quelques traits de contestations observés lorsque les seconds font fi du cadre normatif qui régit les activités aurifères nationales.

Ainsi, l'étude est répartie en quatre axes principaux dont le premier porte sur une analyse du cadre juridique et institutionnel du secteur extractif du Cameroun. Le deuxième axe se penche sur l'instrumentalisation dudit cadre par les autorités nationales et élites locales qui naviguent entre illégalité et légalité pour la sédentarisation des entreprises minières chinoises à Kambélé. Le troisième axe aborde les effets de ces exploitants miniers chinois et les réactions qu'ils ont engendrées dans la localité ci-dessus mentionnée. Enfin, le quatrième axe apporte des perspectives et recommandations pour une approche qui prend en considération aussi bien les intérêts des entités infranationales que nationales.

¹⁵³ Représentant le prix d'un gramme d'or.

¹⁵⁴ Mokam, Tsikam, "L'impact de l'exploitation...".

¹⁵⁵ C. Alden, O. M. Otele, "Intégrer la Chine à : l'élite locale. Collusion et contestation sur le long du chemin de fer à voie standard du Kenya", *African Affairs*, Vol. 121, N°484, juillet 2022, p. 444.

I- ANALYSE DU CADRE JURIDIQUE ET INSTITUTIONNEL REGISSANT L'EXPLOITATION MINIERE AU CAMEROUN

Au Cameroun, l'extraction minière est pratiquée dans un cadre prescrit à travers une législation approfondie du régime juridique (1) accompagnée d'un cadre institutionnel (2) que l'on se propose d'analyser dans cette première grande articulation.

1- Une législation approfondie du régime juridique

Elle repose sur plusieurs éléments dont les plus importants sont : le code minier, la loi cadre relative à la gestion de l'environnement, et les conventions internationales auxquelles le Cameroun s'est arrimé pour une gestion transparente de son secteur extractif.

a- Le code minier

Par le passé, il a fait l'objet de plusieurs modifications d'abord avec la Loi fédérale n° 64/LF/3 du 06 avril 1964 portant régime des substances minérales¹⁵⁶, ensuite celle n° 78/24 du 29 décembre 1978 fixant l'assiette, le taux et le mode de recouvrement des droits fixes, redevances et taxes minières¹⁵⁷, puis, en 2001 via la publication du premier code minier et de sa révision en 2010, pour enfin aboutir à la promulgation de la Loi n° 2016/017 du 14 décembre 2016 portant code minier. Composé de 242 articles, l'actuel code minier a pour objectif central la mise en avant de l'attractivité du secteur minier camerounais. Il est distinctement évoqué par ses dispositions générales qui précisent à l'article 2 que la loi minière vise à favoriser, à encourager et à promouvoir les investissements dans le secteur minier susceptibles de contribuer au développement économique et social du pays¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁶ P. Keubou, "Lecture juridique du nouveau code minier camerounais promulgué par le Chef de l'Etat le 14 décembre 2016 : dispositions différentes de l'ancien code minier, mécanismes de collecte des taxes et redistribution de la valeur ajoutée", [En ligne], consulté le 07 novembre 2022 à 13h56 min, disponible sur : <https://fr.slideshare.net>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁵⁸ Loi n°2016/017...

En outre, l'on comprend qu'elle n'impose aucune restriction pour les investissements étrangers qui sont traités au même titre que les investissements locaux à l'exception de l'activité artisanale qui est réservée aux personnes de nationalité camerounaise¹⁵⁹. Ce choix s'est avéré payant au regard de la pléthore d'entreprises chinoises qui se sont installées dans le pays.

Au demeurant, la nouvelle loi minière contrairement aux précédentes s'inscrit dans le sillage de la modernité. Cela est perceptible à travers les innovations observées dans les conditions d'exercice de l'activité minière, les sanctions du non-respect de ces conditions et enfin le mécanisme de collecte des taxes et de redistribution de la valeur ajoutée¹⁶⁰. Par contre, l'absence de son décret d'application six ans après auxquelles dépendent 90 dispositions¹⁶¹ crée un vide juridique.

b- La loi N°96/12 du 5 août 1996

D'après son article 1^{er}, elle fixe le cadre juridique général de la gestion de l'environnement au Cameroun¹⁶². Ceci démontre en rapport avec le secteur extractif que le législateur prend en considération de ses externalités environnementales et, à cet égard, le préambule de la Constitution camerounaise dispose que toute personne a droit à un environnement sain et que la protection de l'environnement est un devoir pour tous. L'Etat tente ainsi de communiquer sa préoccupation pour la défense et à la promotion de l'environnement¹⁶³.

La loi de 96 souligne ainsi dans son article 67 (1) que « l'exploration et l'exploitation des ressources minières et des carrières doivent se faire d'une façon écologiquement rationnelle prenant en compte les considérations environnementales », et dans son article 37 (1) que « les titulaires de titres miniers ou de titres de carrières sont tenus à l'obligation de remettre en l'état les sites exploités »¹⁶⁴. En effet, le principe posé en cette matière par le législateur est que toute activité

¹⁵⁹ République du Cameroun, Rapport ITIE..., p. 51.

¹⁶⁰ Keubou, "Lecture juridique du...".

¹⁶¹ L. Himbé, "Le nouveau code minier camerounais, au cœur des standards de la gouvernance extractive contemporaine", [En ligne], consulter le 10 novembre 2022 à 21h59 min, Disponible sur : <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr>.

¹⁶² Loi n°96/12 du 05 août 1996, portant loi-cadre relative à la gestion de l'environnement.

¹⁶³ PRECASEM, Etude relative à l'élaboration d'un cadre d'utilisation des revenus miniers et des carrières au..., p. 34.

¹⁶⁴ Loi n°96/...

minière et des carrières doit respecter la législation et la réglementation en matière de protection et de gestion durable de l'environnement¹⁶⁵.

Tous contrevenants s'exposent de fait à un régime de sanctions consignées au sein du Titre VI de la responsabilité et des sanctions de ladite loi. Toutefois, il est observable qu'il n'existe pas de cadre permettant d'aborder les impacts environnementaux et sociaux au niveau stratégique et au-delà des frontières. Le cadre de référence utilisé devient alors celui imposé par les instances internationales, comme les politiques de la SFI-Banque Mondiale (principes de l'Equateur, OP-BP), ou comme les sauvegardes proposées par nombre d'ONG environnementales internationales¹⁶⁶.

c- Les conventions internationales

La production internationale des cadres de transparence minière est structurée par une longue tradition de controverses internationales autour de la gestion des revenus publics provenant des industries extractives. Les guerres civiles du Liberia de 1990 à 1997 et de la Sierra Leone de 1991 à 2002 servent alors à aiguillonner ces controverses internationales au cours desquelles on estime que la mauvaise gestion des revenus de l'exploitation minière entraînerait non seulement un manque à gagner et un manque à développer dans les États producteurs, mais aussi l'instabilité, l'insécurité, la corruption, les guerres civiles¹⁶⁷.

Ainsi, l'intégration des conventions internationales au sein de l'espace national camerounais¹⁶⁸ est synonyme d'affiliation du pays au système international de normes, de règles et de modèles de comportement articulés autour de la transparence dans la production et la commercialisation de produits miniers¹⁶⁹. Elle aura comme résultat l'adhésion du Cameroun à l'Initiative de Transparence sur les Industries Extractives (ITIE)¹⁷⁰ en 2005 et il obtiendra le 17 juin 2013 le

¹⁶⁵ PRECASEM, Etude relative à l'élaboration d'un..., p. 34.

¹⁶⁶ Smith, *Evaluation stratégique environnementale et sociale...*, p. 80.

¹⁶⁷ J. C. Keutcheu, "La transparence minière sur scène au Cameroun", in J. C. Ngnintedem, M. Ngaido, C. Krolik (dir) et al (eds), *La transparence des industries extractives en Afrique*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2021, p. 63.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁷⁰ Qui est une norme internationale qui promeut la publication des paiements, des contrats et de la propriété réelle en matière extractive tout en instaurant une gouvernance tripartite Etat-sociétés minières et société civile.

statut de pays conforme, son engagement à la Vision Minière Africaine¹⁷¹ ou au *Dodd Franck Act*¹⁷², et, son intégration au processus de Kimberley¹⁷³ en 2012 entre autres.

Il serait fastidieux de faire étalage de l'ensemble de l'arsenal juridique sur lequel est bâti le secteur des mines du Cameroun. L'essentiel est dans la certitude qu'ont les institutions en charge de ce domaine que, son développement passera par l'application et le respect des lois mises sur pied par le législateur.

2- Les institutions

L'industrie minière du Cameroun est supervisée par diverses institutions qui peuvent être regroupées en deux catégories, à savoir, les acteurs étatiques et non-étatiques qui, assument ses fonctions à son niveau de compétences respectif.

a- Les acteurs étatiques

Le Ministère des Mines, de l'Industrie et du Développement Technologique (MINMIDT), le Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la Nature et du Développement Durable (MINEPDED), le Ministère des Finances (MINFI), le Ministère de la Défense (MINDEF) et la Société Nationales des Mines (SONAMINES) sont quelques structures qui représentent l'Etat du Cameroun dans la filière de commercialisation de l'or et du diamant.

❖ Le MINMIDT

¹⁷¹ Document de politique publique africaine adopté en février 2009 à Addis-Abeba lors du Sommet des Chefs d'Etats de l'Union Africaine. Il a pour but l'exploitation équitable et optimale des ressources minières en vue d'une large croissance durable et d'un développement socioéconomique soutenu

¹⁷² Loi cadre-américaine votée en 2010 et entrée en vigueur en 2012 sous la présidence de Barack Obama. Elle oblige les entreprises minières et pétrolières cotées à New York de publier les sommes qu'elles versent aux gouvernements des pays où elles opèrent mais aussi à préciser si leurs produits proviennent des minerais de conflits. Plus d'informations disponibles sur : <https://www.novethic.fr>.

¹⁷³ Régime international de certification des diamants bruts, qui réunit gouvernements et industriels du diamant, dont l'objectif est d'éviter de négocier sur le marché mondial, l'achat des diamants présentés par des mouvements rebelles dans le but de financer leurs activités. Il a été signé en 2003 par le Canada, les Etats-Unis et l'Union Européenne.

Il est l'autorité principale de la gestion du secteur minier. Le texte l'instituant lui confère les missions de mise en œuvre de la stratégie du gouvernement, d'organisation et de supervision des activités des équipes de contrôle minier, de contrôle du respect de la réglementation relative aux activités minières, du contrôle du respect des clauses des cahiers de charge par les opérateurs miniers, en liaison avec les administrations et organismes concernés¹⁷⁴.

Il est composé de structures qui sont directement sous son autorité comme la Direction des Mines, la Brigade Nationale de Contrôle des activités minières, et la Sous-direction du cadastre minier qui, par leurs missions¹⁷⁵, confortent le MINMIDT en tant que coordonnateur prépondérant du secteur tout en réduisant les autres ministères et organismes¹⁷⁶ légalement impliqués au rang de simples observateurs dotés d'un rôle purement accessoire.

En retour, il a été observé que l'étendue de ses pouvoirs est limitée par ceux de l'exécutif qui, s'arroge le droit de l'avis conforme que doit suivre le ministre des Mines lorsqu'il s'agit de l'attribution de l'autorisation d'exploitation artisanale semi-mécanisée des substances précieuses et semi-précieuses, ou encore, de celle concernant le permis d'exploitation de la mine industrielle qui en est son exclusivité¹⁷⁷. Autrement dit, c'est la Présidence de la République qui a le contrôle de l'industrie extractive au Cameroun.

❖ **Le MINEPDED**

Il est en charge des questions environnementales, y compris de l'examen des rapports d'étude d'impact environnemental et social (EIES) et de plan de gestion environnemental et spécifique (PGES) présentées par les promoteurs de projets, tous secteurs confondus. Ainsi, le MINEPDED est un acteur clé du secteur minier, du fait qu'il préside un comité interministériel d'examen d'EIES, PGES et autres informations environnementales soumises par les promoteurs de projets,

¹⁷⁴ Décret n°2012/432 du 01 octobre 2012, portant organisation du Ministère des Mines, de l'Industrie et du Développement Technologique.

¹⁷⁵ Plus de données sur : S. Pennes et Y. B. Alvarez et al (eds), *Etude sur les filières de commercialisation de l'or et du diamant au Cameroun*, PRECASEM, Rapport final, Septembre 2021, pp. 19-20.

¹⁷⁶ Le cas le plus récent a été l'annulation trois jours seulement après la signature du Mémorandum d'Entente du 18 juillet 2022 entre la SONAMINES et la China Railway N°5 Engineering Group Co. Ltd (CREG 5).

¹⁷⁷ Voir à propos les articles 27, alinéa 2 et 55, alinéa 1 du code minier de 2016.

qu'il délivre des certificats de conformité, et qu'il est responsable du contrôle de la mise en œuvre des PGES¹⁷⁸.

Ce département ministériel est donc mis à rude épreuve au regard du développement des activités minières¹⁷⁹ qui risquent d'infliger des dommages considérables au milieu naturel camerounais.

Même si à ce jour, l'unique lien entre le ministère de l'Environnement et celui de l'industrie minière à grande échelle reste l'évaluation des incidences environnementales et l'approbation des plans de gestion des grands projets¹⁸⁰ ; il n'en demeure pas moins que les ressources qui lui sont allouées pour le suivi des conformités environnementales sont modiques et qu'il subit en fin de compte la pression de l'exécutif pour ne pas freiner l'avancement de projets miniers à valeur économique élevée pour le pays¹⁸¹.

❖ Le MINFI

Avec ses administrations déconcentrées telles que la douane et surtout le service des impôts, ce ministère a dès à présent acquis tous les pouvoirs en ce qui concerne la fiscalité minière. Cela est clairement mentionné dans le nouveau code général des impôts en ces termes : l'assiette, le recouvrement et le contrôle des impôts, taxes et redevances du secteur minier relèvent de la compétence de l'administration fiscale¹⁸².

En 2017, après qu'il ait constitué des stocks souverains d'or reçus du Cadre d'Appui et de Promotion de l'Artisanat Minier par la filière de canalisation et par le prélèvement à la source des opérations semi-mécanisées au titre de l'impôt synthétique libérateur¹⁸³, il a permis au Cameroun de disposer au sein de la Banque des Etats d'Afrique Centrale un stock estimé à 29.954 onces d'or,

¹⁷⁸ Smith, *Evaluation stratégique et environnementale...*, p. 70.

¹⁷⁹ Projet d'exploitation de la petite mine d'or à Mborguéné à l'Est-Cameroun, l'exploitation industrielle du minerai de fer de Lobe dans la région du Sud, les projets miniers et d'industries de Ngaoundal et Makan dans l'Adamaoua, l'exploitation du gisement de fer de Mbalam etc.

¹⁸⁰ Smith, *Evaluation stratégique...*, p. 66.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., P. 70.

¹⁸² Voir article 239.

¹⁸³ PRECASEM, Etude relative à l'élaboration..., p. 22.

d'une valeur de 21 milliards Fcfa¹⁸⁴. Il est utile pour pallier les situations extrêmes au cas où la monnaie papier peut ne pas être acceptée¹⁸⁵.

Par ailleurs, il est adressé comme griefs au MINFI le fait de ne pas prendre en compte les réalités nationale et régionale lorsqu'il s'agit de fixer le prix de l'or ou celui des taxes d'exportation applicables aux minerais qui sont plus élevées (5,45% pour l'or, 20,50% pour le diamant) que dans certains pays comme la République Centrafricaine (2,25% pour l'or, 4% pour le diamant) et la République du Congo (2% pour l'or, 4% pour le diamant)¹⁸⁶. C'est ce qui justifie que les conditions financières applicables à la chaîne de commercialisation ne sont pas toujours acceptées par tous, y compris au sein de l'administration minière¹⁸⁷.

❖ **Le MINDEF**

Au-delà du défi sécuritaire que causent les incursions des rebelles centrafricains à répétition dans la région de l'Est¹⁸⁸, la présence des éléments de l'armée (militaires et gendarmes) précisément dans les sites miniers du Cameroun se justifie aussi par le partenariat signé entre le MINMIDT, la Gendarmerie Nationale et le Cadre d'appui à la Promotion de l'Artisanat Minier au sujet de l'opération sauvetage de l'or signé en octobre 2007¹⁸⁹.

Dès cet instant, ils ont eu pour missions officielles de constituer un appui sécuritaire permanent au CAPAM et à ses Brigades Minières sur le terrain, rechercher les trafiquants, les identifier et constater leurs infractions conformément à la loi, assurer la sécurité notamment des acteurs et des produits miniers au niveau des postes miniers, sécuriser le transport des fonds et des substances minérales précieuses des différents points d'approvisionnement jusqu'aux points de destination,

¹⁸⁴ S. Andzongo, "Le Cameroun dispose d'un stock de près de 30.000 onces d'or sur total d'environ 202.000 onces à la BEAC", [En ligne], consulter le 17 novembre 2022 à 04h39 min, Disponible sur : <https://www.investiraucameroun.com>.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁶ PRECASEM, Etude relative à..., p. 36.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁸⁸ BRM, "Des rebelles centrafricains font monter l'insécurité dans la région de l'Est-Cameroun", [En ligne], consulter le 19 novembre 2022 à 22h32 min, disponible sur : <https://www.investiraucameroun.com>.

¹⁸⁹ Entretien avec Voundi Eric, 35 ans, Chargé de Cours à l'Ecole Normale de Bertoua filière Géographie.

concourir à la sécurisation de la production minière issue de la mécanisation plus poussée de l'artisanat minier dans le cadre des comités de sécurisation ad hoc¹⁹⁰.

Mais, il a été observé que ces derniers sont impliqués de manière officieuse dans le trafic illégal de l'or avec les orpailleurs qu'ils laissent clandestinement s'infiltrer dans les chantiers miniers moyennant une contrepartie¹⁹¹. Cela met en lumière les mauvaises pratiques courantes au sein de l'industrie extractive camerounaise qui démontrent que l'Etat camerounais est peine à tenir les promesses faites concernant la gestion transparente de ce secteur.

❖ La SONAMINES

Elle a été créée par le décret présidentiel n°2020/749 du 14 décembre 2020¹⁹² avec comme autorité tutélaire le Ministère des Mines (l'article 5 du décret susmentionné). Ses missions sont de réaliser l'inventaire des indices miniers, de participer aux négociations et au suivi de l'exécution des contrats passés entre l'Etat et les sociétés minières, et de réaliser toutes les opérations commerciales, industrielles, mobilières, immobilières et financières qui se rattachent, directement ou indirectement, à son objet social ou de nature à favoriser son développement¹⁹³ entre autres.

En deux années d'activités, la SONAMINES a déjà conclu deux conventions de partage de production avec les Cimenteries du Cameroun pour l'exploitation du calcaire de Figuil et le développement de leur nouvelle usine de production de *clinker*¹⁹⁴, et réussi à enregistrer 55 kilos d'or¹⁹⁵ entre le 17 juillet et le 30 novembre 2021, tout en fixant le cap sur 200 kilos pour 2022, soit 5 milliards de FCFA de recettes¹⁹⁶.

¹⁹⁰ J. M. A. Atangana, "Gestion durable de l'exploitation minière : cas de la petite mine d'or à Bétaré-Oya (Est-Cameroun)", mémoire de Master en Gestion Durable des Mines, Institut International d'Ingénierie de l'Eau et de l'Environnement, Burkina-Faso, pp. 11-12.

¹⁹¹ L'enquête de terrain dans les sites miniers de Kambélé a révélé que pour 30 min ou 1h à passer dans un filon prometteur, les orpailleurs paient entre 50 et 100 mille Fcfa ou alors, les éléments de force de la gendarmerie peuvent décider de laisser libre accès aux orpailleurs, à condition qu'ils aient leurs récompenses via un nombre de sacs (qu'ils ont déterminé) appelés "Banco" remplis de la matière première qui sera traitée par leurs associés dont l'équivalent en espèce peut varier entre 300 mille et 1 million de Fcfa.

¹⁹² SONAMINES : "Historique de la SONAMINES", [En ligne], consulter le 18 novembre 2022 à 14h50 min, disponible sur : <https://sonamines.cm>.

¹⁹³ Voir article 4 du Décret N° 2020/749 du 14 décembre 2020, portant création de la Société Nationale des Mines.

¹⁹⁴ O. Mbadi, "Cameroun : Serge Hervé Boyogueno met la Sonamines dans les pas de la SNH", [En ligne], consulter le 20 novembre 2022 à 16h45 min, disponible sur : <https://www.jeuneafrique.com>.

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem.

Dans la même veine, elle a fait du *benchmarking* pour limiter l'exportation frauduleuse de l'or camerounais¹⁹⁷ aux mois de mai et octobre 2022 respectivement en Namibie et en République Démocratique du Congo, et, participé durant les journées des 13 et 15 juillet 2022 au *Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Conventions (PDCA)*¹⁹⁸ pour valoriser le secteur minier camerounais afin d'y attirer le maximum d'investisseurs dans l'optique de développer les projets d'exploitation minière industrielle¹⁹⁹. Toutes ces actions sont des signes évidents que la SONAMINES est dynamique.

Sinon, aussi jeune soit-elle, la SONAMINES devra relever les défis de l'insuffisance des moyens financiers, humains et matériels²⁰⁰ qui occasionnent la faiblesse des contrôles et la fuite des revenus miniers vers des destinations inconnues d'une part, et, d'autre part, celui de l'insertion maximale de l'activité minière au sein de l'économie camerounaise via les projets intégrant les opérateurs locaux sur toute la chaîne de valeur si elle veut véritablement se démarquer de son ancêtre le CAPAM. Cependant, les acteurs non-étatiques ne sont pas à négliger.

b- Les acteurs non-étatiques

Ils sont constitués des organisations internationales, des organisations non-gouvernementales ou de la société civile qui jouent un rôle de surveillance indépendante vis-à-vis de la gestion du secteur minier et son incidence sur les populations vulnérables.

❖ Les organisations internationales

Dans la plupart des cas, elles ne s'opposent pas au développement des projets miniers surtout dans un pays comme le Cameroun qui se trouve à un tournant crucial en ce qui concerne l'essor de ce secteur d'activités. Leurs efforts visent précisément à apporter un soutien multiforme pour

¹⁹⁷ S. Andzongo, "Lutte contre l'exportation frauduleuse de l'or : la Sonamines s'imprègne de l'expérience de la Namibie et la RDC", [En ligne], mise à jour le jeudi 13 octobre 2022, consulter le 20 novembre 2022 à 17h20 min, disponible sur : <https://www.investiraucameroun.com>.

¹⁹⁸ SONAMINES : "PDAC 2022 : la SONAMINES présente à Toronto", [En ligne], dernière mise à jour : jeudi, 13 juin 2022, consulter le 18 novembre 2022 à 14h50 min, disponible sur : <https://sonamines.cm>.

¹⁹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰⁰ L'enquête de terrain a révélé que toute la brigade minière de Batouri a trois motos (dont deux opérationnelles et l'autre hors service) et un pick-up.

l'amélioration du cadre légal, la transparence et la participation citoyenne dans la gestion durable des ressources minières et foncières²⁰¹.

C'est dans ce sens qu'en 2011, le Conseil d'Administration de la Banque Mondiale a approuvé un crédit de 30 millions de dollars américains pour le financement du Projet de Renforcement des Capacités du Secteur Minier (PRECASEM)²⁰². A cela s'ajoutent, les dotations de l'Union Européenne chiffrées à hauteur de 780 millions²⁰³ FCFA dans le cadre du projet intitulé Projet Mines, Environnement, Santé et Développement (PROMESS)²⁰⁴ qui couvre les arrondissements de Bétaré-Oya, Garoua-Boulai, Ngoura, Batouri, Ketté, Kentzou, Yokadouma, Gari-Gombo²⁰⁵.

Si ce type de programmes financés par ces principales organisations internationales ont déjà commencé à porter leurs fruits (25000 membres des communautés minières ont été informées et sensibilisées sur les dangers de l'exploitation minière, 27 communautés organisées en comités de veille²⁰⁶, révision constante du code minier etc.), des interrogations demeurent sur ce qu'elles bénéficient en retour de leurs assistances tant est qu'il n'y a que des intérêts à sauvegarder entre entités interagissant sur la scène internationale.

❖ Les organisations non-gouvernementales/ de la société civile

A l'origine, beaucoup étaient positionnées sur la défense des forêts, mais elles ont actuellement élargi leurs attentions sur l'exploitation minière, car la plupart des questions économiques, environnementales, sociales et de gouvernance au niveau communautaire, sont similaires à celles

²⁰¹ Discours du Conseiller-Chef de Coopération délégation de l'Union Européenne en République du Cameroun, Arnaud Demoor, Yaoundé, 10 octobre 2018, p. 4.

²⁰² La Banque Mondiale, "La Banque mondiale s'engage aux côtés du Cameroun pour le renforcement des capacités dans le secteur", [En ligne], mise à jour 15 décembre 2021, consulter le 21 novembre 2022 à 07h54 min, disponible sur : <https://www.banquemondiale.org>.

²⁰³ Discours du Conseiller-Chef de Coopération délégation de l'Union Européenne en République du Cameroun, Arnaud Demoor, Yaoundé, 28 mai 2019, pp. 4-5.

²⁰⁴ Sa première phase a couvert la période allant du 1^{er} janvier 2015 au 31 décembre 2018. Sa réalisation a coûté 260 millions de Fcfa ; sa deuxième quant-à elle a démarré le 1^{er} mars 2019 et s'étalera sur 4 ans à hauteur de 520 millions Fcfa.

²⁰⁵ Discours du Conseiller-Chef de Coopération délégation de l'Union Européenne en République du Cameroun, Arnaud Demoor..., p. 5.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

du secteur forêt²⁰⁷. Il s'agit notamment du Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement²⁰⁸, du Réseau de Lutte contre la faim (RELUFA)²⁰⁹, du Fonds de Développement Rural (FODER)²¹⁰, du comité de suivi de l'ITIE, ou encore de la Coalition Camerounaise de Publiez Ce Que Vous Payez (CCPCQVP) lancé en août 2005.

Dans l'ensemble, et avec une expertise avérée, ces organisations de la société civile réclament la transparence et la gestion responsable des revenus pour l'allègement de la pauvreté, suivent les activités des entreprises extractives opérant au Cameroun, et, produisent aussi des réflexions pour relever les manquements en lien avec la profitabilité des revenus miniers pour les populations tout en proposant aux pouvoirs publics des solutions pour améliorer le mode de gestion de l'industrie extractive. Ce qui en soit est une initiative louable car elle rapproche les communautés riveraines du fait minier et appelle le gouvernement et les sociétés minières à faire preuve de plus de responsabilité. Mais, le sempiternel problème de manque de moyens couplé de la non-consideration de leurs recommandations limitent l'impact de leurs actions.

Comme on peut le voir, le MINMIDT et le code minier sont les chevilles ouvrières de toute l'ossature législative et réglementaire qui constitue la première manifestation de l'agence locale dans laquelle s'inscrivent tous les opérateurs miniers au sein de l'industrie extractive du Cameroun. Il s'agira par la suite, de montrer son appréhension dans les faits par les autorités en place à Kambélé qui a abouti à son instrumentalisation visant la sédentarisation des opérateurs miniers chinois.

²⁰⁷ Smith, *Evaluation...*, p. 74.

²⁰⁸ Créé en 1995 en réaction à la crise de gestion des forêts au Cameroun, il va étendre ses problématiques aux industries extractives qui sont perçues comme une menace pour les droits des populations qu'il défend.

²⁰⁹ Elle est une plateforme d'acteurs de la société civile et des communautés de base créée en 2001, qui a pour objectif de joindre leurs forces pour une action plus concertée et plus forte dans la lutte contre la pauvreté, la faim et les injustices économiques, sociales et environnementales au niveau national.

²¹⁰ Elle a été créée en 2002 au Cameroun et s'intéresse principalement aux problématiques de gouvernance liées à l'exploitation des ressources naturelles avec un accent particulier sur les activités d'observation dans le secteur forestier.

II- INSTRUMENTALISATION DU CADRE LEGISLATIF MINIER PAR LES AUTORITES NATIONALES ET ELITES LOCALES : ENTRE ILLEGALITE ET LEGALITE POUR LA SEDENTARISATION DES FIRMES EXTRACTIVES CHINOISES A KAMBELE

Il à noter qu'à Kambélé, les huit (08) entreprises chinoises recensées et qui sont actives, sont des entreprises privées. Loin d'elles les standards d'une Sinosteel dont le contrat signé en mai dernier avec l'Etat camerounais pour l'exploitation d'une mine de fer à Lobé dans le Sud du Cameroun a fait polémique²¹¹. Les firmes privées chinoises, présentes dans cette localité semblent vouloir éviter de s'encombrer avec des longues procédures administratives. Ces pratiques sont rendues possibles par l'entremise de certains agents qui procèdent par le contournement des dispositions légales du code minier, et, la sous-traitance.

1- Le contournement des dispositions légales du code minier

Il y'a en effet un hiatus entre les dispositions normatives (sus-évoquées) et leur mise en pratique sur le terrain par les élites infranationales et nationales à Kambélé.

En effet, la législation camerounaise en matière d'exploitation minière, partant artisanale semi-mécanisée/petite mine est assez précise en ses articles 15 (5) et 27²¹² qui, dans le creux, assurent que les titres miniers comme les autorisations artisanales d'exploitation semi-mécanisée et de la petite mine, sont l'apanage *stricto-sensu* des citoyens camerounais. Cependant, l'enquête de terrain a fait connaître que le chef du village de Kambélé II et ses soutiens dans la haute administration ont pesé de tout leur poids par un jeu de *lobbying* afin que le ressortissant chinois au nom de Wang qui est à la fois un célèbre entrepreneur, propriétaire terrien, détenteur d'une autorisation d'exploitation et directeur des entreprises Zhengouo (Djengou) et Sicomcn Engine (Mbotè) puisse

²¹¹ Ledit contrat avait été signé au mois de mai entre le gouvernement camerounais et la compagnie chinoise Sinosteel qui a prévu investir 675 millions de dollar et produire 4 million de tonnes de concentrés ; ce qui devrait générer à l'Etat du Cameroun près de 38 millions de dollars par an. Sauf que plusieurs experts, dirigeants des partis d'opposition et militants de la société civile ont contesté ces données en rappelant qu'il s'agissait d'une supercherie chinoise et accusant le gouvernement local de vouloir brader les richesses du pays. Plus d'informations sur : <https://projet.afriquechine.com>, consulté le 30 août 2022.

²¹² Loi n°2016...

se frayer un chemin et s'imposer dans le paysage minier camerounais et principalement à Kambélé comme un acteur de premier plan.

Un habitant de l'enclave minière a indiqué que « *le Chef de chantier village est son parrain. C'est lui qui lui a vendu les terres où il faisait ses champs et c'est encore lui qui lui a montré les couloirs pour qu'il obtienne la nationalité*²¹³ ». De même, un travailleur de la commune de Kambélé a affirmé que « *le problème c'est qu'il est camerounais, il s'est naturalisé ce qui a rendu possible la matérialisation du permis de ses terres en toute légalité* ». Il s'agit d'une pratique qui pour le moment n'est pas encore devenue courante chez les opérateurs chinois ou étrangers bien que certains d'entre eux comme Mme Lu entretienne d'excellents liens avec les membres de la famille présidentielle²¹⁴ qui pourrait lui faciliter sa naturalisation.

En retour, et en guise de reconnaissance des services rendus puisqu'il s'agit d'un système clientéliste, comme dans les autres zones aurifères du pays, ces entreprises chinoises paieraient des salaires souvent mensuels aux différentes autorités, salaires qu'elles ne rapporteraient pas dans leurs bilans financiers. D'autres feraient régulièrement des cadeaux aux autorités locales²¹⁵. Pour le cas présent, il a été rapporté que « *Wang se charge régulièrement de régler les factures d'hôpital du Chef du village de Kambélé II*²¹⁶ ». Toutefois, le phénomène de sous-traitance n'est pas à négliger.

2- La sous-traitance

Les activités d'extraction minières sont rarement réalisées par une seule entreprise de façon exclusive. Il s'avère crucial de recourir à des sociétés sous-traitantes, que ce soient celles d'exploitation, de construction, d'ingénierie etc. Selon le code minier camerounais, un sous-traitant est une personne physique ou morale exécutant pour le compte du titulaire du titre minier, un travail se rapportant aux activités principales prévues ou autorisées par le titre minier, conformément à des contrats signés, à des normes, cahiers de charges ou plans imposés par celui-

²¹³ Orpailleur de Kambélé II, 24 ans.

²¹⁴ Entretien avec un employeur de la commune de Kambélé.

²¹⁵ V. Lickert, "La privatisation de la politique minière au Cameroun : enclaves minières, rapports de pouvoirs trans-locaux et captation de la rente", *Politique Africaine*, N°131, 2013, p. 107.

²¹⁶ Entretien avec un habitant de Kambélé II, 27 ans.

ci²¹⁷. En d'autres termes, le sous-traitant est l'entité chargée d'accomplir tout ou une partie des tâches que devait initialement réaliser le client donneur d'ordres.

L'élite à Kambélé s'est muée en courtiers qui exploitent les opportunités s'offrant alors à eux grâce aux positions qu'ils occupent dans les structures sociales ou professionnelles, pas seulement à des fins de manducation personnelle, mais aussi à des fins de courtage pour le développement²¹⁸. C'est ce qui a par exemple, rendu possible dans ladite zone l'exploitation aurifère chinoise et son intensification.

Dans l'ensemble de la localité de Kambélé III où se déroule l'essentiel de l'activité extractive artisanale semi-mécanisée/de la petite mine du village Kambélé, et dont le permis d'exploitation est détenu par une élite politico-administrative camerounaise puissante de la région²¹⁹; l'observation de terrain a relevé que les entreprises chinoises ont le monopole et sont majoritaires (tableau 1). Bel Baba²²⁰ témoigne « *les Chinois quand ils sont arrivés ce n'était pas par leurs propres moyens. Ce sont nos élites, ils ont fait des autorisations à Yaoundé, signées par le ministre et chacun d'eux cherchaient ses partenaires. Alors ils ont trouvé bon d'amener des partenaires chinois* ».

Ce dévolu électif donnant suite aux arrangements entre élite locale et investisseurs miniers chinois, engendrent alors la signature des contrats dans les conditions obscures créant autant de zones de flou qui multiplient les occasions de corruption et de détournements²²¹.

Tableau n°1 : Sociétés minières d'exploitation artisanale semi-mécanisée/petite mine opérant à Kambélé depuis 2017.

N°	SOCIETES	NATIONALITE	LOCALISATION
1	D. K. Mining	Camerounais	Djengou
2	Europe-Afrique	Chinois	Djengou

²¹⁷ Loi n°2016/017...

²¹⁸ N. B. Arifari, "Dans les interstices de l'Etat : des courtiers en col blanc : cadres ressortissants et développement local à Kandi (Nord-Bénin)", in J. P. O. de Sardan, J. P. Chauveau, T. Bierschenk (dir) et al (eds), *Les courtiers entre développement et Etat*, Paris, Karthala et APAD, 2000, p. 56.

²¹⁹ Anonymat 1.

²²⁰ Chef de Kambélé III, 59 ans.

²²¹ Lickert, "La privatisation de la...", p. 114.

3	Good Luck	Sino-Camerounais	Djengou
4	Ismaël	Chinois	Boukaro
5	Mencheng II	Chinois	Djengou
6	Mencheng III	Chinois	Djengou
7	Mencheng IV	Chinois	Mbil
8	Mencheng V	Chinois	Dem
9	Pelle d'Or	Sino-Camerounais	Djengou
10	Xin Yuan	Chinois	Djengou
11	Yu Mining	Chinois	Mbotè
12	Zhengouo	Camerounais	Djengou

Source : M. B. M. Nya à partir des données recueillies sur le terrain

A la lecture de ce tableau, il est important de souligner que les entreprises Mencheng sont prédominantes et que les sociétés telles qu'Europe-Afrique et Ismaël²²², ont fait l'objet de potentiels rachats en passant sous gestion chinoise²²³ quoique les noms d'origine n'aient pas été modifiés. Contrairement à Pelle d'Or qui, officiellement est le fruit d'une alliance entre les locaux (élite législative) et les investisseurs chinois (qui sont majoritaires) ou de *Goodluck* gérés par un certain « *homme*²²⁴ » et des entrepreneurs chinois. En clair, quoique le phénomène de rachat demeure encore marginal, seules Déconka Mining et Zhengouo (dans une certaine mesure)²²⁵ peuvent être considérées comme les représentantes camerounaises dans le domaine à Kambélé.

Par ailleurs, deux raisons précises peuvent justifier le recours aux opérateurs chinois par l'élite détentrice de permis d'exploitation à Kambélé : la première est que, la sous-traitance exige des capitaux voire des compétences pointues dont ne disposent pas toujours le Cameroun au sens large quoique des établissements de géologie et d'exploitation minière ne manquent pas. Ce qui peut se

²²² Camerounaise d'origine.

²²³ Anonymat 2.

²²⁴ Les entretiens avec les habitants de Kambélé ont dévoilé qu'il est l'homme de confiance de l'ancien Ministre des Mines, de l'Industrie et du Développement Technologique qui coordonne toutes les activités au niveau local.

²²⁵ En effet, Zhengouo appartient au citoyen chinois Wang naturalisé camerounais. Ce qui *de jure*, sa structure est camerounaise. Mais *de facto*, les gains générés par cette dernière sont rapatriés dans son pays d'origine ou vendus à Dubaï.

justifier par une main d'œuvre chinoise qui est spécifique et plus expérimentée que celle du pays hôte.

La deuxième quant-à elle relève du fait qu'il est très difficile de pénétrer dans le domaine minier et para-minier sans liens politiques à haut niveau. Or, si l'exploitation minière chinoise ne fait que s'intensifier à Kambélé comme dans les autres localités et régions du pays, c'est justement parce qu'il existe une étroite collaboration entre ces investisseurs chinois opérant dans le secteur minier et le pouvoir central de Yaoundé. Ce qui confirme qu'ils ont le soutien politique et financier du gouvernement chinois qui fait de l'entrisme dans une zone traditionnellement occupée par les intérêts occidentaux²²⁶.

Dès lors, penchons-nous sur les effets de la présence des entreprises minières chinoises sur la localité de Kambélé et les ripostes locales face aux externalités négatives occasionnées par ces firmes.

III- LES EFFETS DE LA PRESENCE DES ENTREPRISES EXTRACTIVES CHINOISES A KAMBELE ET LES REACTIONS LOCALES

Depuis le départ de la société extractive grecque Metalicon²²⁷ en 2016, qui menait des « *opérations de recherches et d'exploitation de 'l'or de l'eau' partout. Elle plaçait même les bornes au village*²²⁸ », les succursales chinoises ont tôt fait de combler le vide. Leur occupation qui s'inscrit dans une logique de remplacement stratégique²²⁹ a généré d'un côté l'augmentation de l'emploi salarié et la construction d'infrastructures, de l'autre côté, il est à noter les mauvaises conditions des travailleurs, la destruction de l'environnement et l'accaparement des terres qui méritent ici notre attention sans oublier les différentes réactions locales.

²²⁶ Smith, *Evaluation...*, p. 72.

²²⁷ D'après l'enquête de terrain, elle est arrivée à Kambélé en 2013 et après ses opérations de zonages, les autorités locales ont préféré attribuer les titres miniers aux exploitants chinois. Ce qui a précipité son départ de la localité et même du pays.

²²⁸ Entretien avec Abessolo Dimbélé Martin, 39 ans.

²²⁹ Il est question pour Pékin de se garantir du monopole dans l'acquisition des projets miniers au Cameroun.

1- L'augmentation de l'emploi salarié et la construction des infrastructures

L'emploi de la main d'œuvre locale (a), et, la construction des infrastructures (b) sont des marqueurs positifs de l'emprunte minière chinoise à Kambélé.

a- L'emploi de la main d'œuvre locale

O. Carlos et S. Florian notent que :

« L'un des principaux avantages de l'IDE est le potentiel de création rapide d'emplois. Cependant, les travailleurs locaux ne pourront trouver des emplois dans les entreprises d'IDE que si ces entreprises sont disposées à localiser leur main-d'œuvre, c'est-à-dire à employer de la main-d'œuvre locale²³⁰ ».

Il a été ainsi donné de constater par exemple, l'utilisation des ressources humaines locales dans toutes les structures chinoises implantées dans la zone de Kambélé. Elles occupent pour la plupart des postes qui ne nécessitent pas une certaine formation spécifique dans le métier des mines. Les données du tableau 2 sont celles de l'effectif de la société Pelle d'Or fournies par un des superviseurs qui a accepté d'échanger avec nous.

Tableau n°2 : Emploi de la main d'œuvre locale par Pelle d'Or

Type d'emploi	Effectif	Salaire (FCFA)
Traducteur	01	-
Superviseurs	03	200.000- 300.000
Conducteurs	04	300.000- 350.000

²³⁰ C. Oya, F. Schaefer, *Firmes chinoises et dynamiques d'emplois en Afrique : une analyse comparative*, Royaume-Uni, IDCEA Research Synthesis Report, SOAS University of London, 2019, p. 34.

Mécaniciens	03	150.000- 200.000
Chauffeurs	14	150.000
Manœuvres	48	110.000- 120.000
Total	73	

Source : M. B. M. Nya à partir des données recueillies sur le terrain
 Comme l'indique le tableau ci-dessus, les salaires oscillent entre 110 mille et 350 mille. Les plus élevés sont détenus par les superviseurs, les conducteurs, les mécaniciens et les chauffeurs. Par contre, les manœuvres eux, qui sont les plus nombreux (48), s'en sortent avec les plus faibles rémunérations de la chaîne des valeurs. Cela signifie somme toute que, l'importance des salaires mensuels est fonction de la nature de la qualification de l'employé et que ces derniers représentent plus du double du salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti qui est de 36.270 FCFA²³¹.

Tang Xiaoyang à l'époque avait théorisé deux modèles dans les entreprises chinoises en matière d'emploi local à savoir : le Bulldozer et la locomotive²³². Pour la présente étude, il est question du modèle locomotive car en employant les ressources humaines locales, les investisseurs veulent l'établissement de liens étroits entre les Chinois et les populations locales afin d'intégrer l'entreprise chinoise dans la communauté locale. L'entreprise recherche un profit à long terme en créant une croissance synergique avec les acteurs africains²³³. Parce qu'en utilisant les atouts du côté chinois, comme le capital, la technologie, l'efficacité, ce modèle, comme une locomotive, peut contribuer à une échelle beaucoup plus grande de développement local, y compris la formation, l'emploi indirect et la prospérité du marché²³⁴. Mais vu uniquement sous cet angle, on est tenté de faire fi des besoins énormes en matières précieuses des

²³¹ Soit 57.22 dollar USD.

²³² Le modèle bulldozer c'est lorsque l'entreprise importe sa main d'œuvre de Chine pour venir réaliser un projet précis et dont les délais sont généralement courts, par contre dans celui locomotive, la société crée des rapports avec la population autochtone dans le but de s'intégrer dans le tissu social. Plus d'informations sur : X. Tang, "Bulldozer ou locomotive ? l'impact des entreprises chinoises sur l'emploi local en Angola et en RDC", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 45, N°3, 2010.

²³³ Ibid., pp. 362-363.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 363.

compagnies chinoises présentes à Kambélé. Or, « *tant que le caillou n'est pas encore fini, ils ne peuvent pas partir*²³⁵ ».

A côté de ces emplois directs, il y'a eu comme un effet d'entraînement lié à la présence des entreprises chinoises qui a stimulé une prolifération de petits métiers aux abords de leurs chantiers et bases. Cela est perceptible par la multitude d'épiceries, de buvettes, et de prêts à porter qui pullulent dans les coins du village. Aussi, l'activité dite des *motos taximen* s'est considérablement accrue d'un bout à l'autre de Kambélé si bien qu'elle a poussé les autorités de Batouri à instituer une taxe journalière s'élevant à 1000 FCFA auprès des conducteurs de ces engins à deux roues. Elysée Fils Dodo témoigne en effet de ce phénomène de taxation journalière « *le travail donne c'est pour cela que je fais dans ça. Sauf qu'ils nous taxent fort, mais on n'a pas d'autre choix que de payer, sinon nous ne pourrions pas nourrir nos familles*²³⁶ ».

b- La construction des salles de classe et forages

L'engagement des entreprises chinoises auprès des riverains de Kambélé pour le développement et l'amélioration de leurs conditions de vie est une réalité. Ainsi, elles ont agi conformément aux desideratas des populations locales consignés dans leurs cahiers de charge. B. Baba explique:

« *On avait posé nos doléances, ce qu'ils doivent réaliser est dans le cahier de charges. Le premier chinois qui était arrivé, qui a l'entreprise Mcheng, c'est une dame là, on l'appelle souvent Mme Lu, or son vrai nom chinois est là. Elle a quand même réagi en construisant deux salles de classes et deux forages. Un est à côté ici, l'autre à l'école [...] Bon maintenant après madame, il y'a l'entreprise de M. Wang qui est entrain de construire deux salles de classe et un bureau au directeur toujours dans la même école là*²³⁷ ».

Ce qui veut dire en d'autres termes que la RSE des compagnies chinoises dans cette zone est axée sur l'éducation et l'accès facile à l'eau potable. Ainsi la photo n°1 de la gauche vers la droite illustre les édifices construits par Lu, Wang (en cours), le Cadre d'Appui à l'Artisanat Minier

²³⁵ Superviseur de société Pelle d'Or, 35 ans environ.

²³⁶ Moto-taximan, 28 ans.

²³⁷ Chef de village de Kambélé III, 59 ans.

(CAPAM) devenu SONAMINES et le dernier par le Programme National Participatif (PNDP, en cours).

Photo n°1 : Ecole publique de Kambélé III



Cliché réalisé par M. B. M. Nya.

Dans la même logique, conscient du fait que la concentration de son exploitation minière à Kambélé II a défiguré les points de ravitaillement naturels des populations en eau de consommation courante, l'opérateur minier Wang a procédé par l'octroi sous forme de dons de deux autres forages qui approvisionnent le secteur dit de « chantier village » en guise de compensation. *« J'ai vu seulement il a fait les forages comme ça. Il a fait deux, ici et là-bas en haut derrière le marché [...] on nous avait dit que c'est un don qu'il a fait aux gens du village »* affirme Z. A. Martin.

C'est alors que dans l'ensemble de la localité de Kambélé, la RSE des compagnies minières chinoises se résume à quatre (4) salles de classe et quatre (4) forages. Leur implication pour le

développement socio-économique tel qu'articulé à l'article 166 qui prévoit entre autres le développement des ressources humaines locales, notamment par la mise à niveau, l'adaptation ou la création d'établissements locaux de formation des professionnels des métiers miniers²³⁸, semble alors modique au regard de l'intensité de l'activité minière de ces entreprises et de leurs plus-values. Les intérêts des populations riveraines semblent ainsi être dépréciés compte tenu de la relation très étroite qu'entretiennent les opérateurs miniers chinois et l'élite locale ou l'autorité nationale, tout en associant à cela une gouvernance marquée par les logiques de corruption²³⁹. Ceci a servi de catalyseur aux effets pervers déjà liés à la pratique chinoise en la matière dans la zone d'étude.

2- Les mauvaises conditions de travail des employés locaux, l'écocide, et l'accaparement des terres

Ils représentent quelques indicateurs de la nocivité des industriels miniers chinois à Kambélé.

a- Les mauvaises conditions des employés locaux

Elles se matérialisent d'abord par l'absence de contrats de travail. A Kambélé, ce *modus operandi* des sociétés minières chinoises est une violation de la législation camerounaise en matière de droit du travail semble être ancré dans les schèmes mentaux des ouvriers et des populations voisines comme une norme (bien qu'il soit possible de saisir la délégation du Ministère du travail de Batouri pour remédier à cette violation). Or c'est ce dernier qui est chargé de protéger les employés en cas d'abus. Dramane Ndoko²⁴⁰ le confirme :

« Ici là il n'y a même pas un contrat. On avait fait une réunion avec le Chinois mais ça n'a pas abouti. Il y'avait même les gens là que le Chinois voulait enlever parce qu'ils ont parlé du contrat. Ça veut dire que même si tu as fait quinze ans avec eux et que ta tête l'énerve un matin il va te chasser. Ici là c'est zéro contrat ».

²³⁸ Loi n° 2016...

²³⁹ Voundi, "Extractivisme minier...", p. 25.

²⁴⁰ Employé de la société Mencheng, 24 ans.

Ce récit qui n'est pas un cas isolé, est le reflet de la situation de précarité dans laquelle sont plongés tous les employés locaux des chantiers miniers chinois. Par ailleurs, l'autre problématique concerne la maltraitance dont sont victimes les ouvriers locaux au sein de ces enclos miniers. En effet, ces derniers sont soumis à un rythme cadencé d'au moins dix (10) heures de temps pour un salaire jugé dérisoire par rapport à l'effort fourni. Rodolphe Towa affirme :

« Là-bas c'est l'esclavage, ils nous traitent comme des esclaves. Dès fois ils crachent sur nous. Même le 20 mai²⁴¹ j'ai travaillé. Je me suis retrouvé dans cette entreprise à faire onze heures de temps en journée avec une heure de pause. Ce qui veut dire que le travail revient à dix heures de temps un travail intense pour attendre un salaire de combien ? Un salaire minable et c'est un travail pénible [...] si tu es malade, là-bas on ne connaît pas le malade. Chez nous c'est que si tu as trente jours de travail tu dois les remplir, même si tu te blesses c'est ton problème. C'est comme ça avec les chinois²⁴² ».

Toujours dans le même registre, et vraisemblablement dans des conditions irréalistes, Mbombé Simon David révèle que : *« les gants il n'y a pas, la botte c'est toi qui paie dans ton argent de salaire [...] c'est cinq manteaux pour six. Toutes les deux équipes du bol portent ça. Les casques jamais, les cache-nez jamais, leur problème c'est seulement que vous travailliez²⁴³ ».*

Enfin, il y'a la question de l'hébergement des travailleurs. Il a été observé qu'à l'image des entreprises de construction qui réalisent des chantiers dans les zones éloignées, les compagnies minières chinoises également bâtissent des logements à leurs ouvriers, mais, force a été de constater qu'ils sont modestes et faits avec du matériel de basse qualité (photo n°2).

²⁴¹ Jour de la fête de l'unité nationale du pays. Elle est décrétée fériée et chômée.

²⁴² Employé de Mencheng, 34 ans.

²⁴³ Ancien employé de Zhengouo, 28 ans.

Photo n°2 : Logement des ouvriers de l'entreprise Mencheng



Cliché réalisé par M. B. M. Nya.

Comme on peut le voir, leurs ouvriers résident dans des habitations précaires qui ne les mettent pas à l'abri des intempéries. De même parfois l'intimité des ouvriers tend à être violée par les partons comme le témoigne Towa : « quand ils nous logent c'est comme vivre sous conditions. Puisque le Chinois vient chez toi à n'importe quelle heure qu'il veut, quand il veut, il entre seulement, ta dignité est où ? Et tu ne peux rien dire parce que tu as peur qu'on te mette à la porte ». Dans d'autres localités de la région, ce type de pratiques de non-respect des conditions de travail adéquates ont donné lieu à des soulèvements et grèves. Cependant, les causes environnementales sont peines perdues tant les dérives écologiques opérées semblent importantes.

b- Kambélé : un écocide

Le développement des projets miniers chinois (petite mine/semi-mécanisée) à Kambélé a induit moult bouleversements environnementaux. Le premier, et le plus frappant, est la déforestation. De ce fait, l'exploitation intensive, et à ciel ouvert, de l'or et des diamants alluvionnaires défigure le

réseau hydrographique et élimine totalement les forêts ripisylves²⁴⁴ au point d'engendrer la disparition des essences végétales rares, des plantes aux vertus thérapeutiques et plus loin la fuite des animaux (photo n°3).

Photo n°3 : Aperçu de l'avancée de la déforestation issue de l'exploitation minière chinoise à Kambélé III



Cliché réalisé par l'auteur.

En se référant à l'image précédente, on peut d'ores et déjà dire que les activités minières des industriels chinois redessinent le paysage forestier de la localité en lui imposant de nouvelles frontières. Preuve irréfutable que le processus de désertification va bon train en compromettant non seulement la productivité de la terre, mais aussi en diminuant la viabilité de l'activité agricole. B. Bel exprime son désarroi : *« au lieu qu'ils cherchent des endroits non-exploitable, ils ont*

²⁴⁴ Voundi, " Extractivisme...", p. 17.

calculé directement là où les riverains travaillaient. Ça a donné donc ce que vous voyez aujourd'hui là que la forêt est dévastée, on ne peut plus faire l'agriculture ni l'élevage ».

Le deuxième marqueur du désastre environnemental qui sévit dans notre zone de recherche est celui de la pollution de l'eau (photo n°4). En effet, étant une composante du processus de production de l'exploitation minière, on a constaté que les lits des cours d'eau sont détournés ou reçoivent les eaux usées et parfois polluées aux métaux lourds par le procédé d'amalgamation de la poudre d'or au mercure pour en extraire le filon²⁴⁵. Ce qui met en péril la biodiversité de Kambélé en ce sens qu' :

« Auparavant il y'avait les poissons. Mais pour l'instant là, dès que les Chinois sont arrivés il n'y a plus un seul poisson dans toutes les rivières du chantier [...] tu arrives maintenant au nom de Dieu tu peux même mettre le champignon au sol tu n'auras rien. Et l'eau est polluée, chaque fois qu'on boit de cette eau ici on tombe malade²⁴⁶ ».

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Entretien avec Yélé...

Photo n°4 : Externalités environnementales des activités minières chinoises à Kambélé.



Cliché réalisé par l'auteur.

A la vue de ce cliché, le respect des normes environnementales semble être ignoré les opérateurs miniers chinois provoquant une tragédie écologique. Le chef du village de Kambélé III affirme en effet :

« Nos cours d'eaux au lieu qu'ils cherchent un endroit où canaliser l'eau et envoyer pour laver la terre qu'ils prennent, ils ont préféré fermer tous les lits des petits cours d'eau. Actuellement là où je vous parle la pisciculture on ne peut plus faire, la pêche on ne peut plus faire, l'environnement est complètement gâté ».

Enfin, la pollution atmosphérique qui est la conséquence de l'usage par les industriels chinois des métaux lourds indispensables pour leurs activités tels que le plomb, le mercure, le cadmium,

l'arsenic, le nickel, le cyanure, ou le zinc s'avèrent dangereux pour les populations locales qui les inhalent de façon inconsciente. En plus des poussières soulevées par leurs camions qui assurent le transport des agrégats, les riverains sont en contact permanent avec les déchets (photo n°5).

Photo n°5 : Des riverains à la récupération des résidus de traitement des minerais de l'entreprise Mencheng à Djengou.



Cliché réalisé par l'auteur.

A noter que sur l'image ci-dessus, l'on est en situation de "*wash-play*" où les populations riveraines réceptionnent les limons et sables fins rejetés par les engins chinois qui ne sont plus importants pour la suite du processus. Ils seront recyclés par ces dernières dans l'optique d'en tirer la quantité d'or restante. Mais ce qu'elles ne savent pas, c'est qu'elles sont *de facto* contaminées à travers des aérosols qui contiennent des produits chimiques utilisés lors du traitement (composés organiques, cyanure, acide) et sont généralement riches en minéraux sulfurés auxquels sont associés les métaux et métalloïdes²⁴⁷ qui sont alors à l'origine de nombreuses pathologies sévères comme la sclérose

²⁴⁷ E. Resongles, "Etude de la contamination par les métaux et les métalloïdes d'origine minière sur le bassin des gardons : approche élémentaire (As, Cd, Hg, Pb, Sb, Ti, Zn) et isotopique (Sb, Zn)", Thèse de doctorat en Hydrologie, Sciences et Techniques du Languedoc de l'Université de Montpellier II, 2014, p. 18.

en plaque, les maladies neurodégénératives (maladie d'Alzheimer et de Parkinson), les cancers du poumon, des voies respiratoires et digestives ou encore l'insuffisance rénale²⁴⁸.

c. L'accaparement des terres

Avec la libéralisation à demi-teinte de l'industrie minière camerounaise en 2005, la course effrénée des exploitants aurifères chinois sur les riches terres de Kambélé ne s'est pas faite sans heurts. Elle s'est, au grand dam des autochtones, accompagnée de l'acquisition de terres à grande échelle dans le but de les exploiter pour une production industrielle de produits miniers, destinés essentiellement à des marchés étrangers.

Ce phénomène tant décrié mais en pleine expansion s'est opéré dans la cité minière avec la complicité de l'administration locale (autorités administratives, chefferies, comité de développement), et a très souvent donné lieu à des tensions car, pour la majorité, il rappelle étrangement les maux du colonialisme et pose nouvellement les questions anciennes de souveraineté territoriale²⁴⁹. Nguenam Eric témoigne :

« Un frère a eu ce problème, le Chinois a travaillé jusqu'à entrer sur son terrain, on a grévé et fait des problèmes. Mme Lu est venue nous voir avec les gens du comité de développement. Et comme mon frère ne connaissait rien du tout, c'est le comité de développement qui a négocié. Dans les papiers ils payaient 1 hectare or mon frère pensait que c'était 50 mètres sur 100. Après quand ils ont repris le travail, c'est là où le gars se rend compte que c'est tout son terrain qui avait été vendu et quand il voulait recommencer la grève on sort les papiers avec sa signature. Ils ont arraché son terrain avec l'aide du comité ²⁵⁰ ».

Le jugement des autres riverains est sans appel parce que d'après Y. Eric : *« les gens n'ont plus où habiter, l'occupation chinoise est anarchique et ils encerclent le village. Plusieurs anciens propriétaires terriens viennent louer chez moi. Quelqu'un comme moi, je ne veux plus les Chinois »*. Moïse Sah s'est montré plus incisif lorsqu'il dit qu' *« ils sont des mauvais. Ces Chinois*

²⁴⁸ L. Levy, "Intoxication aux métaux lourds : une pollution invisible ?", [En ligne], consulter le 22 juin 2022 à 18h48 min, Disponible sur : <https://www.topsante.com>.

²⁴⁹ R. Bohbot, "De l'accaparement des terres aux investissements agricoles internationaux responsables : la construction de l'acceptabilité sociale", Thèse de doctorat en Sciences Humaines Appliquées, Faculté des Arts et des Sciences de l'Université de Montréal, 2017, p. 16.

²⁵⁰ Orpailleur, 32 ans.

*doivent libérer c'est tout !*²⁵¹ ». De telles déclarations traduisent un mal être viscéral et contrastent avec les propos irréalistes du Sous-Préfet de Batouri, qui semblait décrire une réalité autre que celle que vivent les populations de Kambélé lorsqu'il vantait la réussite de l'intégration chinoise au sein de ladite localité.

De plus, certains expropriés se sont vus contraints à l'exil faute de prise en compte de leurs revendications et au regard de la qualité du dédommagement chinois qu'ils ont considérés comme une moquerie. Y. Eric apporte plus d'éclaircis :

*« Quand Mme Lu a apparu dans le chantier, les populations se sont opposées qu'elle doit dédommager. Tout ce qu'elle a trouvé à donner à Monaco c'est 40 millions et ça nous a fait mal. Le gouvernement donnait 130 mille par personnes. Moi j'ai refusé de prendre cette somme. Mbombè, Guèdjè, ont aussi refusé. Nyandjon est rentré en ville parce qu'il était vraiment énervé et a même abandonné sa maison qui est ici*²⁵² ».

De pareilles dérives, en plus d'avoir généré des dysfonctionnements écologiques et des frustrations chez les habitants/employés, ont aussi entraîné diverses ripostes de la part de l'autorité administrative et des populations à Kambélé.

3- Les réactions des autorités et des populations riveraines

Elles démontrent respectivement que les autorités de la commune ainsi que leurs habitants ne sont pas de simples spectateurs face à la violation de la législation camerounaise et les abus commis par les entrepreneurs chinois. Il est à noter l'arrêté préfectoral et la sécurisation de l'accès aux mines, et, les actes de protestation des populations riveraines.

a. L'arrêté préfectoral et la sécurisation des sites miniers

Il est la première mesure conservatoire jamais prise par l'autorité administrative de Batouri dont dépend Kambélé. En effet, l'arrêté a été signé le 27 juillet 2022 par Djadai Yakouba²⁵³ qui

²⁵¹ Orpailleur, 32 ans.

²⁵² Orpailleur, 36 ans.

²⁵³ Préfet de la Kadey.

recommandait une cessation de toute activité minière dans la zone réputée aurifère de Kambélé²⁵⁴ pour causes : les morts récurrentes de personnes par noyade et éboulement, du fait du non-respect des prescriptions environnementales en la matière, et les menaces de dégradation de la route nationale 10, du fait de l'obstruction du lit des cours d'eau par les coulées boueuses²⁵⁵ pouvait-on lire.

Cela rappelle les mesures prises par Ernest Ngwaboubou²⁵⁶ qui avait constaté les activités illégales des opérateurs miniers chinois à Bétaré-Oya et a déclaré : « *Le Cameroun n'est pas un no man's land [...] le Cameroun a ses lois et ses règlements qu'il faut respecter. Il n'y a pas de raison que ceux qui viennent les foulent au pied*²⁵⁷ », ou ; Margueritte Ndeh²⁵⁸ qui avait procédé au scellage de cinq entreprises minières chinoises qui opéraient dans la même localité en 2014 sans autorisation préalable des pouvoirs publics au nom de Gipo Mining, Ging Ma SA, D'or de Lion, Danshang Ming et Fuhai Ming²⁵⁹.

Sauf qu'au lendemain dudit arrêté préfectoral, un habitant²⁶⁰ de la zone a fait savoir que certains opérateurs en occurrence Wang ne s'est pas senti concerné par la mesure conservatoire en disant qu' « *il n'y a plus de mouvement à Kambélé à part Wang, parce que lui d'abord a la tête dure. Il ne gère pas, ses chantiers de l'autre côté à chantier village continuent de tourner* ». Aussi, il menace les populations et dit à qui veut l'entendre qu'il a des contacts dans l'administration camerounaise, et que rien ne peut lui arriver²⁶¹.

Ce qui signifie que la libéralisation du secteur minier a abouti non pas à sa dépolitisation, mais au contraire à une multiplication des acteurs politiques qui y interviennent et, dans le même temps, à

²⁵⁴ Compte facebook de *Cameroon Tribune*, consulté le 28 juillet 2022 à 12h57 min, disponible sur : <https://www.facebook.com/100063586388055/posts/469371918525684/?flite=scwspnss&mibextid=2MdMz0IBIDI42w5X>.

²⁵⁵ Ibidem.

²⁵⁶ Ancien Ministre des Mines, de l'Industrie et du Développement Technologique de 2015 à 2019.

²⁵⁷ C. Locka, "Est-Cameroun : comment des élites aident les chinois à piller l'or", [En ligne], consulté le 13 août 2022 à 16h39 min, mis à jour le 28 juin 2021, disponible sur : <https://ajafe.org>.

²⁵⁸ Déléguée départementale des mines du Lom et Djerem à l'Est-Cameroun.

²⁵⁹ S.A, "Cinq entreprises clandestines démasquées dans les champs miniers de l'Est-Cameroun", [En ligne], consulté le 18 août 2022 à 00h47min, mis à jour le vendredi 21 mars 2014 à 08h45 min, disponible sur : <https://www.investiraucameroun.com>.

²⁶⁰ D'après le même informateur, les activités avaient repris leurs cours normaux le 22 août 2022.

²⁶¹ Y. Kenne, "Région de l'Est : les compagnies minières défient l'administration", [En ligne], mise à jour le 10 août 2022, consulter le jeudi 24 novembre 2022 à 17h18 min, disponible sur : <https://ecomatin.net>.

une recentralisation du pouvoir autour de l'espace présidentiel²⁶². Par conséquent, à Kambélé, derrière chaque Chinois se trouve une personnalité de la république. Et Comme ils ont des appuis très hauts, les Chinois méprisent les autorités administratives locales, la presse, les organisations de la société civile²⁶³. Certains délégués régionaux des mines ont voulu en savoir plus sur les activités des Chinois, on leur a dit d'appeler la présidence²⁶⁴.

Par ailleurs, pour sensibiliser les habitants de la localité, le Préfet et les responsables du MINMIDT de Kambélé ont procédé depuis le 30 septembre 2022²⁶⁵ à une opération de sécurisation des différents sites à travers l'implémentation des plaques de signalisation sur lesquelles il est marqué : « *chantier minier, accès interdit" ou "danger, risque d'éboulement*²⁶⁶ ». Ceci traduit une gouvernance réactive plutôt qu'anticipative qui témoigne de l'influence des opérateurs chinois sur les autorités nationales. Ainsi, les industriels miniers chinois et les cadres d'administration camerounaise sont mutuellement responsables de ce dysfonctionnement sécuritaire.

4. Les actes de protestation des populations riveraines

Ils se traduisent dans les faits par les barricades et blocages consistant à stopper momentanément les opérations d'exploitation d'or menées par les sociétés chinoises. Le nœud du problème étant les retombées sociales de l'exploitation minière pour les populations locales²⁶⁷ qui, mises de côté, pour se faire comprendre « *envahissent les carrières des chinois pour se servir en cherchant le bon caillou pour trouver de quoi manger. C'est ce qu'on appelle ici le sassayé*²⁶⁸ ». Bien que cette pratique ait le plus souvent entraîné des pertes en vies humaines comme en juin 2021 où, il a été dénombré plus d'une dizaine de morts²⁶⁹ dans la carrière de Mme Lu à Boukarou²⁷⁰.

Dans le même chapitre, les problèmes fonciers ont provoqué des altercations violentes entre exploitants miniers chinois et autochtones comme le fait savoir Y. Eric : « *les chinois avaient*

²⁶² B. Rubbers, "Les sociétés africaines face aux investissements miniers", *Politique Africaine*, N° 131, 2013, p. 19.

²⁶³ Locka, "Est-Cameroun...".

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Libam, "Batouri : on sécurise l'accès aux sites", [En ligne], dernière mise à jour le 04 octobre 2022, consulter le jeudi 24 novembre 2022 à 17h30, disponible sur : <https://cameroon-trabinune.cm>.

²⁶⁶ Ibidem.

²⁶⁷ Voundi, "Extractivisme...", p. 18.

²⁶⁸ Entretien avec Nguenam...

²⁶⁹ L. B. Ahmed, "Cameroun : au moins dix morts dans l'effondrement d'une mine d'or dans l'Est", [En ligne], consulté le 19 août 2022 à 01h14 min, mis à jour le 01 juin 2021, disponible sur : <https://www.aa.com.fr>.

²⁷⁰ Secteur de Kambélé III.

l'habitude d'arracher les terres des gens qui sont vers le marché parce qu'ils ont de l'argent. Ils sont arrivés chez mon petit frère, qui avait un site, ils ont arraché, nous avons fait de vrais problèmes jusqu'à c'est revenu à mon petit frère ». Les populations sont déterminées à défendre leurs droits malgré l'avance économique et relationnelle non-négligeable des industriels chinois.

A part dans les faits, la présence chinoise est aussi contestée dans le discours des riverains qui nourrissent une haine et de l'animosité. Cela dit, il a été donné d'entendre des phrases telles que : « *n'est-ce pas ils ont l'armée avec eux, la prochaine fois nous ne brûlerons pas que l'engin*²⁷¹ », « *à l'heure actuelle la population crève parce que le chinois est entrain de prendre l'or d'un camerounais pour partir avec* » ou "*quelqu'un comme moi, s'ils ne parviennent pas à me dédommager normalement je pourrai tuer et pas mystiquement mais face à face*". Ce genre de propos reflète donc les tensions, la discorde et l'antipathie croissante que développent les habitants de Kambélé à l'égard des ressortissants chinois.

Ainsi, la présence des compagnies chinoises à Kambélé a plus d'impacts négatifs que positifs. Bilan peu reluisant qui est analogue à ceux des autres localités de la région de l'Est telles que, Ngoe Ngoe, Ngoura ou Bétaré-Oya dans le Lom et Djérem. Cela nous permet donc d'entamer la dernière articulation de cette recherche avec les réactions locales face aux effets néfastes créés par l'exploitation minière chinoise et d'esquisser quelques propositions et recommandations dans le but d'inverser la tendance.

IV- PERSPECTIVES ET RECOMMANDATIONS

Celles-ci concernent la régularisation de la situation des travailleurs camerounais, la nécessité de fournir l'équipement de protection aux employés locaux et l'octroi d'une meilleure formation, la fermeture des sociétés dégradant l'environnement, la pertinence du triumvirat pouvoir public-opérateurs miniers chinois et communautés locales, l'opérationnalisation de la SONAMINES, la fabrication des champions locaux, l'assainissement sectoriel du Ministère des Mines, de l'Industrie et du Développement Technologique de Kambélé, la divulgation périodique des données statistiques du secteur de la mine solide, et enfin la considération des plaidoyers des organisations de la société civile.

²⁷¹ Anonymat 3, 40 ans environs.

1- Contractualisation des employés miniers locaux

Relevant du Ministère du Travail, il s'agira pour ses services déconcentrés situés à Batouri de ne plus laisser faire à leur guise tous les opérateurs chinois de Kambélé exerçant dans le secteur minier. Ce qui signifie que lesdits services doivent les contraindre à signer des contrats de travail à leurs différents employés, les affilier à la Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale, et, à respecter leur droit de se syndiquer conformément aux dispositions légales prévues par le code du travail en vigueur au Cameroun principalement en ses articles 3 et 25²⁷².

2- Fournir des équipements de protection individuelle et octroi d'une meilleure formation

Pourtant reconnues par le code du travail aux termes de son Titre VI²⁷³, il a été donné une fois de plus de constater que la santé et la sécurité des mineurs locaux sont mises à rude épreuve dans les entreprises chinoises. Il revient donc aux inspecteurs ou médecins-inspecteurs du travail de Batouri de : non seulement exiger la fourniture du matériel d'équipements de protection individuelle lié à l'activité minière, mais aussi d'adresser un rapport à la Commission Nationale de Santé et de Sécurité au Travail sur les conditions dangereuses dans lesquelles les mineurs exercent à Kambélé afin qu'elle prenne des mesures exécutoires pour protéger l'ensemble du personnel et les orpailleurs qui interviennent dans l'exploitation des mines à ciel ouvert à Kambélé. De même, l'administration d'une formation de qualité impliquerait l'institution des cours d'apprentissage de langue autrement dit du Chinois pour les locaux et le français pour les chinois dans l'optique de favoriser le brassage culturel et briser la barrière de la langue d'un côté, et de l'autre, de veiller à la formation des employés par niveau et secteur pour accroître leurs compétences techniques dans les métiers des mines en dehors de celle qui privilégie l'acquisition des compétences professionnelles sur le tas.

²⁷² Loi n°92-007 du 14 août 1992.

²⁷³ Ibid.

3- La fermeture des sociétés dégradant l'environnement

Les entreprises chinoises étant moins soucieuses des normes environnementales camerounaises dans cette partie du pays, au mépris des articles 122 et 136 du code minier, les Ministères des Mines et de l'Environnement devraient prendre leurs responsabilités en scellant ou fermant définitivement les sociétés des récidivistes. Ce qui dissuadera les futurs aventuriers et épargnera de nombreuses vies humaines qui se perdent du fait de la dangerosité des excavations pleines d'eau surtout en saison de pluie. Pour y parvenir donc, des contrôles journaliers et non saisonniers c'est-à-dire fin août pour l'argent des rentrées scolaires et fin décembre pour celui des fêtes²⁷⁴ devront être de mise. Car comme nous le certifie A. D. Martin: « *ce sont des inondations et des morts d'hommes chaque année qu'on compte ici parce que les chinois ne ferment pas leurs trous. Vraiment !* », et plus loin, depuis 2015, au moins deux cents personnes²⁷⁵ ont péri à cause de ce fait dans l'Est Cameroun.

4- La pertinence du triumvirat pouvoir public-opérateurs miniers chinois et communautés locales

Dans l'attente de la signature du décret d'application du nouveau code minier afin de rendre justice de façon optimale aux populations locales, le gouvernement devrait privilégier le triptyque pouvoir public-opérateurs miniers chinois et communautés locales. En effet, il a été observé qu'à Kambélé, la dernière partie prenante n'est pas toujours informée de la réalisation des projets miniers. Ceci par la suite crée des tensions liées à l'accaparement des terres, des bouleversements environnementaux et au mépris du droit coutumier. Or, en optant pour cette démarche, l'intégration des opérateurs chinois se fera sans grandes difficultés tout en installant un climat de confiance entre les parties prenantes.

²⁷⁴ Anonymat 1.

²⁷⁵ Compte Twitter de VOAAfrique, consulté le 26 août 2022 à 12h14 min, disponible sur : @VOAAfrique.

5- L'opérationnalisation de la SONAMINES

Face à ce que beaucoup considèrent comme un *hold-up*²⁷⁶ des ressources minières à l'heure actuelle dans cette localité par les entrepreneurs chinois, l'Etat central devrait suffisamment doter la SONAMINES en moyens financier et technique pour qu'elle assure ses missions qui sont entre autres de mener les activités d'exploration et d'exploitation des substances minérales, mais aussi de promouvoir la transformation et le conditionnement des substances minérales²⁷⁷. Plus loin, activer le mécanisme de levée de fonds en mettant à contribution la diaspora, les institutions financières nationales ou des particuliers pour gérer de façon autonome les minerais de Kambélé permettrait de ne plus se limiter à la taxe *ad valorem* de 25%. Cela représenterait un bond important en matière de développement, non seulement local, mais aussi national. Ceci éviterait notamment le type de scénario du contrat querellé précédemment évoqué.

6- La fabrication des champions locaux

Il a été constaté qu'il existe des hommes d'affaires camerounais à l'instar de Déconka qui s'est investi dans le secteur minier à Kambélé. Mais faute parfois de matériel technologique ou de moyens financiers, ils sont contraints de soit abandonner, soit recourir aux partenaires chinois en fonction du besoin. C'est alors que le gouvernement peut décider d'accompagner ces acteurs locaux dans le but d'en faire des champions nationaux qui pourront limiter la captation de ce secteur stratégique aux mains des étrangers dans cette localité. Répandu à l'échelle nationale, ce serait le Cameroun qui en sortirait gagnant.

7- L'assainissement sectoriel du Ministère des Mines, de l'Industrie et du Développement technologique de Kambélé

Enfin, le fonctionnement actuel des mines à Kambélé est gangrené par les logiques de trafic d'influence et de corruption qui ne forment pas une perspective de prospérité et de

²⁷⁶ En effet, les habitants de Kambélé décrient le fait que la richesse de leurs sous-sols soit surexploitée par les opérateurs chinois à leur détriment sans que cela n'apporte une plus-value à leur localité sous le regard complice des autorités qui ne disent mots.

²⁷⁷ Décret N° 2020/749 du 14 décembre 2020, portant création de la Société Nationale des Mines, p. 2.

développement local. La Commission Nationale Anti-Corruption (CONAC) tout comme le Contrôle Supérieur de l'Etat (CONSUPE) pourrait donc être convoquée pour mettre les autorités administratives, locales et les opérateurs chinois partisans de ces pratiques face à leurs responsabilités. Cela favoriserait une gestion efficace des activités extractives et permettra aux communautés riveraines de bénéficier de la rente et des retombées de l'exploitation minière qui sont pour l'heure la propriété de l'élite de la zone.

8- La divulgation périodique des données statistiques du secteur de la mine solide

Pour le moment, elle est faible. Par exemple, le MINMIDT ne publie pas de rapports périodiques contenant des données spécifiques et désagrégés sur le secteur extractif, tout comme les sociétés ne fournissent pas de rapports sur leurs activités dans les localités où elles sont installées. Pourtant, Le chapitre 6 du titre V du Code minier intitulé, « De la gouvernance et de la transparence dans le secteur minier », les oblige à se conformer aux exigences de traçabilité, aux règles et principes internationalement reconnus. Cette opacité ne permet donc pas au public de disposer d'informations en temps utile sur les activités extractives, et donne lieu parfois à des incohérences dans les données de la mine solide entre la SONAMINES qui est sous la tutelle du MINMIDT et certains rapports des organisations internationales²⁷⁸. Il faudrait par conséquent que le MINMIDT opte pour une option périodique de dissémination des informations statistiques de son secteur afin de se rapprocher de celles collectées par les observateurs indépendants d'une part, et d'autre part, les mettre à la disposition de tous pour un meilleur suivi-évaluation des politiques du développement de l'extractivisme-minier camerounais .

9- La considération des plaidoyers des OSC

L'analyse empirique des relations entre les organisations de la société civile camerounaise et les acteurs institutionnels qui rentrent dans le champ minier laisse voir qu'il existe un langage de

²⁷⁸ En 2017 selon le rapport du Centre Régional Africain pour le Développement Endogène Communautaire, pendant que le Cameroun déclarait avoir exporté 4 kg d'or vers les Emirats Arabes-Unis, ces derniers reconnaissaient par contre avoir importé 10,9 tonnes d'or, lire, B. Bangda, A, Malloum, "Au Cameroun, les fausses déclarations sur la production de l'or font florès", [En ligne], dernière mise à jour le 12 avril 2022, consulter le vendredi 25 novembre 2022 à 16h49 min, disponible sur : <https://ecomatin.net>.

sourds entre les deux partenaires. En effet, malgré leurs multiples productions (sous formes de rapports) et plaidoiries pour la prise en compte des impacts locaux de l'exploitation minière en général par les décideurs, il n'y a pas eu d'avancées notables. Pour preuves, en septembre 2021, le FODER a recensé 703 trous abandonnés, dont 139 lacs artificiels sur une superficie 93,66 ha²⁷⁹ à Kambélé, ou de la recommandation faite par le CRADEC²⁸⁰ et les OSC qui appellent l'Etat à s'assurer de l'effectivité et l'efficacité du mécanisme de contrôle et de suivi de la production²⁸¹ car leurs déclarations de production ne sont pas faites ou alors ne sont pas exactes²⁸². Par ailleurs, le FODER et le CRADEC soulignent qu'il faudrait que les quotes-parts destinées aux communes et communautés soient mises à leur disposition²⁸³. L'Etat camerounais, en tant que propriétaire des ressources au nom de sa population et collecteur des recettes publiques, agit comme conduit des bénéfices au reste de l'économie, y compris au niveau local²⁸⁴.

²⁷⁹ Kenne, "Région de l'Est : les compagnies minières...".

²⁸⁰ Centre Régional Africain pour le développement Endogène et de Droit Camerounais.

²⁸¹ Andzongo, "La société civile plaide pour un contrôle effectif des opérateurs miniers enclin à sous-évaluer leur production", [En ligne], mis à jour le mardi 19 mars 2022 à 14h29 min, consulter le vendredi 25 novembre 2022 à 22hh42 min, disponible sur : <https://www.investiraucameroun.com>.

²⁸² Ibidem.

²⁸³ Ibidem.

²⁸⁴ P. C. Pole, A. L. Dabalen et al (eds), *L'exploitation minière en Afrique : les communautés locales en tirent-elles parti ?*, Washington, Collection l'Afrique en Développement, 2020, p. 34.

CONCLUSION

En définitive, il était question de faire la lumière sur le rôle joué par l'élite locale dans le processus d'installation des entreprises minières chinoises disséminées dans la localité de Kambélé. Il en ressort succinctement que, l'extractivisme minier au Cameroun est encadré par un arsenal juridique dont le MINMIDT est le dépositaire central et que, le contournement des dispositions légales du code minier par un jeu de *lobbying* et la sous-traitance sont les moyens utilisés par l'élite en place qui favorise le contrôle de l'exploitation artisanale semi-mécanisée et de la petite mine à Kambélé par les opérateurs privés chinois. Néanmoins, s'ils ont depuis 2017 réussi à réaliser la construction de 04 salles de classes et de 04 forages, la maltraitance des employés locaux à laquelle se greffent la misère des populations autochtones et les dégâts causés sur l'environnement du fait de leurs activités n'ont pas d'égaux. Toutefois, l'arrêté préfectoral du 27 juillet 2022 et les barricades orchestrées par les riverains sont des signes de vitalité qui montrent que les forces locales ne sont pas passives face aux défis que posent l'extraction chinoise. Un réinvestissement de l'Etat via une synergie d'action de ses ministères qui s'inscrivent dans la chaîne de son industrie minière dans cette partie du pays qui semble être passée sous pavillon chinois et la création et promotion des champions locaux peuvent éviter la spoliation des minerais de cette cité par les investisseurs chinois. De ce fait, on peut dire sans risques de se tromper, qu'à Kambélé, la présence des sociétés extractives chinoises même si elle est le fruit du vouloir des autorités nationales et élites locales, ne participe pas suffisamment au développement socioéconomique de la localité dans la mesure où, pour ces dernières, priorité est donnée à l'extraction du précieux matériau jaune. Cependant, le cas de Kambélé n'est que le reflet du véritable paysage minier camerounais où les bénéficiaires de la rente minière sont les élites et les propriétaires des entreprises privées qui se sont apprivoisés les principaux sites de gisements nationaux qui nécessitent des moyens énormes dont- ils ne possèdent pas pour leur mise en valeur. On comprend donc pourquoi, ce secteur continue de stagner en contribuant à hauteur de moins 1% au produit intérieur brut camerounais.

ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1 : Liste non exhaustive des entreprises publiques et privées chinoises exerçant au Cameroun dans le secteur minier.

- Les entreprises publiques chinoises

NOMS	REGIONS
SINOSTEEL.CAM	Sud
SOCIETE COAST INVESTMENTS INTERNATIONAL SARL	Centre, Est, Nord
ORIENTAL MINING SARL	Sud-Ouest
LONGSHENG CAMEROON S.A	Sud, Est, Centre
PREMIER CHOOSE MINERAL RESOURCES CAMEROON S.A	Sud, Est, Adamaoua
FAMETAL MINING RESOURCES CAMEROON	Centre, Est
TIAN YU MINING	Est
CAMEROON MEIGE MINING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LTD	Adamaoua
INTERNATIONAL MINING COMPANY LTD	Est

Source : M. Stephens, Rapport de conciliation des flux financiers et des volumes relatifs à l'exploration et l'exploitation des hydrocarbures et des mines solides au titre de l'année 2013, ITIE Cameroun, 2015, pp. 164-170.

- Les entreprises privées

NOMS	REGIONS
GOOD LUCK	EST
EUROPE-AFRIQUE	EST
ISMAEL	EST
MENCHENG	EST
SICOMCN ENGINE	EST
XIN YUAN	EST

YU MINING	EST
PEACE MINING	EST
HONG-KONG	EST
Gipo Mining	EST
Ging Ma SA	EST
D'or de Lion	EST
Danshang Ming	EST
Fuhaï Ming	EST
Huating	EST
LIN XING RONG DONGUE	EST

Source : M. B. M. Nya à partir des données recueillies sur le terrain.

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N°	Noms et Prénoms	Age	Fonction	Lieu et date d'entretien
01	A. Dimbélé	39 ans	Orpailleur	Kambélé III, 01 juin 2022
02	A. Serge	20 ans	Ouvrier de l'entreprise Mencheng	Kambélé III, 03 juin 2022

03	Anonymat 1	43 ans		Kambélé III, 07 Juin 2022.
04	Anonymat 2	59 ans		Kambélé III, 02 juin 2022.
05	Anonymat 3	32 ans		Kambélé III, 05 juin 2022.
06	A. Victor	14 ans	Orpailleur	Kambélé III, 03 juin 2022
07	B. Bel	59 ans	Chef de 3 ^{ème} degré Kambélé III	Kambélé III, 02 juin 2022.
08	D. Roger	34 ans	Chauffeur de l'entreprise Mencheng	Kambélé III, 03 juin 2022.
09	D. Daniel	63 ans environ	Chef de 3 ^{ème} degré Kambélé I	Kambélé I, 02 juin 2022.
10	D.F Elysée	28 ans	Moto taximan	Batouri, 04 juin 2022.
11	D. Ndocko	24 ans	Ouvrier Mencheng	Kambélé III, 02 juin 2022
12	E. Essian Franck	36 ans	Sous-Préfet	Batouri, 02

	Ghislain		de Batouri	juin 2022.
13	E. Pierre	36 ans	Orpailleur	Kambélé III, 03 juin 2022.
14	M. Patrick	30 ans	Ouvrier Mencheng	Kambélé III, 03 juin 2022.
15	M. Thadée	28 ans	Ancien employé de Zhengouo	Kambélé II, 03 juin 2022.
16	M. Z. Roger	30 ans environ	Instituteur Contractuel à l'école publique de Kambélé III.	Kambélé III, 02 juin 2022.
17	N. Rosalie	66 ans environs	Cheffe de 3 ^{ème} degré de Narke II	Narke II, 1 ^{er} Juin 2022.
18	N. B Mulema	28 ans	Orpailleur	Kambélé III, 03 juin 2022.
19	N. Lucien	47 ans	Ouvrier Zenghouo	Kambélé II, 01 juin 2022.
20	N. Eric	32 ans	Orpailleur	Kambélé III, 03 juin 2022.
21	S. Moïse	32 ans	Orpailleur	Kambélé

				III, 03 juin 2022.
22	Anonymat 3		Superviseur Pelle d'Or	Kambélé III, 05 juin 2022.
23	T. James	39 ans	Mécanicien Mencheng	Kambélé III, 01 juin 2022.
24	T. Amadou	22 ans	Chauffeur Mencheng	Kambélé III, 02 juin 2022.
25	T. Rodolphe	34 ans	Ouvrier Mencheng	Kambélé III, 05 juin 2022.
26	V. Eric	35 ans	Chargé de Cours à l'Ecole Normale de Bertoua filiale Géographie	Yaoundé, 15 mai 2022.
27	Y. Eric	36 ans	Orpailleur	Kambélé III, 06 juin 2022.
28	Z.A Martin	27 ans	Orpailleur	Kambélé II, 02 juin 2022.

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3. Redefining Labor Norms and Practices in Africa- China Projects

**CHINESE MINERS, COMMUNITY RESISTANCE AND COLLABORATION IN
GHANA**

**By
Isaac Odoom
Carleton University**

ABSTRACT

The paper examines how youth in mining communities accommodate and resist Chinese mining activities in Ghana. Based on empirical research in Ghana, the paper first explores why and how Chinese miners have become involved in small-scale gold mining in Ghana, an activity reserved for Ghanaian citizens. Second, the paper probes the extent of collaboration, contestation, and connivance between Chinese miners, local communities, and Ghanaian public officials. Departing from the dominant approach in the literature that focuses primarily on how Chinese actors determine Ghanaian realities, this study shows dynamic interactions, collaboration, contestation, and different forces that shape the terms of Ghanaian and Chinese interactions. The paper argues that while collaboration and resistance practices in Ghana against Chinese mining activities point to evidence of local agency, they reflect real oppositional politics borne out of struggle against state neglect, inequality, and youth poverty in Ghana.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The persistent presence of Chinese miners in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale mining sector has led to a proliferation of publications in the last decade (Ocquaye 2023; Olander 2021; Botchwey et al., 2019; Boafo et al., 2019, Hilson et al., 2014; Odoom 2015; Crawford et al., 2015; Aidoo, 2016). The media and, more recently, the academic literature offer various reasons and motivations behind illegal Chinese mining in Ghana (See Ocquaye 2023; Antwi-Boateng and Akudugu 2020; Botchwey et al., 2019; Debrah & Asante, 2019; Boafo et al., 2019; Crawford & Botchwey, 2017; Aidoo, 2016; Crawford et al., 2015; Hilson et al., 2014). Some have focused mainly on the environmental impacts of Chinese mining activities (see e.g., Armah et al., 2013); others have looked at the implications of the arrival of Chinese miners on Ghana's ASM sector (see Hilson et al 2014); yet others have examined the increasing level of anti-Chinese sentiments (Aidoo 2016), and how state corruption fuels the phenomenon of illegal mining (Crawford and Botchwey 2017). Most research have focused on Chinese miners' practices and their implications and consequences for Ghana. Few analyses show how community actors respond to Chinese miners and shape state policy, denying the agency of local actors (See Hausermann, et al, 2020; Adobor 2023).²⁸⁵

This paper aims to contribute to the existing gap by building on and extending growing research on (Chinese) illegal mining in Ghana, locally referred to as '*galamsey*' (a local term originating from the phrase 'gather them and sell', Rambaud et al., 2000). By exploring the strategic ways Ghanaian actors accommodate and resist Chinese involvement in the artisanal, small-scale mining (ASM) economy, the paper sheds light on the extent and limits of political and social agency of Ghanaian actors and institutions in their engagement with their Chinese counterparts.

The paper analyzes primary data collected in Ghana between 2012 and 2017 and draws on recent literature on Chinese mining in Ghana. It focuses on mining activities in two communities within the Amensie West district of the Ashanti region of Ghana. The communities were selected based

²⁸⁵ Notably, some of the recent scholarship on the broader field of Africa-China engagements has focused on African agency across the African continent (see for example, Mohan and Lampert, 2013; Corkin, 2013; Power, Mohan and Tan-Mullins, 2013; Haman and Brown, 2013; Gadzala, 2015; Aidoo, 2016; Amoah, 2012; 2019; Debrah and Asante, 2019; Odoom, 2019; Soule-Kohndou, 2020; Bhamidipati and Hansen, 2021).

on the pervasiveness of Chinese mining activities and the impact of community response. In-depth interviews of farmers, opinion leaders, youth groups, traditional leaders, and artisanal miners were conducted. Additionally, interviews and communications were sought with Ghanaian policy makers and civil society groups at the forefront of recent national campaigns against illegal small-scale including the #STOPGALAMSEYNOW and #OperationVanguard by the state. Civil Society groups, policymakers and the local residents interviewed cast considerable light on the dynamics of the persistent Chinese presence in Ghana's informal gold mining economy, and the different forms of responses it has engendered.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, I offer a brief historical overview of the small-scale mining industry and its regulatory framework as well as its challenges. The examination of the ASM sector helps not only to account for the significant underlying issues leading to the emergence of foreign miners into a sector reserved for Ghanaians, but also to understand community resistance and accommodation within the prevailing conditions. The next section conceptualises resistance as agency to account for how Ghanaian actor express agency in their interactions. Next, I examine the presence and (il)legality of Chinese miners in Ghana within the context of growing relations between Ghana and China and the strategic responses of local residents and governmental institutions. In the final section, I examine the implications of the Chinese miners' impasse on Ghana-China relations and offers suggestions for policy making on both Ghanaian and Chinese sides.

2.0 CONCEPTUALIZING RESISTANCE AS AGENCY

A focus on agency requires identifying specific *agents* (be it political elites, community leaders or ordinary people). It also involves accounting for the socio-cultural *context* within which they act and the *goals* they pursue. This in turn demands the examination of the *tools* different actors use to express agency (Scott 1985; Wight 1999). If local mining communities wield influence and exercise agency in their interactions with their Chinese counterparts, when and which tools do they use to express agency? Contextualising and integrating local agency and resistance within the national and sometimes the global setting can bring to the fore the conditions in which the different *forms, agents, sites and strategies* of resistance emerge (Chin and Mittelman 1997: 36).

Resistance in the context of Ghanaian Chinese encounters is conducted individually and/or collectively. It involves agents such as government officials, state institutions, communities and ordinary people. These acts of resistance are carried out through everyday life expressions in the public sphere involving protests, confiscation of properties and non-cooperation.

The acts of local resistance that I discuss below are directed at blocking further alienation, expropriation, marginalisation and environmental degradation in a sustained manner. In many ways these acts represent a project of restitution and self-determination arising from exploitation and perceived injustices perpetuated by the state, entrepreneurial migrants and transnational corporations. To further investigate the idea of resistance as agency, I draw upon the experiences of Ghanaian actors' resistance as social and political agency in the face of and in response to the adverse impact of Chinese presence and activities in Ghana's economy. Gramsci's argument on the 'ambiguity of resistance' (Mittelman & Chin, 2005:17-27) is of importance here given the complexities and fluid dynamics of resistance in Ghana-China interactions. In this regard, I acknowledge that local resistance in the Ghanaian-Chinese interaction could be dialogical, ambiguous, and even contradictory depending on existing exigencies and the actors involved. Also, resistance in the form of public protest may or may not readily result in outstanding outcomes such as a "revolution" but they alter the behaviour, transform and/or reproduce the structures (be it the state or foreign actors) to which they are targeted and are also linked to simple changes in the everyday lives of people (Gill, 2008).

3.0 AN OVERVIEW OF SMALL-SCALE MINING IN GHANA

Small-scale mining has been a key feature in Ghana's mining industry for centuries. However, until the 1980s, small-scale mining in Ghana, as in other developing countries, was seen and treated as an informal sector and largely unregulated and unsupported by governmental bodies (Hilson 2001; 2014). In fact, during the colonial era policies were enacted to prohibit or limit indigenes from engaging in small-scale mining (Aryee et al, 2003). Such legislation ensured that large-scale mining, which was dominated by European mining companies, received no interferences from local miners (Ofosu-Mensah, 2010). Restrictions to small-scale mining continued during the early independence years until the 1980s when the government, with the encouragement and support

from international agencies, initiated policies to formalise and regularize small-scale mining operations in Ghana (Hilson, 2001). A series of laws, including *The Small-Scale Gold Mining Law*, *The Mercury Law* and *The Precious Minerals and Marketing Corporation Law*, were passed at the end of 1980s to fully regularize small-scale mining (Hilson, 2001:21). These laws and regulations, which were implemented as part of the Economic Recovery Programmes and the Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1980s, targeted the small-scale mining sector with the view to establishing the basis for local miners to register and formalise their activities (Hilson, 2001).

After decades of official policies to promote small-scale mining as a catalyst for poverty reduction and sustainable development ([Aryee, 2003](#)), illegal mining in Ghana continues to be widespread. In fact, these policies and regulations seemed to have further marginalised and disempowered prospective licensees (Hilson et al., 2014: 294). As a result, many small-scale mining operators continue to mine outside of the legal framework. While many factors account for this irregularity, research has shown that this failure can be attributed to lack of serious commitment on the part of government to prioritise ASM as well as government and donor agencies' perception of the sector's operators as people merely looking to 'get rich quick'—without considering that most of operators in ASM are instead driven by economic hardship, not a desire to 'get rich quick' (Hentschel et al., 2002; Hilson, 2010; Hilson et al., 2014).

The little support provided to the ASM industry and ironically the enormous demands for formalisation placed on local operators have proved highly inappropriate over the last several years. This discrepancy has fuelled the growth of two broad categories of small-scale gold miners: those that have registered and licensed their operations and those (the majority) that operate illegally (Sarpong, 2014: 2). It is estimated that over 85 percent of ASM miners in Ghana operating without license. Part of the reason for this high number of unlicensed miners is that the procedures for registration to obtain concessions of land are considered cumbersome and complex, requiring the completion of several forms, and final approval from governmental authorities (Hilson, 2001: 21).

Moreover, the process is largely voluntary and small-scale miners in the business mainly to survive cannot afford the capital requirements and therefore have no option than to operate without official

registration and license (Nyame and Blocher, 2010; Sarpong, 2010; Low, 2012). But the risks associated with operating small-scale mining (without license) are high. Local miners are subjected to constant 'raids' by security agencies. Security contractors of transnational mining companies assisted by armed police and soldiers often conduct "raids" or "operations" ostensibly to arrest or ward off alleged illegal small-scale mining operators in the concessions of large-scale mining companies and other demarcated areas. These "raids" tend to be violent, and invasion of communities often results in gross human rights abuses. Furthermore, small-scale mining is generally seen as a tedious job that is labour-intensive, with the use of fairly rudimentary tools (Hilson 2001; Aryee et al., 2003) with groups of people coming together to clear the vegetation, dig the earth, wash and sift the minerals. People who go into alluvial mining are considered brave and adventurous because of the potential risks inherit with the nature of the work. Over the years, many miners have died in their own pits due to walls collapsing and falling on them while underground (Sarpong, 2010). However, these periodic government and the industry-sponsored 'raids' of illegal mining sites and frequent deaths associated with mining activities, not to mention physical hazards and illness, have not deterred operators from ASM (Hilson et al., 2007).

Galamsey activities have expanded significantly since the 1980s and continue to be popular in mining areas in Ghana despite the high risks associated with them (Nyame et al., 2009; Tschakert, 2009). This dramatic increase in illegal ASM in Ghana can be attributed to the high rate of youth unemployment and the growing poverty prevailing in many mining communities in Ghana. Mining communities in Ghana have some of the highest incidence of unemployed youth. Some of these youth were former workers who have been laid off by multinational mining companies, while others are farmers who have lost their arable lands leaving them with the only option of digging for minerals (Banchirigah and Hilson, 2010). As largely a poverty driven activity, ASM miners do not usually see their activities as illicit or at least they do not want to accept it as such. The state, large-scale mining companies and the media tend to characterise *galamsey* as a nuisance, a menace and even a threat to the operators, their communities, concession landholders, and the nation. Due to their encroachment on concession lands procured by national and multinational mining companies, their use of dangerous mercury substance in gold extraction, as well as social cost to

communities, illegal artisanal miners in Ghana are marginalised and even criminalised (Tschakert, 2009: 24; Carson et al. 2005).

Despite the problems small-scale mining operations bring and the anti-galamsey discourse, the sector has also generated employment and contributed millions of dollars to the national economy since 1989 (Aryee, 2003; Auty, 1998; Carson et al., 2005). The state officially purchases *galamsey* gold, via agents licensed through the Precious Mineral Marketing Corporation. From these indicators, the state should be committed to support ASM as a means of reducing poverty and ensuring sustainable development in mining communities. Yet, unlike the country's large-scale mining sector, very little has been done to help local miners navigate the complex regulatory framework. This lack of support accentuated by the difficulties experienced with registration, payments to state institutions, and challenges with accessing viable technological and financial support have combined to discourage local gold miners from securing licenses (Hilson et al., 2014: 297).

Local miners must navigate these already costly processes along with frequent payment of bribes to landowners and traditional authorities and other middlemen before they can be sure of getting access to a parcel of land. Thus, in sum, state policies or lack thereof over the years have frustrated and further marginalized Ghanaian *galamsey* operators, leading some of them to resort to unorthodox means to continue to stay in small-scale gold mining, although even many registered operators need financial and technological assistance (Hilson et al., 2014: 298). As discussed below, within this environment of neglect, many local gold miners have sought partnership and assistance through unconventional means with Chinese nationals whose presence in Ghana has increased in the last decade.

4.0 CHINESE MINERS IN GHANA

Since the mid-2000s several Chinese migrants, traders, investors and temporary workers have entered Ghana on an increasing scale (see Ho 2008; Hilson et al 2014; Crawford 2017; Botchwey et al., 2019). Many of these Chinese nationals have come to Ghana on the back of growing relations between Ghana and China. While some studies suggest that China's infrastructure-based

development assistance to African countries has led to *official* dispatch of thousands of Chinese labourers to Africa (Tan-Mullins et al., 2010), there is little evidence this is happening in Ghana, where there are a number of Chinese infrastructure projects, including the Bui Dam and the Atuabo Gas project and recent Sinohydro-Ghana Bauxite deal. But certainly, it could be argued that the growing ‘visibility’ of China in Ghana has made Chinese entry into Ghana easier in the last decade.

While most Chinese nationals that have entered Ghana since the mid-2000s are engaged in productive legal activities, increasing numbers have entered into illegal artisanal and small-scale mining. According to the Ghana Immigration Service, some of these migrants use tourist visas to enter Ghana via neighbouring countries and operate mining sites without working visas. As noted, The Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703), which was enacted to replace the Minerals and Mining Law, 1986 (PNDCL 153), prohibits non-Ghanaians from engaging in ASM. Thus, the emergence of the Chinese into the ASM sector and the proliferation of their activities suggest weaknesses in state agencies enforcement of rules and more importantly gaps in the minerals and mining legal framework. Taking advantage of government’s inability to properly regulate the ASM sector, Chinese miners have entered into *galamsey* in Ghana, raising concerns about environmental and social cost impact of their mining activities.

4.1 The (il)legality and Partnership with Chinese Miners

Before proceeding further, it is important to clarify a few things about the Chinese miners in Ghana. First, it should be noted that the (il)legality of Chinese mining activities in Ghana is ambiguous. As stated above, according to the Minerals and Mining Law, the small-scale mining sector is reserved for Ghanaians, so the law excludes foreigners. However, Ghanaian law allows foreigners to assist Ghanaian small-scale miners technically and financially in the form of mine support services. Consequently, some of the Chinese enter into the small-scale mining as goods and services providers and then later partner with Ghanaians who front the applications for land concessions. Thus, many of the Chinese small-scale gold miners are in the possession of valid concession rights (through partnerships and alliances with Ghanaians), although it is a fact that some of the miners are in the country and the mining sites without valid visas and work permits.

Those who have concession rights have them through Ghanaians potentially backed by local officials often well aware that these rights are given to Chinese and other foreign miners. Ghanaians go through the right process to get mining licences after which they sell the licences to the Chinese, transfer the licence or enter into partnership with them. What this means is that on paper Ghanaians own the small-scale mining ‘companies’ yet, in practice, it is the Chinese and other foreigners who operate them. This is the case because most local miners are unable to afford the cost of licensing to operate as registered small-scale gold miner. As discussed earlier, although small-scale mining in Ghana, as in other developing countries, plays an important economic role, it is dominated by socially and economically marginalised and disadvantaged communities who resort to mining to escape poverty, unemployment and landlessness (Bush 2009; Hilson 2012; Armah et al 2013). Most small-scale miners in Ghana cannot afford heavy machinery; their mining involves a mixture of manual digging and semi-mechanised processing, using small diesel crushers and technique of mercury amalgamation (Siegel, 2013; Hilson et al., 2014). Notably, the arrival of Chinese miners in Ghana’s ASM sector has since changed this dynamic. The Chinese have introduced new technology and machinery into the sector, thereby transforming the traditional method of pickaxe, shovels and pans. They have introduced a hybrid model that combines mechanized industrial mining techniques and equipment (trench drills, wash plants, insuction equipment, bulldozers, excavators etc) with the mobility of small-scale mining. Along with technological changes came big capital and intensification of production. Areas of land are now mined in weeks, which previously could take years. These practices are attractive to the local mines as they potentially increase the amount of gold: hence the increasing partnership with the Chinese. A local miner interviewed had this to say:

You know this business now requires big money, but I don’t have it so the Chinese people are sponsoring me, because I have the license and they have the money. Of course, I know that some people have also sold their licenses to the Chinese. Whether it is legal or illegal, I do not know.

Another local miner said he has partnered with the Chinese because they have the needed equipment:

I am a Ghanaian and I go and acquire the mineral license and concession from the authorities but due to the fact that I don't have the logistics and the machinery to work so I have to work with the Chinese who have the equipment.

The intensification of production as a result of the presence of Chinese miners comes with large-scale environmental degradation, destruction of land and water bodies. And so, while Chinese mining activities have been welcomed by those who benefit directly (such as farm-owners, chiefs, local politicians, local gold miners among others), on the whole, and as a result of the telling impact on the environment, farm produce and water bodies, the Chinese mining has created anger, frustration and protest from members of affected Ghana mining communities. For local residents the feeling of a sense of loss and damage to natural resources generates discontent and animosity towards foreign miners.²⁸⁶

Second, the Chinese who are involved in the small-scale mining sector belong to a relatively small group of Chinese who appear independent, not directly linked to Chinese government or even known to the Chinese embassy, according to Chinese officials in Ghana. Obviously, several factors account for Chinese migration into Ghana's gold mining sector, and it's certainly not a mere coincidence that Chinese engagements in *galamsey* in Ghana has grown around the same time that Beijing's political and economic interests in sub-Saharan Africa in general are at an all-time high (see Botchwey et al., 2019; Antwi-Boateng & Akudugu, 2021).

Ghana is the second largest gold producer in Africa after South Africa and the price of gold was soaring at the time of increasing Chinese migration to Ghana. As reported by Chinese media, "most young men from Shanglin County could only earn 1,000 yuan a month or less as a farmer, but they

²⁸⁶ Other nationalities such as Indians and Serbs (Armah et al 2013: 97), however, are involved in the "illegal" gold mining in Ghana, meaning the Chinese miners are but one group of foreign nationals. As I will examine below, what is curious about the Chinese miners are the vast numbers, how they got into Ghana's ASM in the first place and why their presence and activities have led to clashes with mining communities.

could make about 10,000 yuan a month in Ghana.”²⁸⁷ For many of the Chinese, the decision to move to Ghana was enticing and life changing. Most of the first Chinese miners in Ghana came from Shanglin County, a mining community in Guangxi province in China following the collapse and shut down of the mining activity in that locality.²⁸⁸ That said, other factors have certainly made Chinese entry possible, including the informal character of the small-scale mining sector in Ghana, the growing presence of Chinese investment in Ghana and a fluidity of migration between Ghana and China, catalysed by trading networks which have galvanised since the launch of the ‘Going Out Policy’ (Hilson et al 2014: 297; Botchwey et al., 2019; Antwi-Boateng & Akudugu, 2021).

5.0 CHINESE MINERS AND THEIR ‘HOST’ COMMUNITIES IN GHANA

The two communities at the centre of this study were visibly enduring the effect of systemic and mechanised drilling of the land for gold at the time of my research visit. Farmlands had been bulldozed for their gold content and left unclaimed. Roads and bridges essential for commute and for transportation to nearby markets were flooded because streams have been re-routed. Kofi, a local resident, complained of the destruction:

The Chinese don’t care; once they come in, they erect their tent in the bush, they clear the forest and farms, they dig with their machines, wash, crush, and separate the soil from the gold. If the area they are exploiting is done, they move to another piece of land and clear the land, which has farm crops.... This river [pointing his hand] used to flow this way, now they have redirected it.... Within 3 months the whole area is destroyed. Why should that be?

²⁸⁷ See: “Low costs and huge profits irresistible lure for Chinese to mine Ghana's gold” *South China Morning Post* (June 2013): available at <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1255126/low-costs-and-huge-profits-irresistible-lure-chinese-mine-ghanas-gold> accessed March 4, 2023

²⁸⁸ This was confirmed to me during a discussion with a Chinese academic in Beijing, March 2014. See also report in the Chinese news media: “Low costs and huge profits irresistible lure for Chinese to mine Ghana's gold” *South China Morning Post* (June 2013): available at <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1255126/low-costs-and-huge-profits-irresistible-lure-chinese-mine-ghanas-gold> accessed July 20, 2013

Similarly, Mr P.²⁸⁹ expressed worry about the effect of the mining activities on their water bodies and the environment:

Look at the road to the school, look at the buildings.... As for these people [Chinese miners] they are destroying the river, and the people cannot use it for anything.... They have destroyed all the food crops. Look, it's been barely two months, but look at all these [pointing to mine site]... They have destroyed the environment.

Ataa, a young woman I met at the marketplace in Manso-Nsiena, described how she felt when she saw local people 'selling' land for money: "just last week I witnessed a family taking some amount of money from the Chinese; 'selling' their farmland for money. I almost cried because I could tell the amount was not worth it and they were going to lose their farm produce too." Ataa was kind enough to take me and my research assistant to other locations where Chinese miners were digging for gold. She was sceptical of the contribution of the miners to the community: "it's not as if they [Chinese] like us. They do not buy from our market; they bring in their food at the back of their trucks, and they build their tent and stay in the bush for their mining activities."

Chinese gold mining in Manso-Nsiena also has negative social impact. Residents explained how illegal mining was affecting school children's daily schedule and preparation to school. Mr P complained about some of the negative social impact of the activities of the Chinese miners:

In the morning when they [Chinese miners] come to the borehole to fetch water they tell everybody to leave. If not they will give a warning shot. They come with big tanks and take the water and when they come, they prevent the people from taking the water. As a result, students who are supposed to go to school in the morning around 7:30am end up going to school around 10am because they have to wait for their turn to get water.

Community outrage and finger pointing were evident in a community meeting that was set up in one of the communities to discuss the growing problem of Chinese mining. Community members wanted to find solutions to the looming problem, but they ended up arguing about who was to blame for allowing the Chinese into their community. One of the reasons why small-scale mining

²⁸⁹ Mr P (not his real name) is an opinion leader who requested anonymity due to fear of victimisation. He claimed some local officials had threatened him, ironically, because of his criticism of the Chinese miners. He agreed to meet for the interview at a location outside of his hometown (Manso-Nsiena).

in Ghana often lead to violent clashes with the local people is because the local people are not always involved in the decisions over land concessions. For example, it is possible that locals will wake up one day and suddenly find a group of foreigners who may claim to have the right to mine for gold in farmlands they have used for many generations. These temporary ‘owners’ of the land or concession holders (concessions are valid for a limited period of time) tend to defend their newly acquired land with sophisticated weapons. For instance, Chinese miners use guns at their sites, claiming that they do so to defend themselves from robbers and other attackers.

5.1 Connivence with local chiefs

The raging anger of local residents is not only targeted at the Chinese or the government agencies that have failed to protect them. Some community leaders and local chiefs are accused of conniving with the Chinese to mine the gold in exchange for money. In the Ashanti region and Ghana as a whole, land is allocated through the paramount chief, or *Omanhene*, of the locality and the hierarchy of sub-chiefs operating under the Ashanti King. Therefore, it is almost impossible for concession holders to have the land without the consent or at least awareness of the chiefs. But some chiefs are deeply involved in illegal mining activities in their communities. A local miner in Manso-Nsiena indicated that the chiefs gave the land to the Chinese miners and 10 percent of their output goes back to the chiefs. But one of the Chief claimed innocence:

I have no idea of what the Chinese miners were doing here. All I know is a native of the town came to me to mine on the land and I told them to go to the Mineral Commission, that only the Mineral Commission can give them the license. Since then, I haven't heard anything. It was only two days ago that a citizenry of the town came to report to me that the land is being spoiled.

Responding to the role the local chief play in the illegal mining activity, an official of the Minerals Commission said some Ghanaians acquire the land and in turn sublet their licenses to Chinese and other nationals. He claimed that behind every illegal Chinese activity at the community level there is likely a local opinion leader, a chief, a farmer, a farm owner involved. He stated further:

I have been told that a number of chiefs are involved, but I must say there are some chiefs who are standing against illegal mining, and they insist on letting them [Chinese] go. So, you must understand that not all chiefs are with illegal miners.

5.2 State/Police Inaction

Meanwhile the youth in the affected mining communities were convinced that somebody must stop the miners from further destroying their community. However, they also knew that it was not going to be the police or any state institution because local authorities have not been responsive to their call for help. As far as they were concerned, the Ghanaian state has not only been unable to regulate small-scale mining; it has failed to protect communities from the adverse effect of irresponsible gold mining. In view of the failure of the state to stop the illegal mining activities of the Chinese miners, Mr P., who was mobilising the youth in the affected communities, offered the following observation:

They [Chinese miners] did not show that they would leave. It was up to us. The police people were not coming. We had to do something. We had to defend ourselves and our community.²⁹⁰

In the past, some of the youth in the affected communities had signalled their opposition to the actions of the miners by destroying some properties belonging to the Chinese miners. This followed a report that in one village the Chinese miners allegedly shot a local man in the thigh while attempting to reach his farm. Upon hearing this, the villagers retaliated by setting fire to an excavator belonging to the miners.²⁹¹ The Chinese miners will often fire warning shots to ward off local residents, but as expected, the firing of guns in turn infuriates local residents, leading to misunderstanding and conflict, as Mr P. lamented:

They [Chinese] walk into our country illegally and engage in illegal activity that destroy our river, they drop cyanide and mercury into our rivers that we drink and still have the audacity to hold guns to fight Ghanaians. What do they take us for?²⁹²

In July of 2012 the Youth in the Manso-Nsiena community embarked on what Mr P. described as ‘massive demo’ (or public demonstration). This protest was organised a few days before Mr P (the ‘leader’ of the youth group) arrived in the town from another location (he had been away from town after there was a threat on his life from some local supporters of the Chinese miners) and

²⁹⁰ Interview with Mr P. Kumasi, Ghana, August 2012.

²⁹¹ Cited in Siegel, S., 2012. “The missing ethics of mining”. *Ethics & International Affairs*. 27 (1), 3-17

²⁹² Interview with Mr P. Kumasi, Ghana, August 2012.

noticed that the destruction to the land and property was getting worse. As he described, there were about six different groups of illegal Chinese miners operating at the Manso-Nsiena area, a predominantly farming community of about 1,000 inhabitants.

On that fateful July day when the youth group approached the mining site to demand them to leave the community because of their destruction, the Chinese fired warning shots. The warning shots went on for some time, forcing three men from the community to fire back. The scene was dramatic, but there were no casualties, and the protest march went on for some time before armed policemen arrived from Manso Nkwanta, a nearby town, to save the situation from further deterioration.

The news of the protest and the ensuing fragile security in the communities reached almost every corner of Ghana. Radio stations, television networks and social media were abuzz with the news of the confrontation as some journalists working on the story captured the incident and reported. When the video footage of the confrontation and the extent of damage to the environment were put in the public domain, the Ghanaian public was outraged and agitated over the destruction caused by illegal mining. Most people were upset by the lack of oversight and the failure of state institutions to prevent the crisis, yet others were also outraged about the role some Ghanaian citizens played by encouraging or benefiting from the illegal mining activities.

The anger and frustrations from among the public were also accompanied by a general recognition that the bold mobilisation of the disgruntled youth finally exposed such illegal mining activities as a national issue. The protest or ‘demo’ showed how the youth of the affected communities mobilised in the face of threat to their community and livelihood. They did so by employing the means most available to them by protesting against the activities of the Chinese miners.²⁹³ The confrontation from the youth led to the arrest of some of the Chinese miners and a temporal suspension of mining activities in the two communities under study. Eventually, it also prompted a government response in the form of a national task-force and more importantly broader joint Ghana-China efforts to prevent future re-occurrence.

²⁹³ Interview with Mr P. Kumasi, Ghana, August 2012

After a rather long period of growing public pressure, Ghana's new president John Mahama²⁹⁴ in May 2013 finally established an Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Illegal Mining. The terms of reference of the taskforce were to 'seize all the equipment the illegal miners use, arrest and prosecute perpetrators whether they be Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians.'²⁹⁵ The taskforce coordinated the work of a newly convened Operations Team that included staff of the National Security Council, the Ghana Immigration Service, personnel of the Ghana Police Service and the Ghana Armed Forces.

Some members of the public and other commentators saw the government's taskforce as too late and a façade aimed at pacifying an agitated public considering that it took about a year for its formation. Some commentators suggested that the delay in action against illegal Chinese miners was due, in part, to protracted government deliberations concerned that forceful action against the Chinese miners could deteriorate relations with China (Hilson et al 2014: 293). While the Ghanaian government denies this claim, such trepidation of potential loss of development support from foreign interlocutors is problematic. What it means is that, for example, although the state may consider the presence and activities of Chinese as illegal, it may not want to overly 'offend' foreign 'patrons' because of fear of losing development assistance. This patron-client relationship in many ways forecloses African agency (see Jackson 1993; Comaroff, and Comaroff, 2006). As trade and diplomatic relations between Ghana and China are soaring, public perception that Ghanaian officials did exercise some leniency in dealing with the impasse of Chinese miners in Ghana finds traction among many observers.

The mining taskforce was also accused of targeting and destroying equipment belonging to Chinese and some local miners. But the Minister of Interior, Alhaji Fuseini, who was the head of the task force, indicated that "he does not begrudge Chinese miners for aspiring to improving their economic status in Ghana but emphasised that endeavours of all foreign nationals must be prosecuted within the confines of the laws of Ghana." The Minister announced that the Inter-Ministerial Task Force against illegal mining was reclaiming lands degraded by illegal miners and

²⁹⁴ Ghana's president, John Atta Mills died in office in 2012.

²⁹⁵ See Peacefmonline: 'Task Force against illegal mining refutes allegations', available at <http://news.peacefmonline.com/pages/news/201306/166619.php> accessed June 15, 2014

indicated that government would welcome Chinese assistance for the exercise as a goodwill gesture to reflect the new Ghana-China relations.²⁹⁶

Later that year a Chinese team of personnel from the Chinese Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Public Security arrived in Ghana to discuss with their Ghanaian counterparts the issues linked to Chinese citizens. This visit followed a report by the Chinese media that a Chinese man was killed in October of 2013 by Ghanaian military police in the Ashanti region of Ghana.²⁹⁷ The Chinese embassy in Accra was unhappy about this incident and also expressed concern about the detention of over 100 Chinese nationals on suspicion of illegal mining. This treatment of Chinese nationals led to an investigation by Ghanaian authorities following a formal protest by the Chinese embassy in Accra.

In another interesting twist to the mining impasse, Chinese media reported that hundreds of residents of the Shanglin County in China took to the streets to demand the help of the Chinese government for their relatives in Ghana who were being chased down by Ghanaian task force for illegal mining. As stated earlier, most of the miners in Ghana came from a Shanglin, a small mining town in the Guangxi province of China. The protests in China raised fears of reprisals against Ghanaians in China but no incidents like that were reported.

Following the operations of the mining task force, some Chinese miners voluntarily opted to be repatriated back home and the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) granted their request after screening them to determine their nationalities.²⁹⁸ The screening also helped GIS to establish how the Chinese entered the country in the first place and where they carried out their illegal mining activities. The Inter-Ministerial Task force established in 2013 to deal with illegal Chinese miners succeeded in deporting over 4000 Chinese nationals some through voluntary deportation.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ See “Chinese Diplomat Calls for New Era in Ghana-China Relations.” *Africa News Service* 12 July 2013. *World History in Context*. Accessed December 8, 2014.

²⁹⁷ See: *China Daily*: “Ghana detains 100 Chinese for ‘illegal’ mining” available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2012-10/15/content_15816410.htm accessed July 11, 2014

²⁹⁸ See: Myjoyonline: “Don’t arrest us; we are ready to go - illegal Chinese miners tell immigration” <http://edition.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201306/107567.php> accessed June 30, 2015

²⁹⁹ See: The Guardian, “Ghana deports thousands in crackdown on illegal Chinese goldminers” <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/15/ghana-deports-chinese-goldminers> accessed August 15, 2013

However, as discussed below deporting thousands of Chinese nationals did not solve or end the problem of illegal mining in Ghana, nor did it end the presence of foreign miners including the Chinese. In Ghana, such everyday forms of resistance by ordinary people open up new possibilities for youth in mining communities. Yet, state neglect and successive governments' failure to formalise small-scale mining and to see that economic deprivation as the main driving force behind illegal mining activities, prevent the possibility of finding lasting solution to Ghana's small-scale mining sector.

These expressions of agency to challenge the status quo amid state failure converges with public support to bring about changes even if they do not appear overnight. In recent times, civil society groups have joined forces with mining communities that suffer from illegal mining to fight against galamsey through agenda setting, national campaigns and increasing pressure on government to act. For example, a Coalition of media groups lead by CITIFM (a private media house in Accra) started the #StopGalamseyNow campaign to not only raise awareness on the harmful impact of illegal mining, but to call on the national government to implement specific actions. The #StopGalamseyNow campaign mobilised the public for the protection of the environment and water bodies which were been degraded by mining, including the activities of Chinese miners who had introduced new mining techniques such as river dredges and causing damages to water bodies. In the streets of urban centres, the campaigners used images of contaminated land, rivers, and water degradation in mining communities to garner support from several actors including NGOs, policy think-tanks, faith organizations and the general public for a ban. The sustained campaign by a coalition of non-state actors led to 18 months ban on galamsey activities in Ghana and the government's setting up of "Operation Vanguard," a military-police Joint Task Force in July 2017 to enforce the ban and tackle galamsey in Ghana.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ For details about these military/security taskforces see Hilson, 2017; Hilson, R. Maconachie. "For the environment: an assessment of recent military intervention in informal gold mining communities in Ghana" *Land Use Pol.*, 96 (2020), Article 104706. Dery Tuokuu, FX, Idemudia, U, Bawelle, EBG, Baguri Sumani, JB. Criminalization of "galamsey" and livelihoods in Ghana: Limits and consequences. *Nat Resour Forum*. 2020; 44: 52– 65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-8947.12189>; Leudi, Jeremy. 2019. "Galamsey in Ghana and China's Illegal Gold Rush." *Asia by Africa* No. 16/2019. at <https://www.asiabyafrica.com/point-a-to-a/galamsey-ghana-illegal-mining-china>; Bansah, K. J., Acquah, P. J., & Assan, E. (2022). Guns and fires: The use of military force to eradicate informal mining. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 11, 101139.

However, as mentioned above, in the face of economic hardships, unemployment, illiteracy, and corruption the use of military force approach to the galamsey problem has been both unsustainable and impractical. Anti-galamsey task forces such as the 2013 Inter-Ministerial Task Force under President Mahama and the “Operation Vanguard” under President Akufo-Addo fail because they do not deal with the root causes of the problem.

Illegal small-scale gold mining is popular in Ghana especially among marginalised communities and dis-empowered youth. Despite years of attempted policy and legal reforms, small-scale mining is a serious problem for the Ghanaian government, which has to deal with a disorganised mining sector and various illegal practices. Gold mining and especially small-scale illegal gold mining can be damaging to the environment and often has led to adverse social and health effects for local miners and host communities. This paper argues that the absence of effective legal frameworks and secure rights for miners and communities in Ghana exacerbates this problem. A key factor in the failure of attempts to regulate ASM in Ghana is that the current policy mechanisms are too technical and cumbersome and do not take into account the complex socio-political realities of the people involved and the local communities they find themselves. Aggravating the situation (or due to it) is the arrival of illegal Chinese miners who have started to partner with local Ghanaian small-scale miners because they have the money and the equipment. The arrival of Chinese miners and the crisis brought about by their activities in Ghana reveals some of the gaps in institutional and legal framework in Ghana, particularly current public policies (including the Minerals and Mining Act) that are not placed to deal with the complex dynamics of the ASM sector as well as Immigration and security issues making it possible for foreign nationals such the Chinese miners to gain entry into Ghana and mine without proper permits. Taking advantage of government’s inability to properly regulate ASM sector, Chinese miners get access to large acres of land (sometimes farmlands with crops), use heavy machinery to extract gold, causing deforestation and water pollution and running into conflict with local residents.

Nonetheless, the presence of Chinese nationals in Ghana’s informal gold mining sector is a reflection of the complex nature of the Ghana-China relationship at the people-to-people level. As discussed above, on the one hand, some groups, particularly local residents of mining communities

in Ghana, denounce the environmental and social devastation brought about by the unsustainable activities of Chinese miners. On the other hand, however, other individuals, particularly local miners, encourage or at least welcome the presence of the Chinese because they present partnership opportunities as they have the equipment and financial resources to increase mine and help increase gold production.

All of these notwithstanding, what is curious to note and is the pivot of this study is the way in which the youth of the affected mining communities 'brought' the issue of the negative impact of Chinese miners to the public space and to the attention of state officials both in Ghana and China. This is yet another evident of the resilience and the social agency Ghanaian actors possess in their engagement with Chinese actors. Such evidence of local resistance to perceived threat even without state support is evidence of African actors' capacity to engage Chinese states actors. The residents of Manso-Nsiena mobilised to resist the miners because they saw the role of state actors (for example the Police Service, Mineral Commission) as inadequate. They embarked on demonstrations and protest marches because they had concluded that they could no longer rely on the state agencies to protect them from the activities of the Chinese miners. While it could be argued that setting up Task forces to shut down mine site and confiscate mining equipment cannot guarantee long term compliance with immigration and mining laws it is evident from the discussion above that host mining communities have enjoyed some success in their protest against influx of foreign miners. They have also been able to pressure the state to check, control and even disrupt the activities of Chinese miners operating in the country. Such political and social agency enacted by communities and individuals can help to modify Chinese actors' behaviours and is a material gain for these groups.

By examining this case, this study has sought to put on the forefront the critical Ghanaian voices that have been missing in ongoing research. I have attempted to show how analysis of Ghanaian responses and reaction may help to increase our understanding of how agency operates in situations where the Chinese presence and activities are perceived as harmful. That said it should be noted that the responses and strategies of Ghanaian state and non-state actors to counter the perceived threat of Chinese actors does not indiscriminately affect all or even most Chinese actors

in Ghana.³⁰¹ This conclusion is consistent with findings from Axelsson (2012: 200), which suggest that Ghanaian actors respond to perceived threat of Chinese activities rather than the ‘Chineseness’ of the people involved. Indeed, Axelsson and Sylvanus (2010) have also shown that, in the case of the textile industry in Ghana, the anti-Chinese sentiments is projected on to the Chinese commodity or product (Chinese African Print) itself, but rarely on the person selling it. What this means is that the critical Ghanaian voices and responses regarding the illegal activities of Chinese are not best understood as anti-Chinese sentiments. Rather, in the Ghanaian case, it may be fair to say that these voices and responses are contextually mediated and locally driven strategies that seek to safeguard certain economic sectors of the country without being anti-migrant. Thus, it could be said that the response to Chinese engagements in Ghana is deeply embedded in the local context, although some of the circumstances within which both Ghanaian and Chinese actors operate may be beyond their immediate control and influence.

6.0 POLICY SUGGESTIONS

This paper examined the growing Chinese presence in Ghana’s informal gold mining economy and the forms of protest and resistance their presence has engendered. It argued that the determination of the community youth ‘to do something’ about the miners’ activities even when state institutions appeared to be failing them is evidence of Ghanaian actor’s resilience and agency in their engagement with the Chinese. Given that the *galamsey* crisis is ongoing, in what follows, I offer some recommendations for Ghanaian and Chinese policy makers. As the research has shown, to understand the persistence presence of Chinese operators in Ghana’s ASM sector and to deal with the impasse of illegal Chinese mining in Ghana requires an understanding of the pull and factors in both Ghana and China.

From the discussion so far, several factors account for Chinese migration into Ghana’s gold mining sector, and it’s certainly not a mere coincidence that Chinese engagements in *galamsey* in Ghana has grown around the same time that Beijing’s political and economic interests in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa in general are at an all-time high. However, the growth in the number of illegal

³⁰¹ There are thousands of Chinese nationals living in Ghana and engaged in legal trading and other activities in Ghana that have been targeted by any operation either by state or non-state actors.

Chinese miners in Ghana in recent years is quite significant. Yet the arrival of Chinese miners in *galamsey* in Ghana only adds to an already existing problem. Granted that the involvement of Chinese miners with sophisticated technology and capital has deepened the negative environmental and social impact on Ghana, the Ghanaian state has attempted to fight the problem of *galamsey* for many years. While there has been some success, successive governments have missed out on the major things that need to be done to curb it.

First, Ghana's policy makers need to properly understand the political economy of *galamsey*. The current framework of seeing small mining as driven by 'get rich quick' mentality instead of seeing it as poverty driven isn't working. The rise in artisanal mining in Ghana can be attributed to the high rate of youth unemployment and the growing poverty prevailing in many mining communities in Ghana. Mining communities in Ghana have some of the highest incidence of unemployed youth. Some of these youth were former workers who have been laid off by multinational mining companies, while others are farmers who have lost their arable lands leaving them with the only option of digging for minerals.

The state, large-scale mining companies and the media tend to characterize *galamsey* as a nuisance, a menace and even a threat to the operators, their communities, concession landholders, and the nation. But the miners do not usually see their activities as illicit or at least they do not want to accept it as such; because their lives depend on it. Local miners must navigate costly processes along with frequent payment of bribes to landowners and traditional authorities and other middlemen before they can be sure of getting access to a parcel of land. State policies or lack thereof over the years have frustrated and further marginalized Ghanaian *galamsey* operators, leading some of them to resort to unorthodox means to continue to stay in small-scale gold mining. If government does not attend to these problems and regularize the industry the fight against illegal mining is going nowhere. Thus, by far the most crucial factor that account for foreign operators, specifically, Chinese to have a dominant presence in Ghana's *galamsey* economy is the lack of political will by successive Ghanaian governments to formalize *galamsey* which has the potential of economically empowering the youth that engage in mining. This is the single most important

backdrop which has created the conditions to attract the movement of Chinese miners to Ghanaian mining sites.

Second, in addition to developing a stronger legal and regulatory framework, the state needs to consciously enforce the existing laws. Ghanaian law prohibits non-Ghanaians from engaging in small-scale mining. Yet, foreigners enter Ghana (some of them without valid visas and permits) to engage in a sector that is by law preserved for only Ghanaian. This suggests lapses and connivance in the system involving immigration officers, police, mineral commission, chiefs, and other elites. Contrary to media and other sources that disparage Chinese Chinese migrants as the primary culprits of illegal small-scale mining, a closer look shows that they are only opportunistic migrants that exploiting state weakness created by the ruling elites and state officials mandated with the responsibility of enforcing Ghana's laws (Antwi-Boateng and Akudugu, 2020). State officer ought to strengthen the existing control mechanisms in checking the credibility of immigration and operation documents by Chinese migrants. Additionally, the use of a military-style approach by government to enforce laws and deal with *galamsey* can lead to short term positive impact on resource degradation. However, they are unsustainable and ineffective in solving the *galamsey* crisis. But if they are used, the officers must strive to work with integrity and professionalism.

Third, Ghana and China have enjoyed bilateral diplomatic engagement since the 1960s. While Ghana should leverage on the existing cordial relations with China to find solutions to this ongoing problem at the state-to-state level, there should be a way to include people-to-people relations that involves Chinese nationals and migrants as stakeholders in seeking lasting solutions to the problem of illegal mining. Recognising the Chinese community in Ghana and engaging them in regular stakeholder meetings and consultations will be good start.

Fourth, on the China side, generally speaking, existing research on Chinese migration tends to emphasize push factors which drive people to leave the mainland China for foreign homes. In the case of Chinese miners in Ghana, push factors may include China's go out policy and China's Africa policy; limited economic opportunities in China; Chinese entrepreneurial spirit and demographic challenges at home. While China may not be able supervise and control where and how its citizens operate abroad, the Chinese state ought to have some role to play in ensuring that

its citizens abroad respect the laws of their host countries. China can check the credibility of Chinese citizens going overseas to conduct private businesses. This can help reduce their involvement in illegal business activities and potentially reduce the anti-Chinese sentiment in Ghana and sometimes xenophobic attacks their presence has generated in other African states because of illegal activities. The Chinese embassy must resort to diplomatic channels where necessary to prevent an overall negative impact on China's diplomatic relations with Ghana.

Lastly, China's engagement with Ghana (and with Africa as a whole) is anchored in a well thought out policy which the Chinese have outlined through various policy papers and public fora (such as FOCAC). While Chinese activities in Ghana may not always follow the text, strategy matters in China's relations. Ghana's engagement with China and Chinese must also be equally anchored in a clear strategy. Beyond galamsey, Ghana needs to think and coordinate strategically to maximise its relationship with China—pursuing long-term, integrated goals at levels. And given their important role, Ghanaian actors, especially, civil society groups and individuals remain the last line of defence against the state failure. Their rights must be protected by the state and their voices heard.

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TWYFORD CERAMICS : UN CAPITALISME CHINOIS EN AFRIQUE ?

Position Paper

By

Ibrahima Niang

University of Cheikh Anta Diop, Senegal

RESUME

Malgré les bonnes relations existantes entre le Sénégal et la Chine marquées par un vaste programme d'aide et d'investissements, elles connaissent aussi un revers de la médaille au regard des relations de travail existantes entre les employeurs chinois et leurs employés, aux pratiques d'emploi chinoises qui engendrent des infractions à la législation du travail au Sénégal.

Ce travail revient sur une question souvent évoquée de la présence chinoise en Afrique. Entre les auteurs qui ont cherché à casser le mythe des entrepreneurs chinois exploitant la main d'œuvre africaine sans respect des normes du code du travail des pays concernés, (Hirono et Suzuki, 2013), en passant par ceux qui ont relativisé ses accusations concernant les pratiques d'emploi basées sur la réalité (Sautman et Yan, 2015). En Afrique de l'Ouest les publications les plus significatives sur la question chinoise ont été peu nombreuses à s'intéresser à la question des relations du travail entre entrepreneurs chinois et autochtones, pour la plupart la problématique des migrations Sud-Sud les ont intéressés (Cissé, 2013) (Bertencello-Bredeloup (2005,2006) la polémique née de la présence des commerçants chinois (Marfaing-Thiel,2013), les marchandises chinoises et la prétendue saturation du marché (Marfaing, 2015) l'impact des interactions sociales entre les entrepreneurs chinois et africains dans une rencontre particulière (Giese-Marfaing,2016). Hormis les quelques interrogations soulevées sur les conflits du travail dans les entreprises commerciales chinoises au Ghana (Giese, 2013) et sur les relations d'emploi sino-ghanéennes sous l'angle du contrat psychologique, des attentes interculturelles en matière d'équité et de l'extranéité des petits commerçants chinois (Giese, 2015) dans une perspective de lecture alternative des conflits du travail industriels sino-africains, qui ont jusqu'à présent été discutés exclusivement en termes de violations des réglementations formelles par les entreprises chinoises, et de leurs pratiques d'exploitation et d'abus.

Au Sénégal, pays ayant rétabli ces relations diplomatiques avec la Chine en 2005, après dix ans d'intermède taiwanais¹. Ce phénomène est apparu avec acuité ces dernières années avec l'installation de grandes entreprises chinoises mobilisant une importante main d'œuvre dans leurs activités, parmi lesquelles on peut citer China Road Bridge and Corporation, Twyford Ceramics et dans une moindre mesure SOMETA. Cet article se propose de montrer comment Twford Ceramics, profitant du laxisme ou complicité des autorités sénégalaises, fait fi de la justice sociale et des règles régissant la responsabilité sociétale d'entreprise au seul bénéfice de ses intérêts financiers.

A travers ce qui suit, cette contribution révèle les facettes hideuses d'une nouvelle forme de capitalisme sauvage encouragé par les réglementations et les institutions du pays d'accueil, qui pour être conformes aux politiques d'investissements acceptent les réformes capitalistes

néolibérales mondiales. Dénoncées et condamnées par les acteurs locaux, un modèle d'investissement qui profite plus au capital privé qu'au pays d'accueil, car l'industrialisation concurrence aussi les opérateurs économiques sénégalais longtemps maîtres du secteur des céramiques

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Le retour inattendu de la Chine à partir des années 2000 sur le continent africain a fait l'objet d'un intérêt grandissime dans les milieux médiatiques, universitaires et gouvernementaux au point de soulever de vives polémiques selon un schéma manichéen qui oppose pro et anti chinois. Loin d'être un phénomène isolé et nouveau si l'on analyse bien la question de cette présence chinoise dans le monde comme une redéfinition de la carte économique et géopolitique du monde ; mais aussi comme un retour en force d'un partenaire qui suite à des politiques internes de recentrage s'était retiré du continent africain pour mieux réussir ses réformes internes. Ce vif intérêt sur la question de la Chine en Afrique fait suite à une augmentation croissante des échanges économiques qui ont décuplé en deux décades, qui sont passés de 10,5 milliards de dollars en 2000 à 254 milliards de dollars US en 2021¹, aux programmes d'aide et d'investissements du gouvernement chinois.

En devenant ainsi un des partenaires les plus importants du continent africain la Chine est vue sous deux angles : celui de la menace (Cohen Philippe et Richard Luc, 2005,2010) (Niquet,2006) (Bredeloup Sylvie, Bertencello Brigitte, 2006), (S.Michel, M.Beuret, 2008), qui considère l'Empire du Milieu comme un concurrent ou une nouvelle puissance colonisatrice, et celui de l'opportunité (Lu Shaye, 2008), (Bangui,2009) (Luntumbue Michel,2011) qui définit la Chine comme un nouveau partenaire au développement. Entre mythes et réalités, la présence chinoise s'est construite ainsi avec des conclusions hâtives, une littérature recyclée charriant un ensemble de clichés et de stéréotypes ravivant le vieux mythe du « péril jaune », avec un traitement assez tendancieux des données recueillies çà et là. Ainsi, face à l'importance des relations sino-africaines depuis la mise en pratique de la stratégie du Going Global, associée à la définition d'une politique africaine de la Chine en 2006 autour du FOCAC, sans occulter l'initiative d'une ceinture, d'une route. Au cœur de cette dynamique sans précédent en construction, se trouve une multitude d'entreprises étatiques et privées exerçant sur le continent. Ces entreprises localisées dans tous les secteurs d'activités, et de tailles variables, apportent leur main-d'œuvre, un modèle de management chinois, et des investissements en capital. Le rapport du cabinet McKinsey évalue

leur nombre en Afrique autour d'une dizaine de milliers, chiffre dépassant largement ceux avancés par les sources du ministère chinois du Commerce (MOFCOM), lequel demeure jusqu'ici la seule structure habilitée à donner les chiffres concernant les entreprises chinoises en Afrique.

Au regard de la place des entrepreneurs et des entreprises chinoises dans les productions scientifiques en Afrique de l'Ouest, où elle n'est pas assez importante, l'objet de notre réflexion est de combler cet déséquilibre sur les questions liées à l'emploi, aux relations conflictuelles et à la nature de ce capitalisme afin de sortir des mythes sur la saturation des marché par les Chinois (Marfaing et Thiel, 2013) concernant les relations de travail (Hirono et Suzuki, 2013) qu'entretiennent ces entités chinoises dans leurs interactions avec les populations autochtones , ou pour chercher à relativiser ses accusations concernant les pratiques d'emploi basées sur la réalité selon (Sautman et Yan, 2015). En Afrique de l'Ouest, les travaux de Giese et Thiel (2014) ont suivi ceux de (Yaw Baahet Jauch,2009), si ces derniers ont été les premiers à alerter sur les doutes qui pèsent sur les conditions de travail dans une grande partie de l'industrie chinoise, au point de proposer la nécessité d'une négociation collective et d'une action directe des travailleurs pour se faire sentir de plus en plus dans leur négociation face à des Etats qui ferment leurs yeux. Giese a cherché d'abord à sortir du cadre d'analyse des relations conflictuelles sous l'angle des grandes entreprises qui ont jusqu'à présent été discutés exclusivement en termes de violations des réglementations formelles par les entreprises chinoises, et de leurs pratiques d'exploitation et d'abus pour pour une perspective microsociologique prenant en compte les relations entre petits commerçants et employés (Giese,2013) dans une approche interculturelle. Cette perspective du management interculturel facteurs d'incompréhensions mutuelles a été la charpente des travaux de (Giese, 2012), (Giese, 2013), (Giese-Thiel, 2015), (Giese, 2014) pour mieux appréhender les conflits entre entrepreneurs chinois et employés locaux en Afrique de l'Ouest. Au Sénégal, les entreprises chinoises n'ont jamais été aussi impliquées de manière significative ces deux dernières années dans des questions relatives aux violations des règles régissant le code du travail, comme celles concernant Twyford Ceramics, nonobstant l'existence de rapports conflictuels marqués par des ruptures de contrat entre entrepreneurs chinois et employés souvent arbitrés par le tribunal du travail². La particularité de cette étude sur Twyford Ceramics tient au fait que l'entreprise utilise les mécanismes du capitalisme industriel mondial pour imposer des pratiques de travail au Sénégal.

En outre, nous constatons que, bien que Twyford ait un taux élevé de locaux dans son personnel, les postes de direction demeurent la chasse gardée des Chinois, ce qui engendre un écart entre la création d'emplois et la participation des diplômés dans le top management.

A travers ce qui suit ce travail nous cherchons à voir comment le capitalisme d'entreprise chinoise construit sur le modèle d'un système de rémunération faible, rigidité sur les horaires de travail, avec une utilisation forte de main d'œuvre et un affaiblissement des syndicats s'est imposé au sein de cette entreprise ? Cette question sur les influences du capitalisme industriel en Afrique ne peut ne pas être soulevée sans interroger les logiques sous-jacentes qui amènent des Etats pour être « attractifs » dans le domaine des investissements à fermer les yeux sur les réglementations du travail ? Pourquoi les pays africains sous le prétexte des emplois créés aliènent les questions de justice sociale et du travail à la croissance économique pour ne pas perdre des investissements étrangers?

Dans le cadre de cette **initiative qui vise à étudier l'impact des relations entre l'Afrique et la Chine sur l'économie politique des africains, et la manière dont les acteurs africains, gouvernementaux et non gouvernementaux, s'organisent et bénéficient ou non de ces relations économiques avec la Chine.** Cette publication s'intéresse à un secteur lucratif longtemps dominé par les importateurs sénégalais de céramiques qui s'approvisionnaient à partir de la Chine, précisément dans la province du Guangdong à Foshan, avant de se faire concurrencer dans leur marché par le groupe Twyford Ceramics³. L'intérêt de ce travail pour nous c'est de montrer comment le capitalisme industriel chinois après avoir gagné le très lucratif marché de la distribution des céramiques aux détriments des acteurs économique locaux, se comporte au mépris des règles du travail sénégalais en imposant des horaires de travail à ses employés pour gagner plus et payer moins, s'oppose à la liberté syndicale, étouffe l'accumulation primitive de capitaux en affaiblissant les commerçants sénégalais importateurs et traite les travailleurs de son entreprise.

Nous avons été frappés par la manière dont des entreprises chinoises au mépris des règles de la législation du travail, de la protection de l'environnement, de la dignité humaine traitent leurs employés dans la plus grande entreprise chinoise au Sénégal. A la lumière de l'étude qui sera faite sur le cas de l'entreprise chinoise Twyford Ceramics, nous allons montrer comment mesurer l'impact des relations sino-africaines sur les populations africaines, sur l'économie politique et

comment le Sénégal en tant qu'Etat dit souverain pour agiter des statistiques de créations d'emplois et de positionnement dans le rapport Doing Business pour le tout investissement chinois précarise l'employé sénégalais au profit de l'employeur chinois avec une certaine complicité des autorités publiques.

1.1 Approche méthodologique

Ce travail de recherche s'est construit sur la base d'entretiens, de documents de presse, de documents audiovisuels disponibles, de témoignage de journalistes ayant travaillé sur la question. Pour nous permettre de voir dans quelles mesures les pratiques de travail de Twyford sont en déphasage complet avec cet idéal tant chanté des relations sino-africaines.

Ainsi, nous avons été amenés à discuter avec un ensemble de salariés et d'anciens salariés du groupe Twyford Ceramics pour voir comment les relations de travail ont évolué au sein de l'entreprise afin de mesurer s'il y'a eu des avancements dans le traitement salarial et les horaires de travail. Aussi, la question de la législation du travail ne pouvait être comprise sans le concours des échanges avec des professionnels des ressources humaines. De plus, ces interrogations n'ont pas cherché à occulter le point de vue des employeurs mais leur absence de réactions n'a pas aidé dans le traitement triangulaire des données pour confirmer ou infirmer certains propos. L'Apix⁴ n'a pas manqué d'être interrogée pour les besoins de ce travail, car certaines facilités ayant permis aux chinois d'outrepasser ces règles sont considérées comme relevant des mesures incitatives offertes par l'APIX.

Pour finir, la question environnementale nous a intéressé car Twyford dans son entreprise capitaliste sous-traite l'exploitation de ses mines (matières premières entrant dans la fabrication des céramiques) à d'autres entreprises pour échapper aux taxes du secteur des industries extractives.

Les reformes entreprises au sein de ces pays pour réduire le chômage et accueillir des capitaux étrangers ont fini de freiner l'accumulation primitive de capitaux pour les entrepreneurs locaux et favoriser un chômage exposant la majorité des chercheurs d'emplois dans une précarité à laquelle profite le capitalisme chinois en Afrique.

2.0 TWYFORD CERAMICS

Dans le cadre de la politique de délocalisation des entreprises chinoises, certains groupes industriels chinois comme Twyford ont voulu profiter des zones dites à bas salaires pour s'y implanter et gagner le maximum de capital, donnant ainsi l'impression aux pays comme le Sénégal de connaître un développement de seconde main. En effet, à la fin de l'année 2015 le gouvernement chinois a annoncé une série de mesures pour inciter les entreprises chinoises à s'installer en Afrique dans le cadre de la stratégie du « Going Global »⁵. Coïncidant à une période où les Etats africains ont été invités à plus d'ouverture pour être aux normes de certains rapports comme le Doing Business⁶. L'intérêt de Twyford Ceramics n'est pas fortuit car parmi les importations sénégalaises de produits venant de Chine, les Ceramiques y occupent une importante part. En effet, le volume des échanges commerciaux entre la Chine et le Sénégal ont atteint un volume commercial de 2,20 milliards de dollars en 2018, soit une augmentation de 158% par rapport à 2012. Toutefois, ces échanges traduisent un déficit de la balance commerciale du Sénégal avec une prédominance des marchandises importées de Chine constituées pour la quasi-totalité des produits manufacturés (pierre céramique et verre, métaux communs, voitures, textile, machines, matériels⁷).

Située sur la nouvelle autoroute Thiès-Touba, la société chinoise de Ceramique Twyford s'élève dans la localité de Sindia. Cette entreprise qui est un joint-venture entre deux entreprises chinoises - SunDa Group et Keda Clean Energy Company a commencé ses activités par la commercialisation de carreaux importés de Chine avant de migrer vers la production dans plusieurs pays africains comme le Ghana, la Tanzanie et le Kenya. Son principal partenaire dans l'Usine de Céramiques de Sindia est basé à Shanghai. C'est un géant de la fourniture de machines industrielles. Sur une superficie de 32,62 hectares, ces deux entreprises ont investi 62,88 millions de dollars dont 37,73 millions de dollars pour la première phase et 25,15 millions de dollars pour la seconde. C'est l'une des usines chinoises qui emploierait le plus de salariés avec 1000 emplois directs et 2000 autres indirects pour la commercialisation. Ces deux entreprises chinoises ont été celles qui ont mobilisé à la fois une importante main d'œuvre et le plus gros financement parmi les entreprises chinoises implantées au Sénégal.

Twyford produit pour toute l'Afrique de l'Ouest avec en moyenne 55 000 m² carrés de carreaux en moyenne correspondant à 150.000.000 de francs Cfa soit 250.000 dollars par jours . Malgré ces investissements jugés importants par les autorités sénégalaises et les retombées de cette exploitation, Twyford Ceramics continue d'alimenter les discussions dans le secteur de l'emploi et de l'extraction au point qu'un journal sénégalais l'a surnommé « l'entreprise du mépris »⁸. Comment cette entreprise est-elle devenue celle du mépris ? A-t-elle obtenu des facilitations dans son accord d'investissement avec l'Agence de Promotion pour les investissements au Sénégal ? Pour répondre à ces interrogations un bref exposé de l'APIX est nécessaire pour connaître cette institution particulière au cœur des plus grandes politiques de l'Etat du Sénégal en termes de reformes, de facilités des investissements, de porte d'entrée des investisseurs étrangers au Sénégal. Pour rappel, Twyford a commencé l'installation de sa plateforme industrielle en 2019 à Sindia⁹, site situé dans le département de Mbour, plus précisément dans la région de Thiès. Dès son installation Twyford a fonctionné avec un régime de travail de 12 heures par jour sans pause selon les premiers salariés à y intervenir. A l'époque l'entreprise prétextait la nécessité de finir dans les délais ces installations pour commencer la production. Ainsi, face aux récriminations des salariés sur le nombre d'heures de travail et le niveau des salaires, Twyford promit de faire des augmentations dès l'entame de la phase de production.

Pour cet ex travailleur qui a arrêté à Twyford :

« A l'époque, les conditions étaient très difficiles car le site de Sindia est éloigné des centres urbains pour disposer de certaines commodités, d'un point de vu du climat il y fait très chaud. Nous travaillions dans des conditions risquées avec l'installation des grues métalliques très lourdes et le tirage des cables électriques énorme pour la centrale de l'entreprise. A cause du manque d'emploi dans le pays, nous tous avons personnellement investi pour la réussite du projet. Les techniciens étaient appelés à travailler à des taches destinées aux ouvriers comme moi d'ailleurs alors que je suis recruté comme électrotechnicien. Nous gagnions pour les techniciens spécialisés pour chaque jour de travail 6 à 7 euros par jour et la moitié d'un euro pour chaque heure supplémentaire, celui qui travaille le dimanche pouvait gagner 9 euros pour 12 heures de travail. Nos conditions étaient meilleures que celles des ouvriers sans qualifications, car à la base j'ai mon master. Toutefois les conditions de travail étaient difficiles car il y'a deux vagues par jour de 12 heures répartis en trois groupes avec un jour de repos par semaine. Face à la faiblesse du

salaire et de l'horaire de travail qui dépasse la moyenne nationale qui est de 40 heures maximum par semaine, j'ai fini par arrêter de travailler pour la compagnie, car la rémunération n'était pas satisfaisante »¹⁰.

Ce témoignage sur les conditions de travail à Twyford dès son installation, associé au non-respect des promesses de départ sur l'amélioration des conditions sociales en référence avec les normes établies par le Code du travail sénégalais¹¹, présageaient des manifestations d'humeur au sein de l'entreprise matérialisées par la saisine de l'inspecteur du travail et de l'union des travailleurs du Sénégal. Dans la partie suivante nous allons voir quels ont été les manquements de Twyford face à la législation du travail au Sénégal ?

3.0 Les manquements notables de l'entreprise

En Juin 2020, sous les auspices de l'Union Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal (UDTS), fédération à laquelle sont affiliés les travailleurs de Twyford Ceramics, et de la Direction générale de l'entreprise, l'inspecteur du travail a été convié pour atténuer les angles entre les deux parties, avec pour objectif de faire respecter la législation sociale par l'employeur et par là, réussir l'instauration d'une paix durable dans cet établissement.

Ainsi, le 4 septembre 2020, date de sa première visite à l'usine, l'inspecteur du travail accompagné de cinq de ses agents dit avoir noté de nombreux manquements à la législation du travail. Dans ses notes, il dit avoir relevé des dysfonctionnements graves dans les différents ateliers, vestiaires et mêmes dortoirs. Ce qui le poussera dès le lendemain, à servir à l'employeur, une mise en demeure dont les 29 points à corriger portaient notamment sur l'absence de mesures de protection collectives et d'équipements de protection individuelle ; le non-respect des prescriptions en matière d'hygiène, de santé et de sécurité ; **le non-respect des horaires de travail réglementaires**¹² ; le refus d'octroyer les indemnités prescrites par la réglementation ; **l'interdiction des syndicats professionnels et le refus d'organiser des élections de délégués du personnel**¹³ ; de difficiles conditions d'hébergement des travailleurs logés dans l'entreprise. Au terme de sa visite d'entreprise, l'Inspecteur du travail ordonna la fermeture immédiate des dortoirs¹⁴ qui ne répondaient à aucune norme réglementaire non sans attirer l'attention de l'employeur sur le climat tendu qui prévalait. Interrogé sur l'absence de suivi de ces prescriptions par l'entreprise Twyford Ceramics, l'inspecteur dira :

« Malheureusement, la Direction de l'entreprise n'a pas jugé utile de suivre mes recommandations. Du coup, quelques jours plus tard, elle faisait face à la première grève déclenchée par ses travailleurs sans observation préalable d'un préavis. Toutefois, l'intervention de l'Inspection régionale du Travail et de la Sécurité sociale permit une sortie de crise sans représailles aucune à l'endroit des travailleurs contre la reprise de leur activité deux jours plus tard »¹⁵.

Ainsi, une première grève sera déclenchée en Septembre 2020 pour l'amélioration des conditions de travail, pendant quarante-huit heures les machines étaient à l'arrêt dans l'usine Twyford. L'entreprise servit des demandes d'explication pour imputer la panne de deux lignes de production aux grévistes en perspectives de licenciements. Finalement avec des gains pas assez importants car sur les vingt-neuf points de recommandations de l'Inspecteur du travail, seuls les points concernant le vote des délégués du personnel, l'autorisation à créer un syndicat de base, la levée du camp, la distribution des tenues de travail, les horaires de travail revus, la fermeture du dortoir. Le Syndicat (SUTIMAC) fut donc créé en septembre 2020, dans le même temps, dix-huit délégués ont été élus le 08 Octobre 2020. Par cette décision les deux parties à savoir employeurs chinois et employés sénégalais décidèrent de donner une chance à la négociation pour la levée de toutes mécontentes.

Périodiquement, elles se sont retrouvées dans les locaux de l'inspection du travail pour un suivi des engagements mutuels. Dans le même temps, l'inspecteur reconnaît dans un communiqué rendu public :

« A ce jour, même si certaines choses pourraient encore nettement être améliorées, objectivement, il n'y a dans cette entreprise, ni esclavage ni traitement dégradant ou contraire aux droits incompressibles de l'homme. Seulement, aux yeux des délégués et de leur organisation professionnelle, les correctifs à apporter par l'employeur prenaient trop de temps et que malgré la pénibilité de leur travail, ce dernier se dérobaient toujours pour ne pas satisfaire leurs revendications à incidence financière. De son côté, selon l'employeur, à ses multiples efforts consentis depuis des mois, les délégués ont toujours répondu par la surenchère et l'extrémisme syndical au point d'installer l'établissement dans une crise chronique¹⁶ ».

Les propos de l'inspecteur du travail prètent à équivoques dans la mesure où il a noté **le non-respect des horaires de travail réglementaires** ; le refus d'octroyer les indemnités prescrites par la réglementation ; **l'interdiction des syndicats professionnels et le refus d'organiser des**

élections de délégués du personnel, comment peut-il considérer que les travailleurs ont versé dans l'extrémisme syndical nonobstant le refus des employeurs de se mettre en règle après sa visite ? Il y a ici une partie pris flagrante de l'inspecteur du travail qui a cherché à jouer aux équilibristes, alors que les conclusions de son rapport mentionnaient clairement les manquements sur les lieux du travail et sur la rémunération. Cette attitude justifie les forts soupçons de corruption des travailleurs concernant l'inspecteur du travail, qui a semblé oublier les vingt neuf recommandations faites aux dirigeants de l'entreprise.

En Décembre 2020, éclata l'affaire Serigne Mbacké Sylla , un ouvrier de l'entreprise qui fut licencié pour faute lourde. En effet, ce licenciement fait suite à une bagarre entre un employé sénégalais et son chef chinois. L'ouvrier sénégalais a décidé de rendre des coups reçus de son chef chinois. Une pratique qui est loin d'être un cas isolé, car des ouvriers se sont déjà plaints de coups reçus et d'insultes venant de leur chef chinois. Face au tollé général de l'information relayée par la presse sénégalaise et les réseaux sociaux, la direction de Twyford sort un communiqué pour donner leur version dans cette affaire.

Dans un communiqué du 15 décembre 2020³⁰², l'entreprise Twyford, l'entreprise bat en brèche les versions partagées par la presse sénégalaise et affirme dans un communiqué :

« Entre le 1er et le 12 décembre 2020, des articles de la presse sénégalaise ont mentionné la bagarre opposant un chef salarié chinois et un ouvrier sénégalais. Twyford tient à saluer l'excellente coopération amicale et fraternelle qui unit les deux peuples depuis fort longtemps et qui témoigne de la nouvelle dimension du partenariat stratégique global entre la République du Sénégal et la République Populaire de Chine matérialisé par l'implantation d'une unité de fabrication de carreaux en céramique dans la commune de Sindia. Cette usine inaugurée par son Excellence le Président Macky Sall au mois de janvier 2020 qui se positionne comme la première industrie de carreaux-céramiques du Sénégal et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, va largement profiter à l'écosystème de la construction dans un pays qui amorce un autre tournant de son chemin vers l'émergence. Twyford Ceramics présente un grand avantage pour le peuple sénégalais qui verra les coûts de

construction diminuer de manière considérable avec des produits de bonne qualité fabriqués localement. »

Ce communiqué¹⁷ est un modèle de la rhétorique de la coopération sino-africaine avec un lexique qui couvre les notions habituelles d'amitié, de peuples, de partenariat, de fraternité etc.. pour légitimer la bonne entente des relations sino-africaines. Une manière de se donner bonne conscience sur les investissements chinois en Afrique. Ce communiqué est fidèle au discours sur les généralités des relations sino-africaines déjà présentes sur les principes de la politique étrangère de la Chine en Afrique (égalité entre les partenaires, bénéfices mutuels, respect de la souveraineté, utilisation de dons et de prêts sans intérêts, renforcement du bénéficiaire, respect des obligations) .Toutefois, ce communiqué qui magnifie la bonne entente entre les dirigeants chinois et ses partenaires enfonce en partie l'entreprise, car elle reconnaît après une année d'exercice n'avoir pas mis à la disposition de ses employés de tenues de travail, d'équipements de protection individuelle, de personnel de santé ; et qu'à cet égard la direction s'engage à améliorer les conditions de travail et de sécurité pour une meilleure maîtrise des risques professionnels. A ce niveau, il faut se poser la question de savoir pourquoi une entreprise avec une expérience de plusieurs années dans le monde du travail n'avait-elle pas jugé nécessaire de mettre en place tout ce dispositif dès le démarrage de ses activités avant la levée de boucliers des travailleurs ? Cette attitude traduit-elle un manque de respect vis-à-vis des employés sénégalais de la part de l'entreprise en esquivant les vrais problèmes qui secouent l'entreprises .

Pour les employeurs, des efforts ont été consentis pour permettre une réunion mensuelle entre les délégués et la direction générale, il y'a eu une amélioration des conditions de transport et de couverture par l'augmentation des dessertes jusqu'à Mbour et Thiès, recrutement d'un médecin et de trois infirmiers, distribution de l'eau potable, amélioration de la restauration,

Nonobstant ces dernières améliorations de nouvelles tensions surgissent avec le licenciement d'un second travailleur du nom de Fallou Mbaye en Février 2021, qui aurait donné des coups violents à son patron chinois après que ce dernier l'ait frappé avec un bâton. Pourtant une accalmie s'était installée au sein de l'entreprise, car dans la même période, les deux parties venaient de conclure un accord portant sur 12 points de droit sur les 14 de leur plateforme, les travailleurs sont revenus déposer un préavis portant sur les deux points à incidence financière, n'ayant pas fait l'objet

d'accord. Bien que ceux-ci relèvent de libéralité, l'employeur finit par marquer son accord de principe en promettant de revenir sur les montants à arrêter par le Président du Conseil d'administration du Groupe résident en Chine. En effet, la forte mobilisation et les arrêts de travail ayant entraîné de fortes pertes à l'entreprise ont permis aux travailleurs de bénéficier de certaines améliorations :

- Primes de salissures et de risques
- Mise à disposition des numéros d'immatriculation de l'IPRES et de la Caisse de Sécurité Sociale
- Changement de la convention
- Affichage et respect des heures réglementaires et la pause quotidienne ;
- Elargissement complet du transport notamment aux travailleurs des zones les plus importantes à savoir Dakar, Mbour et Thiesou octroyer une prime de transport à ces travailleurs ;
- L'organisation et le contrôle exclusifs des repas par les délégués du personnel, et l'octroi de la somme équivalente à la prime de panier pour le repas du soir ;
- Mise à disposition complète des EPI adéquats selon les ateliers(chaussures, masques, casques à oreilles)
- désinfection des lieux quotidiennement pour faire face à la covid et distribution de gel ;
- la direction s'engage à mettre des bouteilles d'eau de manière suffisante au profit des travailleurs ;
- Achat d'une ambulance pour les services de l'infirmierie ;
- Pour l'externalisation de l'emploi, la direction a promis de se mettre en règle conformément à loi

C'est donc dans une situation de forte tension que les deux parties se sont séparées, par conséquent le dialogue était à un point de non-retour. Les dirigeants de l'entreprise excédés décident de mettre fin aux contrats des délégués syndicaux et d'entraîner l'entreprise dans une forte situation de tension sociale, dans un contexte marqué par l'arrestation de l'opposant Ousmane Sonko¹⁸.

Entre corruption, intimidations et licenciements

En Avril 2021, l'entreprise décide de ne pas renouveler le contrat de 20 travailleurs de l'entreprise, parmi lesquels 16 des 18 délégués syndicaux du principal et unique syndicat de l'entreprise. Certains délégués étaient à leur quatrième renouvellement de CDD, ce qui est contraire à la législation du travail au Sénégal. Par cet acte l'entreprise pose le premier jalon de la liquidation du syndicat maison installé devant l'inspecteur du travail un an auparavant. En effet, face au refus des délégués de plier aux injonctions des employeurs pour ne plus réclamer les points d'accord obtenus devant la commission de conciliation dirigée par l'inspecteur du travail, les dirigeants chinois passent par l'étape supérieure en mettant fin au contrat de tous les leaders du mouvement syndical.

« En Avril 2021, Les Chinois ont décidé d'arrêter les contrats des délégués. Au total, nous étions 18 délégués. Ils ont renvoyé les 16 et ils attendaient que les contrats des deux derniers expirent pour les renvoyer. Et pourtant nous étions élus pour un mandat de trois ans » Entretien Alioune Ndiaye,

Par cet acte dénoncé auprès des autorités compétentes, les employeurs vont réussir à asphyxier le mouvement syndical après avoir cherché à casser la dynamique de revendication des travailleurs par une tentative de versement de pots de vin pour neutraliser les délégués afin que les revendications soient mises sous le boisseau, selon l'ancien secrétaire général du syndicat Aliou Ndiaye . Racontant cet épisode l'ancien salarié et leader du syndicat dira que ;

« Les Chinois nous avaient convié dans un hôtel de la place pour nous inviter à un dîner. Ils étaient venus avec leur sac rempli d'argent. Ils voulaient mettre de l'argent dans nos comptes pour que nous délégués tournions le dos à nos camarades. Ensuite, ils nous ont dit qu'ils vont prendre les attaches d'une société intérim Topwork qui va désormais recruter, comme ça ils vont se débarrasser des autres employés. Nous avons refusé. C'est ce qui nous a valu des problèmes » Entretien Aliou Ndiaye.

Très remontés contre le gouvernement, qui a préféré profiter des investissements chinois et de l'aide chinoise en contrepartie d'un mutisme sur les comportements des employeurs chinois. Les représentants des travailleurs n'ont pas compris le silence et la non-implication de l'Etat du Sénégal à trouver une solution face à leur sort, suite aux licenciements des délégués. Cet état de fait est illustratif des pays en développement qui pour capter les investissements étrangers ont tendance à fermer les yeux sur les dérives des entrepreneurs étrangers. Cette situation est-elle une constante des entreprises chinoises aussi quand on sait que nombreux ont été les entrepreneurs

chinois à être épinglés pour des cas de violations des règles du travail et des droits des travailleurs sur le continent. Une sorte d'exceptionnalisme chinois hérité du modèle entrepreneurial chinois qui fait fi des libertés syndicales et des revendications salariales. La particularité de cet "exceptionnalisme" est qu'une grande proportion d'entreprises chinoises situées dans de nombreuses régions d'Afrique opèrent par un système de bas salaires similaire aux l'expérience de certaines régions de Chine (Baah et Jauch, 2009 ; HRW, 2011).

Pour le secrétaire général du Sutimac viré, Alioune Ndiaye, accuse en effet l'entreprise Twyford Ceramics traîne ses employés dans la précarité et la psychose depuis sa création en 2017. Nonobstant toutes les facilités octroyées par l'Etat du Sénégal pour son installation, Twford Ceramics n'a pas cherché à améliorer les conditions de travail de ses employés telle que le stipulait le protocole d'accord signé sous la supervision de l'inspecteur du travail. Face à cette situation difficile, les médias sénégalais ont servi de relais aux travailleurs traitant l'information concernant les difficiles conditions des travailleurs afin d'alerter l'opinion publique. Ainsi les Unes des journaux des quotidiens « Libération » et « L'Enquete » n'ont pas manqué de qualifier cette situation conflictuelle entre employeurs chinois et employés sénégalais comme une forme de mépris des employeurs sur leurs salariés et une impunité totale pour les dirigeants chinois face aux violations du code du travail¹⁹. Alors que l'inspecteur du travail joue sur les mots en parlant de non-renouvellement des contrats à durée déterminée qui sont arrivés à terme, pour éviter de dire licenciements, car le licenciement supposerait une autorisation préalable de l'Inspection du Travail (voir article L.214 du code du travail) .Ces renouvellements à volonté et sans limitation des CDD par Twyford Ceramics ont été contrairement à l'article L.42 du code du travail, rendus possibles par l'agrément de l'APIX²⁰ dont elle bénéficie, soutenu Tène Gaye tout en invitant la direction de Twyford à

« faire preuve de dépassement pour une issue heureuse de cette situation car même si elle s'appuie sur le droit, un climat de travail serein gage d'une paix sociale durable porteur de progrès pour les travailleurs et de performances économiques pour l'entreprise est à ce coût²¹ ».

Dans sa note d'information publiée, l'entreprise dit que ce non-renouvellement est consécutif à l'insatisfaction issue des évaluations de performances menées par la direction des ressources humaines de l'entreprise. Selon la note de la direction, il s'agit d'une expiration normale de

contrats de travail à durée déterminée et non de licenciements comme annoncé par les délégués et une partie de la presse. L'entreprise Twyford Ceramics dit que les motifs qui gouvernent à cette décision sont :

« les travailleurs concernés ne travaillaient plus correctement et passaient leur temps à organiser des sorties médiatiques pour dénigrer la société. En outre, les délégués du personnel sont en connivence avec l'association des commerçants sénégalais de carreaux qui ne souhaite que l'échec total de l'entreprise. Twyford dit être convaincu que les délégués sont manipulés par cette association et posent des actes de déstabilisation de notre usine. Twyford usera de toutes les voies légales pour tirer cette affaire au clair en se réservant le droit de saisir la justice à l'endroit de tout travailleur qui poserait un acte de perturbation, de sabotage ou de vandalisme²²».

Cette note d'information autant elle éclaire le débat sur le licenciement des délégués, autant elle enfonce l'entreprise dans ses dérives dictatoriales, car reprocher à un syndicat de s'être prononcé par voie de presse pour exposer les conditions de travail de ses affiliés est une atteinte aux libertés syndicales, par conséquent ce motif aurait dû être écarté par l'inspecteur du travail. C'est pourquoi son attitude en tant qu'inspecteur du travail a été dénoncée par les travailleurs, qui considèrent que ce corps choisit assez souvent le camp des employeurs au détriment des employés laissant supposer ainsi de forts soupçons de corruption de ce corps par les employeurs.

Au lendemain de ces licenciements, les travailleurs décident de faire un arrêt de travail pour fustiger la décision de la direction de l'entreprise. Une manifestation est organisée devant l'usine le 26 Avril 2021, 25 travailleurs dont 5 délégués furent arrêtés pour avoir réclamé le retour des agents licenciés et le respect des accords signés pour de meilleures conditions sociales. Ils seront placés sous mandat de dépôt pour marche non autorisée, entrave à la liberté de travail, destruction de biens publics. Arrêtés et emprisonnés à la maison d'arrêt de Mbour, pour un sit in sur la route nationale, ces travailleurs resteront en prison jusqu'au 5 Mai 2021 avant d'obtenir une liberté provisoire. En pleine réunion du Conseil des ministres du 28 Avril 2021, le président de la République demande que le ministre du travail prenne en charge ce dossier pour trouver une issue paisible, tout en précisant dans sa communication que « Twyford Ceramics c'est un investissement lourd à forte intensité de main d'œuvre et qui contribue également à nos efforts d'industrialisation »²³. Ces propos laissent penser que l'Etat du Sénégal est plus préoccupé à justifier la création d'emplois que le respect de la législation du travail et de conditions de travail

descentes pour les salariés. D'ailleurs dans le communiqué du conseil des ministres du 28 Avril 2021, il est dit que « le président de la République est revenu sur la situation sociale de l'usine de production de carreaux avec un accent particulier sur le fait que cette usine est le fruit d'un investissement lourd à forte intensité de main d'œuvre qui contribue également à nos efforts d'industrialisation ». Cette partie du communiqué démontre que c'est la préservation de l'outil qui importe le plus aux autorités sénégalaises que les bonnes conditions de travail pour les ouvriers. Ce positionnement fait suite à toutes les mesures prises pour faciliter le recrutement et le renvoi sans frais des employés par des procédés mis en place pour soutenir les investisseurs.

Par conséquent, l'attitude des propriétaires chinois ne pouvait qu'empirer. Ainsi, à partir de cette manifestation, le syndicat sera purement et simplement démantelé avec le licenciement des 16 délégués élus par leurs pairs. Les réunions mensuelles entre les représentants des travailleurs et la direction générale ne se tient plus pour permettre d'évaluer le climat de travail pour améliorer les conditions des salariés.



Dortoir des travailleurs de l'entreprise avant leur démantèlement sur injonction de l'inspecteur du travail.

LA DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DE L'USINE SERT AUX EMPLOYÉS DES DEMANDES D'EXPLICATIONS

Impunité totale pour Twyford

- ▶ En perspective des licenciements, elle impute la panne de deux lignes de production aux grévistes.
- ▶ Abandonnés à eux-mêmes, ils ont repris le travail, hier, la peur au ventre.
- ▶ Le silence complice du ministère du Travail.

P.4



4.0 La fin du syndicalisme à Twyford Ceramics

La syndicalisation des travailleurs de Twyford qui devait conduire à une amélioration significative des conditions de vie et de travail dans une entreprise n'a pas connu les effets escomptés. En effet, profitant de la nature des contrats signés, Twyford Ceramics a fait arrêter 18 représentants syndicaux de leur travail, violant ainsi les règles qui gouvernent le secteur public. Ainsi, pendant deux jours les activités de l'entreprise ont été suspendues après le renvoi des 18 délégués du Syndicat unitaire des travailleurs des industries minières et activités (Sutimac) par la direction. D'après Abou Sène, porte-parole des travailleurs, leur seul tort est le fait d'alerter sur la situation humiliante et dramatique qu'ils disent vivre.

Saisie pour se prononcer la présidente du Haut Conseil pour le Dialogue Social, Innocence Ntap Ndiaye dit être désabusée par l'attitude de Twyford face aux travailleurs, elle dit : « *la direction doit avoir une écoute attentive par rapport aux doléances des travailleurs* ». Ayant eu écho des conditions de travail et de la situation de l'entreprise, Innocence Ntap Ndiaye exhorte la direction de l'entreprise

« à tout faire, à tout mettre en œuvre pour que cette entreprise retrouve la sérénité. Nous n'allons pas manquer de les saisir. Les travailleurs ont été impactés par la Covid-19. Il n'est pas normal que dans les conditions difficiles que les populations vivent, que des travailleurs puissent subir des attaques de tout ordre. Nous avons même essayé par le biais de l'inspection du travail de voir si une conciliation pouvait être faite mais apparemment ça ne marche pas²⁴ ».

Pour le tout capitalisme, les investissements, la justice sociale attendra au Sénégal au regard de la manière dont les Chinois ont écrasé le syndicat d'entreprise.

Les Chinois ont organisé des contre-offensives politiques pour infliger des revers aux syndicalistes et aux affiliés du syndicat. En réussissant à mettre fin aux contrats des 18 délégués syndicaux de SUTIMAC, les Chinois ont réussi à même faire signer des engagements à démissionner du syndicat pour tout employé qui voudrait garder son emploi, au point que déborder par les démissions de ses membres et évitant de leur porter préjudice, dès lors que les délégués ont été limogés de l'entreprise ; ces derniers ont finalement décidé de ne plus accepter un salarié de Twyford Céramiques pour lui éviter du tort. **Nonobstant le fait que la loi**

dit : « le délégué syndical ne peut faire l'objet d'un licenciement individuel ou collectif sans l'autorisation préalable de l'inspecteur du travail pendant toute la durée de son mandat ». Les dirigeants de l'entreprise Twyford ont fait fi de ce règlement pour licencier les 18 délégués syndicaux, se basant seulement les Contrats à durée déterminée qu'ils leur avaient signé. Saisi par les travailleurs face à cette violation du code du travail, l'inspecteur du travail trouva comme justification que c'est l'Agence pour la Promotion des Investissements qui leur donne ce droit. Au-delà de ces manquements, Twyford a bénéficié de permis d'exploitation de carrière de sable et de granite, dans lesquelles ses méthodes ont été peu catholiques.

5.0 Twyford et les permis d'exploitation

Dans sa quête d'approvisionnement en ressources naturelles pour les intrants entrant dans la fabrication de carreaux céramiques, Twyford Ceramics s'est vu attribuer des licences d'exploitation de mines de sable et de granite dans les régions Sud et Sud-Est du Sénégal. C'est ainsi que Twyford Ceramics après plusieurs explorations dans la région Sud, a décidé d'exploiter la mine de sable du Dioudoubou dans la région de Sédhiou²⁵, pour éviter de payer des frais d'exploitation élevé et tomber sous le régime des entreprises régies par l'ITIE²⁶, l'Initiative vise à améliorer la transparence des entreprises et des gouvernements dans le secteur extractif.

Twyford va prendre les services d'une entreprise sénégalaise du nom de Cabit Sa pour l'exploitation de la mine en leur faveur et être en quelque sorte des clients de Cabit Sa étant donné que c'est cette dernière qui a le matériel du transport et d'extraction. Ce procédé est le même qui a été utilisé sur la mine de Bandafassi en prenant les services de Banda Services pour exploiter en leur faveur. Etant une entreprise dont le chiffre d'affaire dépasse 200 millions de francs, Twyford échappe ainsi aux taxes de l'ITIE concernant les entreprises exploitantes, car elle sous traite l'exploitation de ses mines à d'autres entreprises nationales pour échapper au régime de taxation concernant les entreprises minières .

Aux derniers jours de l'enquête , les mines de Twyford ont arrêté de fonctionner, car elles ont été arrêtées pour défaut d'étude impact environnemental par décision des services du ministère de l'environnement²⁸ alors que les machines faisaient des excavations sur les sites d'exploitation. Ce

qui est une violation de l'article 4 de l'arrêté portant autorisation d'ouverture et d'exploitation d'une carrière privée permanente d'argile, sur une superficie de 19ha 17a 63ca, à Tomboronkoto, (Région de Kédougou), au code minier qui dit : Avant le démarrage de ses activités, la société TWYFORD (SN) CERAMICS LIMITED SUARL réalisera, à ses frais, une étude d'impact environnemental et social, conformément au Code de l'environnement et aux décrets et arrêtés y afférents. Twyford a exploité les mines au vu et au su des autorités compétentes avant qu'une décision ait été prise de contrôler la conformité des autorisations d'exploitation.

Plus important, les redevances demandées ne sont pas assez importantes, en effet ledit arrêté dans son article 5 stipule que TWYFORD (SN) CERAMICS LIMITED SUARL est assujettie, après notification de l'arrêté portant autorisation d'ouverture et d'exploitation d'une carrière privée permanente, au paiement d'un montant de deux millions cinq cent mille (2 500 000) francs CFA, représentant les droits fixes, et au paiement d'un montant de huit cent cinquante-huit mille huit cent quinze (958 815) francs CFA, représentant la redevance superficielle de la première, année au taux de 50 000 FCFA/ha/année²⁹.

En résumé, ce capitalisme industriel est un grand danger pour l'environnement économique et social des pays en développement. Par conséquent, le tout investissement dans lequel certains pays africains se sont investis en laissant les entreprises étrangères imposer leur loi est lourd de conséquences sur le futur de ces pays en termes de liquidation de la bourgeoisie locale, de la destruction de l'environnement, de la justice sociale. En jouant sur ces sociétés sous-traitantes, Twyford échappe à la taxation et aux charges sociales concernant les travailleurs opérant dans ces mines, un procédé déjà expérimenté au niveau de l'entreprise sur le plan des recrutements avec un volume de travail de 12 heures par jour pour les deux vagues de la journée pour une entreprise qui fonctionne pendant 24 heures. Cette stratégie de l'entreprise Twyford est illustratif de ce capitalisme sauvage que définit Karl Marx, pour qui le capitalisme n'est rien d'autre que la domination des forces du capital sur les forces du travail. En prenant les services de sociétés sous-traitantes dans l'exploitation des mines et le recrutement de son personnel, Twyford se libère des charges sociales de ses employés pour gagner plus dans le rendement et payer moins de taxes. Alors que l'entreprise se targue d'avoir permis la création de 1 000 emplois directs et de 2 000 emplois indirects³⁰. Cette forme de capitalisme sauvage se manifeste autant dans les procédés

d'exploitation des ressources que dans les relations de travail. Pour rappel Twyford fonctionne vingt quatre heures et sept jours dans la semaine, pour deux vagues successives avec un volume horaire en moyenne de douze heures (soit huit heures et quatre heures supplémentaires payées à 560 francs cfa l'heure pour un salaire de 69.000 à 70.000 cfa). Les jours d'absences ne sont pas comptabilisés dans le paiement et plus vous etes absents, plus vous gagnez moins. La logique entrepreneuriale de Twyford est celle du « Time is money » une éthique du travail correspondante aux sociétés capitalistes. Dans le cas de Twyford cela fonctionne ainsi, la pratique capitaliste consiste ici à employer un grand nombre de travailleurs, près d'un millier et à exiger une croissance continue des profits par un fonctionnement sans arrêt des machines et memes pour les jours de fêtes. Le temps et la productivité sont au cœur des valeurs de cette entreprise qui ne manque pas de recruter des non sénégalais et sénégalais avec un niveau scolaire faible voir inexistant pour travailler dans son usine. Cette perception du temps et de la productivité est la manifestation d'une diffusion du capitalisme industriel chinois allergique aux revendications syndicales et au respect de principes élémentaires des droits des travailleurs. L'objectif c'est d'acheter des forces de travail maniables et corvéables pour le profit.

En effet, avec un marché des importations de carreaux évaluées à 78 850 tonnes par an, représentant une valeur de près de 30 milliards de francs CFA (environ 55 millions de dollars), Twyford a mis sur le « carreau » l'ensemble des importateurs de céramiques sénégalais pour dominer à elle seule le marché des céramiques avec sa production journalière de 55 000 mètres carrés de carreaux. Tout en ayant un œil sur le marché sous régional ouest africain à partir de leur centre de production de Sindia pour accéder aux marchés communautaires que sont l'Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine (UEMOA), avec ses 120 millions de potentiels consommateurs, la Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO), avec près de 400 millions de consommateurs.

Recommandations :

- Il est permis de constater que le modèle d'investissement des firmes comme Twyford Ceramics par la capture du marché et la neutralisation des acteurs économiques opérant dans le secteur d'activités n'est pas propice à l'accumulation de capital de la bourgeoisie locale ; par conséquent les Etats doivent être amenés à associer le privé local aux investisseurs étrangers pour un secteur privé national fort
- Les réformes économiques tirées des politiques néolibérales pour l'attractivité des investissements participent à fragiliser le statut des employés et leur précarisation par les mesures d'assouplissement permissifs octroyés aux investisseurs étrangers ; par conséquent les Etats doivent placer leurs citoyens au centre de leur projet de développement pour un développement humain juste
- Les pratiques chinoises de bas salaire doivent être corrigés par un contrôle des salaires comme existant dans certains pays pour une dignité sociale des travailleurs
- La diffusion du capitalisme industriel porté par l'éthique du travail et la productivité amènent assez souvent des abus concernant les droits des travailleurs, par conséquent les droits des travailleurs doivent être reconnus et respectés autour de syndicats reconnus et acceptés par les investisseurs étrangers
- La législation du travail au Sénégal doit être encadrée pour mieux défendre les travailleurs et non plus les précariser au bénéfice du capital étranger ou nationale
- Une implication des diplômés sénégalais des Universités chinoises doit être plus soutenue au niveau du top management des entreprises chinoises afin de mieux servir les deux parties
- Les gouvernements africains devraient renforcer la capacité opérationnelle des syndicats dans le but de permettre au mouvement syndical africain de participer de manière significative au débat concernant les activités du gouvernement et des entreprises chinoises sur le continent africain.
- Une législation forte doit encadrer l'exploitation des ressources minières pour le suivi et le respect des contrats d'exploitation signés en vue d'une exploitation des ressources précédée par des études d'impact environnementales sérieuses .

6.0 Conclusion

Les relations entre la Chine et les pays africains méritent une réflexion audacieuse pour remettre à plat certains accords incitant les investissements dans le processus de la création d'emplois. Twyford Ceramics, géant des céramiques en Afrique avec des usines au Nigeria, Kenya et Sénégal participe à freiner l'accumulation primitive de capital des importateurs et précarise les emplois créés. En effet, face à la course aux statistiques d'emplois créés, d'entreprises installées sur son territoire, les Etats africains comme le Sénégal ont été amenés à tordre leur législation du travail pour faire plaisir aux investisseurs, sous prétexte d'une installation d'unité industrielle à haute intensité de main d'œuvre. Malheureusement, les habitudes chinoises héritées du capitalisme industriel bâties sur un volume de travail énorme et une grande productivité des salariés sans place pour les loisirs ont conduit les salariés de Twyford à sonner la révolte pour réclamer de meilleures conditions de travail. Ainsi, au regard des pratiques de Twyford matière de travail engendrant des abus via la précarisation de la main-d'œuvre, la faible rémunération des salariés et un manque général d'adhésion à la sécurité au travail, le syndicat de l'entreprise Twyford Ceramics a cherché à mobiliser les salariés pour de meilleures conditions de travail. Malgré les accords signés auprès de l'inspecteur du travail, Twyford n'a pas respecté certains de ses engagements mentionnés plus haut, mieux l'entreprise a réussi à décapiter le syndicat en licenciant les dix huit délégués qui représentaient le personnel avant de neutraliser finalement le syndicat par un non versement des check-off des travailleurs. Ces pratiques d'abus dans le cadre du travail ont concerné ces dernières années beaucoup plus entreprises chinoises que les autres nationalités, en effet entre les mauvaises conditions de travail à l'usine Someta entraînant les morts des salariés broyés par une machine, China Road Bridge Corporation épinglée dans son chantier de l'autoroute Ila Touba avant de rectifier dans son nouveau chantier du Bus RapidTransfert dans la région de v, qui est un chantier à haute intensité de main d'œuvre. L'enseignement majeur montre que ce sont les réglementations des pays concernés qui sont à la base des infractions au droit du travail en Afrique.

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NOTES

¹Thèse Ibrahima Niang « les relations sino africaines, contexte et prospective »

² Durant nos recherches de nombreux cas de rupture abusives de contrats nous ont été signalées dans plusieurs secteurs d’activités. Assez souvent les salariés ont été amenés à porter l’affaire devant les juridictions pour arbitrage. D’ailleurs les services de traducteur sont souvent demandés pour chinois ayant un procès au tribunal dans le groupe chat « Backtogalsen »

³ Twyford Ceramics est une entreprise chinoise cotée à la bourse de Shanghai en Chine. Cette usine est installée à Sindia, non loin du nouvel aéroport international Blaise Diagne, au cœur du triangle formé par Mbour, Thiès et Dakar, des villes parmi les plus dynamiques économiquement au Sénégal. Le coût d’investissement initial de l’entreprise est de 82 millions de dollars dont 62 millions de dollars représentent l’amortissement fixe et les 20 millions de dollars les biens mobiles. L’entreprise, soutient-il, a permis la création de 1 000 emplois directs et de 2 000 emplois indirects. Elle a une capacité de production d’environ 18 millions de mètres carrés de carreaux par an et produit des carreaux de faïence et de céramique. Ceramics contrôlait environ 50 % des parts du marché sénégalais des carreaux, en 2020.

⁴ Conçue pour encourager et faciliter les investissements au Sénégal, l’Agence pour la Promotion des Investissements au Sénégal a mis en place un cadre législatif favorisant la précarisation des emplois au Sénégal. Ainsi, les entreprises y compris les promoteurs/développeurs des Zones Economiques Spéciales bénéficient d’un paquet incitatif qui donne droit à des exonérations fiscales et douanières.

⁵ La Go Out Policy ou Stratégie de mondialisation est la stratégie actuelle de la République populaire de Chine pour encourager ses entreprises à investir à l’étranger. La plupart des pays favorisent l’attraction d’investissements étrangers et ne soutiennent que passivement les investissements étrangers.

⁶ Le rapport *Doing Business* analyse les réglementations de 190 économies dans 12 domaines afin d’évaluer le climat des affaires à travers le monde. Dix de ces indicateurs sont pris en compte pour attribuer à chaque économie une note sur la facilité de faire des affaires. Le rapport se penche sur les règles qui affectent la vie d’une entreprise de sa naissance à sa liquidation : création d’entreprise, obtention d’un permis de construire, raccordement à l’électricité, transfert de propriété, obtention d’un prêt, protection des investisseurs minoritaires, paiement des taxes et impôts, commerce transfrontalier, exécution des contrats et règlement de l’insolvabilité.

⁷ Le marché des céramiques est estimé à 30 milliards de francs par an(Discours du président Macky Sall à l’inauguration de l’usine Twyford) janvier 2020.

⁸Voir le journal L’enquête du 2 Mai 2021. L’Usine du mépris. Numéro 2942.

⁹ La commune de Sindia est créée en 1996 dans le cadre de l’approfondissement de la décentralisation. Elle est une Collectivité Locale relevant de l’Arrondissement de Nguekokh, du Département de Mbour et de la Région de Thiès. Elle est délimitée au Nord par la communauté rurale de Diass, au Sud par la communauté rurale de Malicounda, à l’Est par les arrondissements de Notto (CR Tassette), Sessène (Sandiara) et Fissel (Ndiagianao) et à l’Ouest par l’Océan Atlantique

¹⁰ Interview A. T ancien technicien à Twyford

¹¹ Art.L.135.- Dans tous les établissements visés à l'article L.3 la durée légale du travail ne peut excéder 40 heures par semaine. Toutefois dans les exploitations agricoles, les heures de travail sont fixées à 2352 heures par an. Dans cette limite, un arrêté du Ministre chargé du travail fixera la durée légale hebdomadaire selon les saisons. Des arrêtés du Ministre chargé du Travail déterminent les modalités d'application des alinéas précédents pour l'ensemble des branches d'activité ou des professions ou pour une branche ou une profession particulière. Les arrêtés fixent notamment l'aménagement et la répartition des horaires de travail dans un cycle donné, les dérogations permanentes ou temporaires applicables dans certains cas et pour certains emplois, les modalités de récupération des heures de travail perdues et les mesures de contrôle. Des accords relatifs à l'aménagement et à la répartition des horaires de travail à l'intérieur de la semaine peuvent être conclus au sein de l'entreprise ou de l'établissement.

Art.L.136.- Dans les établissements visés à l'article L. 3, et pour répondre aux demandes de certains travailleurs, les employeurs sont autorisés à déroger à la règle de l'horaire collectif et à pratiquer des horaires individualisés sous réserve de l'information préalable de l'Inspecteur du Travail et de la Sécurité sociale compétent et du délégué du personnel. Les horaires individualisés peuvent entraîner, dans la limite d'un nombre d'heures fixé par arrêté, des reports d'heures d'une semaine à une autre sans que ces heures n'entraînent le paiement d'heures supplémentaires.

¹² Le paradoxe de cette note de l'Inspecteur, c'est d'avoir lui-même relevé **le non-respect des horaires de travail réglementaires sans pouvoir faire revenir l'entreprise à faire travailler les salariés aux normes de la législation du travail sénégalais qui est de 40 heures par semaine.**

¹³ Après cette visite, le syndicat des travailleurs sera installé au niveau de l'entreprise avec l'élection des délégués représentatifs. Le Syndicat est nommé SUTIMAC (Syndicat Unitaire des Travailleurs des Industries Minières et Activités Connexes).

¹⁴ Voir photo, ce dortoir qui a pour seul matériel des tôles en zinc avec une température qui tourne autour de 30 à 35 degrés.

¹⁵ Inspecteur du Travail de Thiès . [Sénégal: Crise à Twyford Ceramics Ltd - Les vérités de l'Inspecteur régional du Travail de Thiès - allAfrica.com](#)

¹⁶ [Sénégal: Crise à Twyford Ceramics Ltd - Les vérités de l'Inspecteur régional du Travail de Thiès - allAfrica.com](#)

¹⁷ Communiqué de l'entreprise Twyford dans le journal « L'Observateur n°5163 du 15 décembre 2020.

¹⁸ La convocation de l'opposant Ousmane Sonko vire au drame par son arrestation qui occasion des manifestations violentes dans la quasi-totalité du territoire sénégalais avec un bilan macabre de 14 victimes tombés des balles des forces de défense et de sécurité du Sénégal.

¹⁹ Voir les journaux l'Enquete du 2 mai 2021, de Libération de septembre 2020 qui parle de silence coupable du ministère du travail. [Supposés mauvais traitements de ses travailleurs : La Direction de Twyford étale ses performances et dément ses détracteurs \(dakaractu.com\)](#)

²⁰ Tel que prévu dans la loi n° 2017-07 du 06 janvier 2017 portant dispositif d'incitations applicable dans les ZES et le décret n°2017-1174 portant application de la loi n° 2017-07 du 06 janvier 2017, les entreprises exonérées bénéficient d'une possibilité de conclure des contrats à durée déterminée sur une durée de cinq (05) années. Cette disposition qui viole la législation du travail pousse aujourd'hui les investisseurs à user et à abuser des contrats à durée déterminée. En effet, la législation du travail au Sénégal contraint l'employeur après deux propositions de contrat à durée déterminée de transformer le contrat suivant à un contrat à durée interminée. Cette disposition est largement bafouée par les employeurs aujourd'hui sous prétexte de facilités obtenues de l'Apix. L'Apix nie avoir signé un tel agrément pour Twyford.

²¹ Extrait du communiqué de l'inspecteur du travail. C'est paradoxal que l'inspecteur du travail fasse des relations publiques dans ce conflit alors que son travail est d'arbitrer le différend entre les deux parties.

²² Note d'information publiée par l'entreprise suite aux licenciements des délégués de l'entreprise.

²³ Communiqué du Conseil des Ministres du 28 Avril 2021.

²⁴ Interview de Innocence Ntap Ndiaye, à la vingt deuxième assemblée du Haut Conseil du Dialogue Social. [Climat délétère à Twyford : Innocence Ntap Ndiaye invite au respect des droits des travailleurs \(seneweb.com\)](#)

²⁵[https://news.sen360.sn/actualite/environnement-goudomp-les-populations-de-dioudioubou-tres-remontees-contre-lentreprise-twyford-ceramics/612390/\[Environnement\]](https://news.sen360.sn/actualite/environnement-goudomp-les-populations-de-dioudioubou-tres-remontees-contre-lentreprise-twyford-ceramics/612390/[Environnement]) Goudomp : Les populations de Dioudioubou très remontées contre l'entreprise Twyford Ceramics (seneweb.com)

²⁶Initiative pour la Transparence dans les Industries Extractives. Complétez les notes de bas de page, rajoutez des liens etc...

²⁷Propos de Clément Senghor , superviseur commercial de Twyford à l'inauguration.

²⁸ Entretien avec le Percepteur régional de Kédougou.

²⁹ARRETE-002205-DU-05-FEV-2019-AUT.-EXPLOITATION-CPP-ARGILE-A-TOMBORONKOTO-TWYFORD.pdf

4. Reinforcing Societal Issues in Africa-China Government Engagement

**(RE-)DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA-CHINA
RELATIONS**

By

Abdul-Gafar Tobi Oshodi

Department of Political Science, Lagos State University

ABSTRACT

The African University is an important institution on the continent. Given this understanding, this report focuses on the African University and how it can respond—is responding or has responded—to Africa-China relations. Specifically, it addresses three questions: (1) How have universities in Africa responded to Africa-China relations? (2) To what extent can the African University serve as a channel for Chinese technology transfer to the continent? (3) How can the African University best shape the future of Africa-China relations? Although Chinese presence on the African campus has evolved (from Chinese language training to Africa-China university collaborations, ICT training, scholarships, and landmark construction projects ranging from libraries and entire universities), the report found that Chinese-trained faculty, institutionalised approach, Chinese-initiated approach, collective approach and domestication are routes to Chinese technology transfer to Africa via the African University. Although the African University has the potential to lead an African-centred engagement of China, doing this will require that it addresses some of its own fundamental challenges. While the report is targeted at universities in Africa, empirical data were collected from lecturers at four public universities in Ghana and Nigeria (i.e., University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology both in Ghana; and the University of Lagos and University of Ibadan in Nigeria) using in-depth interviews with lecturers and focus group discussions (FGDs) with students. This is complemented by desktop research on the state of Chinese presence in African universities and how they have responded to growing African-China relations. The report teases out nine policy options for empowering the African University as an agent and catalyst for an Africa-centred engagement.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

China's presence in Africa is far-reaching³⁰³ and has attracted significant academic interest in the last 20 years (Alden & Large, 2018). In the deepening Africa-China relations, universities have not been left out. Beyond serving as arenas for teaching and researching Africa-China relations (Carayannis & Olin, 2012), universities are a reflection of the state of the relationship (Oshodi, 2019a; Oshodi, 2022). Between the 1960s and 1970 when many African countries had not established diplomatic relations with China, very few universities in Africa had Chinese language units or departments. This began to change as relationship intensified in the 2000s and beyond. Thus, universities in Africa have become an important arena for Africa-China relations in higher education (HE). Not only have Chinese language training centres and Confucius Institutes (hereafter CIs) increased in African universities, but other forms of relationships have emerged on campus. Nonetheless, little academic research has focused on the African university and its response to, or experience of Africa-China relations. Even fewer works have interrogated and analysed the views and aspirations of stakeholders within the African University on Africa-China relations. Yet, the African university represents a powerful arena for the construction of discourses and engagement of China in Africa. Given this lacuna, this report contributes to giving voice to an important stakeholder in the African University. By analysing the views of lecturers, this report will tease out policy options for empowering the African University as an agent and catalyst for an Africa-centred engagement of China.

Not to be in doubt, the concept of the 'African University' is not without contestations and even contradictions. Two broad conceptualisations are discernible. First is a geographical conceptualisation. In this case, it means universities that are located within the continent. In this simplistic sense, any university that is built within an African country becomes an African University. The second conceptualisation situates the African University within a context of its functionality and organic relevance. Simply put, an African University is one that can—and should—contribute to resolving the African problems. In this sense, that a university is

³⁰³ Daniel Large (2021). *China and Africa: The new era*. Cambridge: Polity.

geographically located in Africa does not necessarily translate to being an African University. As one lecturer puts it, universities in Africa are “universal in character and very scarcely African in context.”³⁰⁴ For the lecturer, it is preferable to use “‘the university in Africa’ because African universities have been more or less struggling to be like universities elsewhere—which means that the precepts, values, orientation, curriculum, course offerings, disciplines, all of those things have little African content.”³⁰⁵ Unlike the university in Timbuktu, that was “autochthonous” and emerged from local circumstances and conditions, and therefore qualify as “*the African University*, the contemporary university in Africa “came through the colonial encounters—established to reflect, first, the universal character of universities, but also second, to serve as places that will strengthen the human resource of the colonial enterprise.”³⁰⁶ Thus, in this sense, *the African*—in the African University—is “to locate the university geographically, there is no philosophical content.”³⁰⁷ By implication, the African University is organic. In this sense, the African University is decolonised—and different from a ‘university in Africa’ which is geographical. As a colonial artefact, the ‘university in Africa’ is generally a colonial creation.

In spite of its colonial history, however, this report takes a position that being a university in Africa does not preclude its potentialities of becoming the African University, a development agent and a champion of decolonisation. Ultimately, this report reimagines the role of the university within Africa-China relations in HE. It acknowledges that the location of a university in Africa does not necessarily make it an African University. But rather than a university that is wholly decolonised (as this is still rare), the African University is aspirational. It is within the context of this aspiration that the role of the university is re-imagines in Africa. Structurally, the rest of this report is divided into six sections. Section Two discusses the methodology. Section Three is a brief discussion on the university as a multidimensional arena. Section Four constructs a historical sketch of Africa-China relations in HE. Section Five presents and discusses the empirical findings of the study.

³⁰⁴ Interview in Lagos, Prof O, UI 26 July 2022.

³⁰⁵ Interview in Lagos, Prof O, UI 26 July 2022.

³⁰⁶ Interview in Lagos, Prof O, UI 26 July 2022.

³⁰⁷ Interview in Lagos, Prof O, UI 26 July 2022.

Section Six teases out some policy options for universities and governments in Africa. Section Seven is the conclusion.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This report addresses three research questions: (1) How have universities in Africa responded to Africa-China relations? (2) To what extent can the African University serve as a channel for Chinese technology transfer to the continent? (3) How can the African University best shape the future of Africa-China relations? To engage the questions, a qualitative approach was adopted. This entailed two parts: desktop research and empirical fieldwork. While the desktop research allowed us to highlight some examples across Africa and included a survey of relevant academic and popular media reports, the empirical fieldwork entailed in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussion (FGD).

Figure 1: Interviews with academics in Lagos and Accra



Source: author

The interviews were conducted with faculty members (generally referred to as “lecturers” in the report) at four public universities—i.e., two each from Ghana and Nigeria. Specifically, this included lecturers at the University of Ghana (UG) and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science

and Technology (KNUST) in Ghana; and the University of Lagos (UNILAG) and University of Ibadan (UI) in Nigeria. The universities in the two countries were purposively selected as Nigeria and Ghana offer interesting contexts. Although Ghana established diplomatic relationship with China in 1960 and Nigeria in 1971, the two countries have experienced the growing involvement of China in universities. From building entire universities, equipping laboratories, establishing CIs to information and communication technology (ICT), Chinese presence in Ghanaian and Nigerian universities is not in doubt as illustrated in Table 2.

The lecturers—who range in position from senior lecturers to professors—were purposively selected to ensure, among other things, that: (a) a mix of lecturers that have studied within Africa, China and elsewhere were interviewed, (b) selection cuts across different disciplines in the sciences and social sciences, (c) lecturers in universities with and without a CI, Chinese Study Department or unit, or a centre for Chinese studies were included, (d) selection of lecturers included both those that are (or have been) affiliated to centres or programmes studying Africa-China relations at their universities and those that have not, and (e) selection of a diverse pool of lecturers ranging from a former Vice Chancellor, to Head of Departments (HoD), and to people that have not held such positions. To further understand the views of the lecturers, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with Nigerian undergraduate students studying at UNILAG.

After an introductory question that sought to understand their views about the (African) university and its role in society, three broad group of questions were asked from the lecturers. The first sought to understand their views about the African University's response to Africa-China relations. In asking this set of questions, the researcher's background knowledge about existing programmes on their campus—for instance, the CIs at UNILAG and UG, the Nigeria-China Institute of Development Studies at UNILAG, the Centre for Asia Studies at UG, etc.—were useful in contextualising the questions. A second set of questions elicited their views as to the extent to the African University is (or is not) a channel for Chinese technology/knowledge transfer. It included questions about faculty members that studied in China, factors that they considered to be important in supporting the African University as a channel for the transfer of Chinese technology,

and what roles the government and other stakeholders can play to make this happen. The final set of questions sought to understand the future of Africa-China relations and the African University.

In terms of ethical consideration, a consent form was shared with all research participants. The form included information such as the background and address of the researcher, a summary of the research objectives, participant's rights, and the research funder. Participants received no direct financial benefits from participating in the project but the principle of beneficence guiding the research was shared with all the participants. This principle included that a 3-5 summary of the research findings would be shared with them and that they will be informed about online dissemination of the findings (e.g. webinars, blogs, and media reports). Also the free copies of the policy paper or journal article(s) that results from the research project will be, first, shared with participants before it is shared with other stakeholders.

3.0 THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY AS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ARENA

To properly situate the African University in Africa-China relations and interrogate its capability (or otherwise) to be an agent and catalyst for an Africa-centred engagement of China presupposes a broader understanding of the university as a multidimensional arena. As can be deduced from its conceptual clarification in the introduction, the African University remains a complex space. In many ways, it is a political arena (marked by contestations among stakeholders within and outside the system), a colonial artefact (whose history and contemporary approach is tied to knowledge production outside it), an arena of international relations/struggles, and a development agent. Two points are noteworthy at this juncture. First, rather than compartmentalised, the identified arenas are interconnected spaces that can reinforce one another. Second, the description of the African University as the four arenas is not uniquely African as these representations is observed in non-African contexts. In this report, the African University as an arena of international struggles and a development agent are particularly relevant.

The African University is an arena for international struggle because it has been “intricately linked to national and international politics, and African students have played a significant role in both” (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume, 2014, p. 500). Students and staff were involved in anti-colonial struggles and opposed policies such as the structural adjustment programme (SAP) advanced by international financial institutions in mid-1980s to 90s. In more recent times, universities in Africa are spaces for China-US digital competition. There is the competition to entice students, faculty and management—with their products and academies. While competition between Huawei and Cisco academies are useful examples (Oshodi, 2022), scholarships to university students can also become a tool to entice the next generation of Africans to either side. While US-China competition in the African University is moderated by the “non-alignment of African governments” (Oshodi, 2022, p. 68), this is not the case with China-Taiwan competition. Taiwan-China competition in the African University exemplifies the argument that the university is both an element and manifestation of international relations (Oshodi, 2019a; Oshodi, Moshood & Ubabudu, 2022). The expansion of Chinese CIs into universities across 45 African countries is therefore not a coincidence but a confirmation of a shift of African governments towards China—a recognition of its One China policy by the majority (Oshodi, Moshood & Ubabudu, 2022). The African University appears to be an echo chamber of their host country’s foreign policy, expressed in the limited presence of Taiwan on campuses. Such limited presence includes Taipei’s offer of scholarship to students of the University of Hargesia in 2021 and the 2016 provision of computers to five universities (i.e. Nugaal University, Burco University, Berbera Maritime University, Tima-cade University, and the Erigavo University) in Somaliland, an unrecognized country that recognizes Taiwan (Oshodi, Moshood & Ubabudu, 2022).

Ultimately, the African University is—or can be—an agent of development. This is because universities in Africa, like others elsewhere, have the potential to address society’s complex problems and find solutions. As articulated by Mosha, the African University “will be judged not only by their intelligent discussion, good experiments in the laboratory or greenhouses, or excellent research, but also by how far such achievements are being used to create *a better society in which the people of Africa lead decent lives*” (Mosha, 1986, p. 107, emphasis author’s). The late Thandika

Mkandawire, in an article aptly entitled “Running while others walk: Knowledge and the challenge of Africa's development,” contends that “if Africa will have to run, the university will have to sprint” (Mkandawire, 2011, p. 25). A pertinent question therefore arises: why are the development challenges confronting Africa persistent (and sometimes compounded) in spite of the increase in public and private universities? While Mkandawire did not directly address this question, he clearly underscored an important linkage. For him, “the crisis of the African university is closely related to the crisis of development” (Mkandawire, 2011, p. 25).

This report acknowledges the developmental potential of the African University. Based on this acknowledgement, it contends that one way to understand the potentialities of the African University in Africa-China relations is to give voice to one of its main stakeholders—i.e. lecturers—in the process of finding solutions to the problem. This fits into Anthony Giddens’ (1979) Structuration Theory that maintains that the social environment is constructed by human behaviour within a complex context of agent-structure interactions. Though the structure (or social formations) that emerges are themselves products of the interactions, Giddens accounts for instances where a *system*—what Giddens (1979, p. 131) described as “enduring cycles of reproduced relations” —can be disrupted or challenged by agents within it. In the post-colonial African context, the University is one of such capable agents. As agents, universities can influence the *structure* within which they exist just as they can be shaped by it. With specific reference to Africa-China relations, this report offers a discussion of the extent to which the African University have—and/or can—be a catalyst and agent for advancing an Africa-centred approach to engaging China. This assumes a connection between the University and the society.

a. **ABRIDGED HISTORY OF AFRICA-CHINA RELATIONS IN HE**

Africa’ s long history of development predates European colonization (Rodney, 1976). When the Al-Azhar University in Egypt and the Qarawiyyin University in Morocco are considered, this history of development predates what happened in Europe. Both are noted to be “older than any Western university in existence” (Mazrui, 2005, p. 71). Yet, as noted above, the African University

is an arena of international relations. In terms of the history of Africa-China relations in HE (with specific emphasis on universities), it has slowly evolved over 65 years. For the purpose of this report, three points must be underscored. First, the history of Africa-China relations in HE is divided into three interconnected phases: the early stage (1950s-1998), intermediate stage (1999-2012), and the modern phase (2013 till date). Although this broad periodization can be further subdivided, it is constructed to shed some light into a less studied dimension of Africa-China relations. Second, this history cannot be disconnected from the broader evolution in Africa-China relations. Third, this history will be primarily focused on African universities—although it is acknowledged that HE can be used to mean post-secondary education. In other words, focus will be placed on events within the universities in Africa and how they have responded to Africa-China relations.

4.1 The early years

Africa-China relations in HE commenced in the late 1950s and 1960s when countries in Africa began to achieve political independence. Arguably, it started in Egypt, the first country in Africa to establish diplomatic relations with China (Shinn, 2019). In 1956, Egypt and China established diplomatic relations. In the same year, China set up a trade office in Cairo and there was the exchange of eight students and teachers (Gu, 2017). Although as at 1958, Chinese language was taught at Ain Shams University in Egypt (King, 2013), the limited nature of this language training reflected the stage of Africa-China relation. Nonetheless, China supported anti-colonial struggle in Africa in the 1950-60s and African studies in China at the time “concentrated on the nationalist independence movements” (Li, 2005, p. 62). In Africa, one element of Chinese support was (military) training, illustrated in China’s policy towards Ghana in the 1960s. Ghana gained its independence from Britain in 1957, and by 1960 it established diplomatic relations with China. By October 1964, the new country’s leader, Kwame Nkrumah, welcomed five Chinese guerrilla warfare instructors, led by Col. Yen Leng, to Ghana (US Senate, 1972; Ogunsanwo, 1974). On 7 October, the instructors visited Half-Assini Training Camp, a camp for training freedom fighters close to the Ivorian borders. The Chinese instructors remained in Ghana—moved from Half Assini to the Obenemasi Camp near Kumasi—until the February 1966 coup that removed Nkrumah (US Senate, 1972).

By the time Nkrumah was removed from office, a number of universities had been established in Africa. But the prospects for any meaningful collaboration between them and those in China were low for at least two reasons. First, the period coincided with the Cultural Revolution when Chinese “universities closed for several years” (Li, 2005, p. 64). Second, some of the universities were created under the guidance of colonial powers and retained connection with institutions in Europe, making African-China collaboration in HE limited if not difficult. In a sense, the limited relationship reflected the pro-West foreign policies of the newly independent countries in Africa. Although in 1971 African countries supported China (against Taiwan) in the United Nations,³⁰⁸ relations in the HE sector did not immediately change as it largely remained low until 2000s. There were, however, generally high interest in African studies in Chinese universities in this phase—perhaps propelled by Mao’s own interest and acknowledgement on 21 April 1961 of the need to know more about Africa and establish an institute and write about it (Li, 2005). As early as 1964, for instance, the Research Center of African Studies was established at the Nanjing University. Also, the China Society of African Studies was established in 1979, funded by the same university. Xiangtan University established the African Law and Society Research Center in 1978 at its Law School. At Peking University, a Chinese Society of African Historical Studies was established in the School of International Studies in 1980. The university established a Center for African Studies in 1998. In the same year, the Shanghai Normal University established a Center for African Studies. Other centres for African studies have been established in Chinese universities since then (Bolin, Carayannis, Niewenhuis & Vlavonou, 2022, p. 48).

4.2 The intermediate phase

The years 1999- 2012 laid important foundations for Africa-China relations in HE. This phase coincided with China’s going global policy. Although a few universities in Africa began to establish Chinese Studies, this phase was largely intermediate, exploratory and set in motion initiatives that would advance Africa-China HE relations into the modern era. Aside forming the

³⁰⁸ In the UN vote, 26 African countries supported China while 15 supported Taiwan. See Shinn (2019).

Forum for China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, suffice to mention that China launched its global language and culture promotion programme in this phase. In 2004, the first CI was established in 2004 in Seoul, South Korea, and the second at the University of Maryland, US, in the same year. By 2005, the first CI in Africa was established at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. By 2012, almost 30 CIs have been established in universities in Africa. Though a centre for Chinese language and culture, CIs can serve other purposes including scientific collaboration between African and Chinese universities. Professor Okechukwu Esimone, Vice Chancellor of Nnamdi Azikiwe University (that hosts one of Nigeria’ s two CIs), notes: the institutes “are outlets for exchange of knowledge on Chinese culture. A lot of people wrongly think that the institute is just about the learning of Mandarin, the Chinese language. If you understand the culture of a people, you will relate far and better with them” (Ejiogu, 2022).

Aside hosting CIs, this phase witnessed an increase in interest in Africa-China relations in African universities. For instance, Stellenbosch University in South Africa set up a Centre for Chinese Studies in 2004. In 2009, the University of Ghana introduced a Bachelor of Art in Chinese in the Department of Modern Languages. Although Legon’ s Department of Modern Languages was set up in 1964, its Chinese bachelor programme preceded the establishment of the university’ s CI established in 2013. The reverse was the case at UNILAG where a CI was first established in 2009 before a Bachelor in Chinese Studies programme was introduced in 2013 in the Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies. Similarly, a CI was first established in 2009 at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University before the university’ s Chinese Studies Department was introduced in 2014. Meanwhile, news reportage about Africa-China relations began to attract some interest. By 2009, the Africa-China Reporting Project was established at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (van Wyk, 2019). The Project was to essentially “improve the quality of reporting on African and Africa-China issues by providing facilitation and capacity building for journalists via reporting grants, skills training workshops and other opportunities.” ³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ See The Africa-China Reporting Project, “About us”, ACRP website: <https://africachinareporting.com/about-us/>

About four years after the first CI was established in an African university, the 2009 FOCAC was held in Egypt. It was at this FOCAC that a motion was set for a partnership of African and Chinese universities. In the same year, China's Ministry of Education launched an initiative to bring Chinese and African universities closer: i.e. the 20+20 Cooperation Plan. Specifically, the Plan was formulated as a "one-to-one partnerships between 20 Chinese and 20 African higher education institutions in 17 African countries and sought to promote capacity building and sustainable development in Africa itself" (Gu, 2017). The pairing had two universities in Egypt, Kenya, and South Africa—the remaining parties in the 20+20 Plan were from Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Namibia, Nigeria, Morocco, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The FOCAC initiative and the 20+20 Cooperation Plan, however, snowballed into the 2011 trilateral UNESCO-China-Africa meeting of 44 university leaders on both sides (King, 2013; UNESCO, 2011). The two-day meeting—with the theme "Prospects for Future Collaboration between Chinese and African Universities"—was held at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris (Xinhua, 2011). At its commencement, China promised to support higher education in Africa with US\$2 million annually (Gu, 2017). In spite of the initial expectations it offered, little policy measures have resulted on a Pan-African scale. Four reasons might have accounted for this.

First is contextual disconnections; whereby strong, state-backed and censored university ecology (operating within an autocratic context) in China contradicted the more variegated African university setting (wherein despite the existence of many public universities, government's policy criticism and anti-state renditions on campuses can be deep and persistent). That the initiative is reportedly "initiated by Chinese Ministry of Education" (Xinhua, 2011) demonstrates that it did not generate from within Africa (or its universities)—it is Chinese-driven. While this does not necessarily mean that universities in Africa cannot key into it and instrumentalise it for their objectives, it upends the claim of African agency and urgency in high education (hereafter HE). Equally important, its exogenous nature raise questions as to the extent to which the objectives behind the initiative took account of the specific interest of stakeholders in Africa. Second, that the collaboration emerged out of FOCAC, an institution that demonstrates China's economic

influence in Africa underscores its driving context. The focus of the collaboration, if it were to have originated from within the African University, is thus unknown.

Third, there are structural issues that tend to position African Universities as a weaker partner of the two. For instance, as at the time the 2011 meeting took place, universities in Africa were experiencing the aftermath of the impact of reducing funding from the 1980s, a struggle to recovery that has continued in many leading African Universities (Mkandawire, 2011; Mamdani, 2007). In addition, as at the time of the meeting, Chinese universities had relatively older, and more programmes on Africa-China relations than in Africa (Carayannis & Olin, 2012; Bolin, Carayannis, Niewenhuis & Vlavonou, 2022). The fourth reason relates to the (historical) relationship between universities in Africa and China. In Africa's HE, it is more common to find collaboration between western and home universities. Built on historical/colonial relationships between these universities, many first-generation universities in Africa were colleges of universities in UK. Makerere, Ibadan, and Legon were colleges/affiliates of the University of London. This relationship blossomed with returning-students from European and American universities as faculty members. Compared to those trained in China, these group from Europe and US appear to have a higher number among the foreign-trained Faculty in universities. This point is noticeable from the interviews conducted and in the FGD with UNILAG students. Chinese-trained Faculty in many African universities is relatively lower, a situation that can make organic collaboration slow or difficult.

4.3 The modern era

From 2013, landmark Chinese projects began to appear in university campuses in Africa. Many of the initiatives launched in the intermediate phase began to manifest, building on events of the preceding phase. Unlike in the preceding phase, Chinese state and non-state actors have become more active in African universities. For instance, when Ghana's late President John Atta Mills visited Huawei's Shenzhen headquarters in 2010 during his state visit to China, he was promised ICT laboratories for four public universities. This promise was fully delivered in 2013 when the lab at the University for Development Studies was completed (Adom News, 2013). In 2013, China

launched another institution pairing programme: Think Tank 10+10 Partnership Plan. Centres in universities, on both sides, were paired with think tanks. For instance, the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at the University of Addis Ababa was paired with the Chinese Communist Party School. The Stellenbosch University's (now inactive) Centre for Chinese Studies was paired with the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (Bolin, Carayannis, Niewenhuis & Vlavonou, 2022). Any (limited³¹⁰) Taiwanese presence in the African University further reduced in this era as virtually all countries in Africa shifted to China—although Stellenbosch University had a scholarly collaboration and student exchange with the National Taiwan University (Oshodi, Moshood & Ubabudu, 2022).

As at the time the white paper, “China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals,” was released by the China's State Council Information Office (hereafter CSCIO) in November 2021, the number of CIs on university campuses have increased to 61. In addition, China aided the setting up of Chinese language departments or Chinese language majors in more than 30 African universities (CSCIO, 2021). Although some reports have noted that cultural institutes set up by France (about 200) and the US (almost 180) in Africa still out-number those of China as represented in CIs³¹¹ (Development Reimagined, 2018; Bolin, Carayannis, Niewenhuis & Vlavonou, 2022, p. 48), this must be qualified in terms of their locations. Most of China's cultural institutes are located in universities—and this have been intensified in the modern era where more than half of most CIs were set up in universities. Table 1 shows that up to 33 of the then 61 CIs in universities in Africa were set up between 2013 and 2019, within seven years of the beginning of the modern era. However, the earlier noted limitations of the UNESCO-China-Africa initiative notwithstanding, Africa-China relations in HE has intensified in the current phase. The initial focus on language training has thus evolved and expanded to accommodate construction, and collaboration in agriculture and ICT.

³¹⁰ This were mainly limited to universities in Somaliland and Eswatini where “the private and faith-based Southern Africa Nazarene University is affiliated with the Taipei Medical University” (Oshodi, Moshood & Ubabudu, 2022, p. 135).

³¹¹ One report places China ahead of the US in Africa but below France. Trines (2019) estimates that there are 180 French cultural institutes, 53 Chinese, and 40 for US, 38 for UK and 34 and 21 for Portugal and Germany respectively.

Table 1: Confucius Institutes in Africa, 2013-2019

Country	University	Location	Partner Chinese University	Year
Angola	Agostinho Neto University	Luanda	Harbin Normal University, CITIC	2015
Burkina Faso	Bobo-Dioulasso Polytechnic University	Bobo-Dioulasso	Tianjin Polytechnic University	2019
Cape Verde	University of Cabo Verde	Praia	Guangdong University of Foreign Studies	2015
Central African Republic	University of Bangui	Bangui	-	2019
Chad	University of N'Djamena	N'Djamena	-	2019
Comoros	University of Comoros	Moroni	Dalian University	2018
DR Congo	Diplomatic University of Democratic Republic of Congo	Kinshasa	Central South University	2017
Equatorial Guinea	National University of Equatorial Guinea	Malabo	Zhejiang International Studies University	2014
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa University	Addis	Tianjin Vocational Technology Normal University	2013
Gabon	Omar Bongo University	Libreville	Tianjin Foreign Studies University	2017
Ghana	University of Ghana	Accra	Zhejiang University of Technology	2013
	University of Cape Coast	Cape Coast	Hunan City University	2016
Guinea	Gamal Abdel Nasser University of Conakry	Conakry	Linyi University	2017
Ivory Coast	University of Felix Houphouette Boigny	Abidjan	Tianjin University of Technology	2015
Kenya	Moi University	Eldoret	Donghua University	2014
Madagascar	University of Toamasina	Toamasina	Ningbo University	2014
Malawi	University of Malawi	Lilongwe	University of International Business and Economics	2013
Mali	University of Letters and Human Science of Bamako	Bamako	Southwest Forestry University	2017
Mauritania	Nouakchott University	Nouakchott	Hebei University	2018
Mauritius	University of Mauritius	Port Louis	Zhejiang Sci-tech University	2015
Morocco	Abdelmalek Essaadi University	Tangier	Jiangxi Science and Technology Normal University	2016

Namibia	University of Namibia	Windhoek	China University of Geosciences (Beijing)	2013
Republic of Congo	Marien Ngouabi University	Brazzaville	University of Jinan	2013
São Tomé and Príncipe	University of São Tomé and Príncipe	Sao Tome	Hubei University	2018
Seychelles	University of Seychelles	Victoria	Dalian University	2015
South Africa	Durban University of Technology	Durban	Nanjing University of Technology	2013
	University of Johannesburg	Johannesburg	Zhejiang Normal University, Zhejiang	2014
	University of Western Cape	Cape Town	Chinese Medical University	2018
Tanzania	University of Dar es Salaam	Dar es Salaam	Zhejiang Normal University	2013
	University of Dodoma	Dodoma	Zhengzhou Institute of Aeronautical Industry	2013
The Gambia	University of the Gambia	Banjul	Guizhou University	2017
Tunisia	University of Carthage	Tunis	Dalian University of Foreign Languages	2018
Uganda	Makerere University	Kampala	Xiangtan University	2014

Source: Oshodi, Moshood and Ubabudu (2022, p. 130-131).

China initiated Luban Workshops³¹² in 2018, established in collaboration “with colleges and universities in countries including Egypt, South Africa, Djibouti and Kenya” to share “quality vocational education resources with Africa and training high-caliber technical personnel to meet the urgent needs of economic and social development on the continent” (CSCIO, 2021). By 2022, Kumasi Technical University (KsTU) in Ghana had entered into an agreement with the Rizhao Polytechnic in China to set up a Luban workshop for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In addition to Luban Workshops, however, Chinese projects has increased in African universities. Ranging from equipping ICT laboratories, building libraries to building entire

³¹² It was named after “Lu Ban, an ancient Chinese woodcraft master who was born in 507BC during China's Zhou dynasty” (Li, 2022).

universities,³¹³ Chinese footprints in the African University is no longer in doubt—and these vary in context. Just as some were provided within the tenure of an administration, other projects cut across different administrations and political parties. Three examples of these landmark projects within the last eight years illustrate this variation, demonstrating Chinese flexibility.

First are those projects that come with the establishment of CIs. In 2016, for instance, former Tanzania President, John Magufuli, laid the foundation for a Chinese-funded, US\$40 million university library at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). Considered Africa’s largest library (Havergal, 2016), the new building—which is “designed to double as a public library and resource center, is to host up to 6,000 people, along with a conference room for up to 2,100 and a Confucius Institute center accommodating up to 500” (Abrams, 2016)—was completed in November 2018 (Yang, 2018). In 2013, China similarly built a library at the Republic of Congo’s Marien Ngouabi University, named after the country’s assassinated President in 1977. The library has a Chinese section “where the faculty and students can get to know China via books, disks, and TV programs, which is part of the event ‘Experience China’ sponsored by the Chinese government” (China’s Foreign Ministry in the Hong Kong, 2013). Interestingly, the United States’ Abassador to Congo, Ambassador Christopher W. Murray, donated 400 books to the new library within months of its opening by the Chinese President, Xi Jinping.³¹⁴ In 2014, China also funded the construction of the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST). Although without a CI as in UDSM or a Chinese section as in Marien Ngouabi University, a new library is being completed by a Chinese company at the Lagos State University in Nigeria, the same company that gave Nigeria a gift of the Transport University discussed below.

The second and third examples are from Ghana and Nigeria. As illustrated in Table 2, the two countries exemplify the modern era of Africa-China relations in HE. Among other representations,

³¹³ Phase II of the Bamako University in Kabala was completed in 2022 (He, 2022).

³¹⁴ See U.S. Embassy Brazzaville, “Book Donation to the new Marien Ngouabi University Library”, U.S. Embassy in the Republic of the Congo, 4 April 2016: <https://cg.usembassy.gov/book-donation-new-marien-ngouabi-university-library/>.

the two countries host Chinese-built universities. In Ghana, the first phase of the University for Health and Allied Studies (UHAS) was completed in 2015. Started during the erstwhile President John Mahama's administration (2012-2017), the phase included the central administration building and facilities for the School of Basic and Biomedical Sciences which includes lecture halls, auditorium, residential halls for staff and students, and laboratories (Duodu, 2015; Oshodi, Moshood & Ubabudu, 2022). Estimated at \$60 million, the sod for the second phase was cut by President Nana Akufo-Addo, who won the presidential election under the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in a contest against Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in 2017. That the UHAS project continued across administrations underscore China's ability to navigate political divides. In Nigerian case, a \$50 million Chinese-built Federal University of Transportation is offered as a gift in 2020. Unlike in Tanzania and Ghana, the gift was made within a context where Chinese funding of transport infrastructure is significant (Seteolu & Oshodi, 2018). The Chinese company—i.e. China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC)³¹⁵—that offered the building dominates Nigeria's railway construction (Tunji, 2022). Also unique is that, according to a Nigerian official, the university on completion “would be run by the Chinese government for two years” (Alhassan, 2022).

³¹⁵ Among the project awarded to CCECC includes the Lagos-Calabar coastal railway project covering 1402km worth \$11.10bn, the Abuja-Itakpe-Warri rail line project valued at \$3.90bn (awarded alongside another Chinese company, General Electric, as well as Julius Berger and Sinohydro Corporation), the 334km Ogun intercity railway line estimated at \$3.51bn, the Port Harcourt-Maiduguri rail line rehabilitation project covering 1443km worth \$3.2bn, the \$1.7bn 156km Lagos-Ibadan rail project completed in 2021, the \$876m 187km Abuja-Kaduna line completed in 2016, and the 204km Kaduna-Kano project valued at \$1.2bn (Tunji, 2022).

Table 2: Examples of China and Chinese projects in Nigerian and Ghanaian universities

Year started	Country	University	Chinese intervention
2012-2013	Ghana	UG, KNUST, University of Cape Coast (UCC), and University for Development Studies	Huawei ICT laboratories to four public universities at a total cost of US\$1 million
2013	Ghana	UHAS	Construction of university buildings
2016	Nigeria	Nnamdi Azikiwe University	The CI in the university awarded 54 students scholarship to study in China
2016	Nigeria	UNILAG	Huawei’ s US\$6 million Innovation and Experience Center and the Joint Open Lab.
2017	Ghana	UG	Chinese companies job fair for university students and Degree holders
2018	Nigeria	Ahmadu Bello University (ABU)	CCECC offered 30 scholarships to students
2019	Nigeria	UNILAG	The CI at the institution held its convocation and organised a job fair for staff, students and university community
2019	Nigeria	40 universities	Announcement of partnership between Huawei and the universities in the use of the company’ s technology (Agency Report, 2019)
2020	Nigeria	ABU	Huawei donated three Huawei AR6280 routers along with five Huawei S5720 switches
2020	Nigeria	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University	Huawei and Galaxy Backbone Limited commissioned the Huawei ICT Academy Laboratory
2021	Nigeria	UI	Huawei organised an ICT job fair for students
2021	Nigeria	ABU	Chinese Embassy scholarship award to 50 students—after 47 and 48 was awarded in 2018 and 2019 respectively
2021	Nigeria	Transport University	Construction of entire university and running it for two year
2022	Nigeria	UI	Transsion reached a school-enterprise partnership to “ improve the academic, management, entrepreneurial and innovation capabilities of local college students, help improve the competitiveness of young African talents, and fulfill corporate social responsibility” (Transsion Developer, 2022)
2022	Nigeria	ABU	PhD scholarship to three staff in the Department of Biochemistry to study at the Shenzhen Institute of Advanced Technology
2022	Ghana	UG	Chinese ambassador’ s scholarship to 86 students for excellence in Chinese language
2022	Ghana	UCC	Chinese embassy scholarship to 140 students
2022	Ghana	KsTU	China's Rizhao Polytechnic signed an agreement with the university to set up a campus and workshop in Kumasi for TVET

Source: Compiled by author

In the modern phase, leading Chinese telecommunications companies have also increased interest in the African University. Arguably the most visible on the African campus is Huawei, a Chinese global telecommunications company. Huawei has its ICT Academy in many universities in Africa. When the company was confronted with restrictions in Western countries and universities, Africa was one of the places it turned to. For instance, while collaborations between Huawei—and Zhongxing Telecommunications Equipment Corporations (ZTE)—was suspended in universities like Oxford and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) among others in the West in 2019 for perceived security risk and their host government’s stance (Oshodi, Moshood & Ubabudu, 2022), both companies were welcomed in universities in Africa. There is the example of Huawei’s fifth generation wireless technology (5G), where a 5G Innovation Laboratory was launched in November 2020 in conjunction with Wits University and Rain. Representing the first in Africa, the partnership with Wits is such that “Huawei provides its end-to-end 5G solution, supported by rain’s 5G network” (Wits University, 2020). Prior to that, in 2019, Huawei collaborated with two South African universities—i.e., University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of Pretoria (UP)—to launch free 5G course for postgraduate students studying ICT (Abubakar, 2019). At Wits University, since 2018, ZTE annually supports students with financial difficulties to complete their studies (ZTE Corporation South Africa, 2022). Earlier, in 2016, ZTE, another global Chinese telecommunications service provider, built the \$50 million Ethiopian Education and Research Network (EthERNet), connecting “36 public universities in the East African country for exchange of information and educational activities” (China’s Embassy in South Africa, 2016). The EthERNet project took three years to be completed.

Huawei leads other Chinese ICT companies given its training and certification programmes for university students and staff (Oshodi, Moshood & Ubabudu, 2022). Yet, others exploring the African campus are worth mentioning: Transsion. For instance, Carlcare Development Nigeria Limited, the official customer service provider for Transsion products (like Infinix, itel, Techno, and Oramo), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Nigeria’s oldest university located in Ibadan in September 2022 to establish an “Infinix club” in the institution (Agboluaje,

2022). In October of the same year, Transsion set up a “Tecno fan club” at the University of Nairobi (Techish, 2022). Given that Huawei also introduced its “Student Ambassadors Program” in 2019 to achieve a similar goal as the Infinix club and Techno fan club (Citi Newsroom, 2021), students are a core element of their engagement of the African University. That students are a core element of their engagement offers a benefit beyond Chan’s “psychological impact” (Chan, 2013, p. 32) which focused on “the psychological foundation a university degree confers in situations of underdevelopment” —wherein the “graduate is credentialized as having escaped the structural constraints of poverty upon his or her capacity to understand and interrogate the world” (Chan, 2013, p. 33). From a geopolitical competition point of view, the broader psychological impact of Chinese engagement of students aids China’s image, an image of a country that is not only building universities in Africa but offering training and scholarship for the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution. Yet, research in this particular area lags behind.

More universities in Africa, however, have launched programmes and centres on Chinese studies and/or Africa-China relations in the modern era. In 2013, the Sino-Africa Joint Research Center (SAJOREC) at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) in Kenya. Aided by China, SAJOREC according to its website “serves as the platform and bridge of scientific cooperation between the Chinese and the African scientists in a wide range of fields” —such as collaboration on biodiversity-related research, “wildlife protection, prevention and treatment of desertification, climate change monitoring, and modern agriculture demonstration.”

³¹⁶ Indeed, it appears that 2018 is a landmark in the establishment of these programmes and centres. For instance, UNILAG established its Institute for Nigeria-China Development Studies in 2018. In May of the same year, University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) launched its Centre for Chinese Studies (CCS). The University of Johannesburg established a Centre for Africa-China Studies (CACS) in November 2018. According to its website, CACS aims “to study the entire range of Africa-China relations, including diplomatic relations, economic relations, people-to-people

³¹⁶ See Sino-Africa Joint Research Centre, CAS website <http://www.sinafrica.cas.cn/English/About/Introduction/>

relations, and relations between China, African institutions and African countries in international forums.”³¹⁷

Other forms of collaboration have emerged between African and Chinese universities. In 2021, for instance, KsTU announced four-year joint degree programme (in Mechanical Engineering and Building Technology) in collaboration with Rizhao Polytechnic and Weifang Vocational College both in China. Students will spend their first and last year in Ghana and their second and third in China. After their first year in China that involves internship in a Chinese company, students will be awarded an ‘Enterprise Certificate’ for the internship. In their second year in China, they take professional courses by Weifang Vocational College or Rizhao Polytechnic and are awarded a ‘Certificate of Chinese’ upon completion. When they return to Ghana and complete their last year, they are awarded a Bachelor of Technology either in Building Technology or Mechanical Engineering by KsTU. Students would be given two-year scholarship in China and may be offered a Masters scholarship after they complete their Bachelors (KsTU, 2021). The University of Botswana’s Department of Chinese Studies offer its students study abroad programme in partner universities in China.³¹⁸ In 2015, Moi University in Kenya and the Donghua University in China agreed to annually convene the Sino-Africa virtual international symposium on Textiles and Apparel (SAISTA) that will alternate “between China and Kenya or other African countries.”³¹⁹ A year after, the Sino-Africa Cultural Exchange Forum (SACEF) was added to SAISTA—with the former “providing a platform for textile and apparel professionals from universities, research institutions and industry to promote collaboration between China and Africa, and to explore potential business opportunities and cultural exchanges.”³²⁰ It is worth noting that Moi University

³¹⁷ See UJ Centre for Africa-China Studies website: <https://www.cacs.org.za/about/>

³¹⁸ See University of Botswana, Chinese Studies webpage: <https://www.ub.bw/discover/faculties/humanities/chinese-studies>.

³¹⁹ See “Moi University with Donghua University of China Co-Hosts an International Symposium on Textiles and Apparel”, Moi University website, 5 November 2021 <https://www.mu.ac.ke/index.php/en/media/news-events/735-moi-university-with-donghua-university-of-china-co-hosts-an-international-symposium-on-textiles-and-apparel.html>.

³²⁰ Ibid.

and Donghua University were paired in the 20+20 University Cooperation Plan established in 2009.

Aside setting up centres and institutes to study Africa-China relations, conferences, discussions and roundtables on Africa-China relations have also become more common in universities in Africa. From the November 2015 China-Africa Roundtable at Wits University³²¹ and discussions on an envisaged Wits African Centre for Chinese Studies in April 2018³²² to the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China (CA/AC) Research Network' s fourth conference at the Aga Khan University in Kenya in August 2016, universities in Africa appear to be offering space to the discussion of Africa-China relations.

Yet, the story is not all rosy. In the latest report for the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) on Africa-China knowledge, challenges of funding, expert-government synergy, and absolving scholars working on Africa-China or China or with experience studying in China into universities in Africa among other issues persist. In one case, the “research independence and critical perspectives on China’s engagement in the region... came under increasing political pressure,” leading the leadership of the Stellenbosch University’ s Centre for Chinese Studies “to eventually step down” (Bolin, Carayannis, Niewenhuis & Vlavanou, 2022, p. 48). While there are many dimensions to the challenges African universities confront in their engagement of Africa-China relations, one way to begin to address the situation is to give voice to stakeholders on how they think the current situation can be improved upon. By focusing on university lecturers and interrogating their views on Africa-China relations, this report contributes in this regard.

³²¹ See China Global South Project, “The 2015 China-Africa Roundtable at Wits University,” 15 November 2015, <https://chinaglobalsouth.com/podcasts/podcast-wits-focac-barry-van-wky/>.

³²² See “Scholars discuss a Wits African Centre for Chinese Studies,” Rhodes University, 25 June 2018, <https://www.ru.ac.za/artsof africa/latestnews/scholarsdiscussawitsafricancentreforchinesestudies.html>.

Figure 2: Huawei lab in a Ghanaian university and a Chinese-constructed university gate in Nigeria



Source: author

5.0 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS FROM UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA AND NIGERIA

As indicated in the methodology section and in Table 2, Chinese presence in Nigerian and Ghanaian universities is noticeable. For virtually all the lecturers interviewed for this study, the university is crucial for Africa’ s development. Many believe that the university must exist to address social problems. But by generally describing the African University in terms of its “supposed”³²³ or potential role in society, lecturers were able to offer their expectations of what an African-centred approach of the university looks like. The rest of this section discusses the main themes and elements in their responses to the three broad questions highlighted in the methodology section.

(a) Response to Africa-China relations

- i. Precondition for engagement

³²³ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

Interviews suggest that lecturers tend to offer a description of the precondition for the African University to engage Africa-China relations. Given its historically defined role, for instance, one lecturer warned against engaging China or Chinese actors unprepared. For this lecturer, “the university should seek to answer but that should be the secondary imperative, first it should seek to understand what lesson history could teach the university itself.”³²⁴ It is this lesson that should determine “when to engage, how to engage, who to engage, and much more important, the sequencing of the strategy of engagement in terms of constituencies and the ideational basis.”³²⁵ The call for such preparation is understandable where, as one UI lecturer notes, “knowledge itself is a means of competition” and where “those who are already developed don’t want those who are struggling to develop and rise to the level of their own development.”³²⁶ The example of China itself is used to justify this point: “China has come this far because it has its own independent mechanism for validating whatever it does, not waiting for the validation of others.”³²⁷ China, it is argued, opened up to the world when it was prepared to engage.³²⁸ For one proponent, “the African University with all intent and purpose is a timid institution—timidity in all respect. And that timidity has informed how the African University have received the resurgence of China.”³²⁹ Although this lecturer acknowledges China’s development, he adds that China did not get things right from the very beginning—it made mistakes, experienced crisis, and there were dislocations in the process.³³⁰

ii. Nature of response

Ranging from hosting CIs (in UNILAG and UG), teaching Chinese in their programmes (at UNILAG, UG, and KNUST), hosting ICT laboratories (in UNILAG, UG and KNUST), to having student club (UI), the four universities (whose lecturers were interviewed for this report) have some Chinese presence on campus. The picture of the African University’s response to Africa-

³²⁴ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³²⁵ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³²⁶ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³²⁷ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³²⁸ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³²⁹ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³³⁰ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

China relations painted in this study is equally diverse. In a sense, by hosting this Chinese presence is form of response. It suggests that African universities are comfortable in engaging Chinese partners. Nonetheless, while some lecturers argue that the university is already responding to Africa-China relations, others consider such responses are “negligible” as they have failed to be innovative and are confronted with challenges—such as funding, leadership, etc.—that makes meaningful engagement difficult.³³¹ Yet, a few contend that “there is virtually no response.”³³² For those lecturers that share the view that the African University’s response has been little or negligible, a number of reasons are adduced. For instance, a lecturer in Ghana noted that the “universities appear not to be aware of the fact that China is not just the second largest economy but China is a potential world power and that China is interested in Africa and that China has an agenda in Africa.”³³³ While some hinge the non-interest or non-response of universities in Africa on their inability to attract funding in the subject area,³³⁴ others opine that lecturers have become overwhelmed by the challenges of the universities.³³⁵

The current response by universities is also discussed in terms of the nature of town-gown synergy in the African context. In this case, the view that “high regard the town has for the gown”³³⁶ is absent in many African context appears to be commonly shared. Given this disconnection, it is opined that “many of the universities don’t even have an idea”³³⁷ as to how to engage Africa-China relations. To some that concede that there is some level of response by the African University, the type and scale of the response is an issue. As one lecturer noted: “I think we are not responding as much as we should in terms of education, in terms of finding how they [Chinese universities and companies] are doing it so that we can replicate.”³³⁸ Thus, it is not sufficient for the African University to send its staff to China to study without focusing on learning about “how they

³³¹ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³³² Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³³³ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³³⁴ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³³⁵ Interview in Lagos, Prof O, UI 26 July 2022.

³³⁶ Interview in Lagos, Prof O, UI 26 July 2022.

³³⁷ Interview in Lagos, Prof O, UI 26 July 2022.

³³⁸ Interview in Accra, Dr. L, UG 29 July 2022.

[Chinese] are doing it.”³³⁹ Though this lecturer talks about *replication*, others—as will be discussed below—advance *domestication*.

Other lecturers, however, maintain that the African University is responding to Africa-China relations. One lecturer whose university established the Institute of Nigeria-China Development Studies (INCDS) in 2018 notes, “I think for now we are just creating the consciousness of the African scholars to the need to be more responsive to the challenges we are facing now not only with the incursion of Chinese but the Western world in Africa.”³⁴⁰ For this lecturer, “That is why University of Lagos take the lead to establish an institute to see the academic component of Nigeria’s agreement with China.”³⁴¹ The institute at UNILAG was established to, among other things, interrogate Nigeria’s relationship with China and its win-win narrative—“because 99:1 is still win win—when somebody takes 99% and another one takes one percent.”³⁴² Thus, for this lecturer, “what academics need to do and which University of Lagos is trying to push forward is that we have to go back to those agreements and the new ones to see what are the issues in these agreements and in what areas we Africans need to come out with out with research papers, policy analysis and frameworks that can make us have the best from these agreements.”³⁴³ Not only did UNILAG set up the Institute, but the university is also extending this to other universities and networks. Thus,

University of Lagos now belongs to several organisations as well, the ARUA [African Research Universities Alliance] that is an African organisation, and through that platform we have been able to, through our Vice Chancellor, make presentations of what we are trying to do that our research will focus on policy issues as regards China and Africa relationship. As at today our Institute has a relationship with African Leadership Institute and University of South Africa.³⁴⁴

³³⁹ Interview in Accra, Dr. L, UG 29 July 2022.

³⁴⁰ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁴¹ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁴² Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁴³ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁴⁴ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

iii. Agents

More broadly, universities' responses to Africa-China relations also highlights the role of agents—both within and outside the Africa University. Within universities, these agents could range from the Vice Chancellor³⁴⁵ at the highest level, HoD³⁴⁶ at the intermediate level to lecturers³⁴⁷ that studied in China. Other agents may come from Chinese universities,³⁴⁸ Chinese businesses,³⁴⁹ or from elsewhere outside of the African University. In the case of UNILAG, for instance, one lecturer notes that the agents driving the response included the university leadership with a vision of positioning their institutions and taking advantage of the knowledge space, businesses who requires academic input into their activities and planning, government that is looking for informed data, and the Chinese who are looking for partners to change the narrative of an external exploiter.³⁵⁰ Rather than working in isolation, each of these agents can either lead or can be influenced to act by the other. In the case of UI, for example, it was an African that lectures in a Chinese university that reached out to Ibadan and a few other universities to collaborate with his host university in China—afterwards, the Vice Chancellor and HoD at the university keyed into the agent's project.³⁵¹ Thus, the agent could convince stakeholders in the African University to collaborate with their Chinese counterpart. These agents with connection with Chinese universities can reach out to Africans and African universities, with HoDs³⁵² and/or Vice Chancellors³⁵³ at some point keying into these relationships.

(b) Chinese technological transfer

³⁴⁵ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁴⁶ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³⁴⁷ Interview in Accra, Dr. L, UG 29 July 2022.

³⁴⁸ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³⁴⁹ An example includes China's AVIC-INTL Project Engineering Company that facilitated the collaboration between KsTU in Ghana and Rizhao Polytechnic in China (Xinhua, 2022).

³⁵⁰ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁵¹ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³⁵² Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³⁵³ Interview in Accra, Dr. L, UG 29 July 2022.

From their conceptualisation of the African University—or in the case of one, universities in Africa—the university has a potential to contribute to the development of societies in Africa. With specific reference to serving as a catalyst for the transfer of Chinese technology to the continent, most lecturers expressed the view that the African University can play the role. Broadly speaking, there are at least three possibilities for the university to serve as a catalyst for the transfer of Chinese technology: Chinese-trained faculty, institutionalised approach, and Chinese-initiated approach. While underscoring the need for a collective action, the study also envisages that the Chinese technological transfer needs to be Africanised.

i. Chinese-trained faculty

This approach explores the linkages of Chinese –trained faculties as a catalyst. By experiencing the Chinese educational system, it could become easier for faculty members in African universities to engage in post-schooling collaborations with their supervisors or others as alumni. For example, it is envisaged that the Transport University in Nigeria will benefit from a Chinese-trained faculty (Iroanusi, 2019). Education of Nigerians in China can be in terms of scholarship, self-sponsored, and student/staff exchanges. But almost three years after, coupled with COVID-19, little is known about the stage of the expected Chinese-trained faculty at the university. In any case, the university itself is not yet in operation and when it begins operation it would be first operated for two years by the Chinese (Alhassan, 2022). Nonetheless, the responses of virtually all the lecturers interviewed for this study suggests that the number of Chinese-trained members of faculty members remain relatively low when compared with those trained in Africa, Europe or the US. As one lecturer explains, “you know going to China is a very recent thing, whereas going to the Western countries to study is as old as the universities in Africa itself.”³⁵⁴ This low number reduces the extent to which graduates of Chinese universities can tap into their local scientific network to propel collaborations that can result in some level of technology transfer. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and Beijing’s approach of limiting travels into China has further reduced the prospects for the moment. However, it must be stressed that that that a faculty has members that

³⁵⁴ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

were trained in China does not mean that such faculty members will attract collaborations from China (as the case of UG suggests).³⁵⁵ Another challenge is that the returning African faculty members may not necessarily have the required institutional support in their home institution to be able to explore the potentials of their networks in China.³⁵⁶

ii. Institutionalised approach

Education in China by the faculties in African universities are not the only channel for technology transfer in transportation, ICT or other sectors. Some of the training take place in universities located in African universities. For instance, the agreement signed between the KsTU and the Rizhao Polytechnic in China in May 2022 will ensure that practical trainings are conducted in Kumasi and graduates of the programme would be awarded a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and Construction Technology (Xinhua, 2022). Other universities host laboratories that are operated by the local faculties. For instance, UNILAG, KNUST and UG host laboratories supported by Huawei, the Chinese global ICT company. More importantly, given the limited number of Chinese-trained faculty members in African universities, an option has been to adopt an institutionalised approach—an approach exemplified by the UNILAG example. Indeed, the INCDS was reportedly “advanced by three parties, the Confucius Institute at UNILAG, CIADP [Chinese Investors Association for Development and Promotion] and the office of the vice chancellor, UNILAG” (Diamond, 2018). This functionality of this approach assumes that the university leadership key into the idea of institutionalising its response to Africa-China relations. With limited resources in many African universities, taking such position is believed to have occurred with leadership vision.³⁵⁷

iii. Chinese-initiated approach

Although the Chinese-initiated approach could be institutionalised or may even be combined with a collaboration of African businesses as in the case of Wits University in South Africa (where

³⁵⁵ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³⁵⁶ Interview in Accra, Dr. L, UG 29 July 2022.

³⁵⁷ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

Huawei, the Chinese telecommunications multinational, collaborated with Rain, a telecommunications service provider in South Africa, and Wits University) to establish a 5G Laboratory (Oshodi, 2022), there are instances where a Chinese company offers a platform in African university. This is particularly exemplified by Huawei. Aside from providing the Huawei labs in universities, the Huawei Authorized Information and Network Academy (HAINA) is also an emerging framework for offering Chinese technology to African universities. In a global context where some Western governments are suspicious of Chinese technology, it is crucial for companies like Huawei to begin to encourage the use of its technology and platform. In addition to boosting its brand and market share, encouraging more people including African students to use its products and platform is particularly crucial if Huawei technology and products would survive in the case of a splinternet or decoupling from American system (Umejei, 2022; Oshodi, 2022). Although students, for instance, may choose the Cisco Networking Academy because of its wide usage and spread,³⁵⁸ the HAINA is an emerging option and shares many features with Cisco (Tugendhat, 2020).

iv. Collective effort in the engagement of Chinese actors

There are different Chinese actors involved with the African University. For example, these range from Chinese businesses, Chinese educational institutions to Chinese government ministries, agencies, and embassies. In their engagement with these actors, universities in Africa can either engage as an individual institution or a collection of universities. Virtually all the lecturers interviewed encouraged some form of collective engagement of the Chinese actors rather than a solo effort by universities. This “collective effort”³⁵⁹—or what one described as “epistemic cluster”³⁶⁰—will require universities to combine their strengths, resources, and experts in engaging Chinese actors. Though the envisaged collective effort will likely require the leadership of one of the universities in some areas as the universities do not have equal facilities and resources, one lecturer contends that such cooperation in engaging China, nonetheless, “will benefit all the

³⁵⁸ Interview in Accra, Dr. L, UG 29 July 2022.

³⁵⁹ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁶⁰ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

universities and the risk element will be reduced significantly.”³⁶¹ The approach of UNILAG, especially where its INCDS aims to expand its work by linking up with other universities, fits into this collective effort in engaging China in Africa Universities. Yet, it is unclear how such decisions, for instance, as the location of CIs can be collectively made by African universities given that funding and posting is made from Hanban in China in agreement with individual universities in Africa as elsewhere.

v. Domestication—Africanising Chinese technology

Africa and China are at different levels of development—and may not necessarily be confronted by the same development challenges all the time. This could be deduced from the responses of the lecturers. For example, while one lecturer noted that Africa may not constitute a challenge to China because by the time Africa domesticates Chinese technology, China may be addressing newer developmental challenges,³⁶² another lecturer contends that governments in Africa must be ready to take the same actions as the Chinese to achieve the same outcome with the universities.³⁶³ As one Ghanaian lecturer puts it: “obviously, we will want to learn a lot of things from them but all these things must have to happen from the position of the consciousness of our people... , you don’t become unnecessarily influenced by China in your engagement with them.”³⁶⁴

(c) Future of the African University and Africa-China relations

The lecturers interviewed for this study were asked about their views on the future of the African University’s engagement with China and Africa-China relations. From their responses, three perspectives are discernible; and this include the expansionist, cautious, and pessimist perspectives as well as concerns about the state of the African University.

i. Expansionist perspective

³⁶¹ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁶² Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁶³ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³⁶⁴ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

There are those that maintain that the African University's engagement with Africa-China will increase. For proponents of this group, as with others—like Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, and universities—in the Global North, “it is China that will vanguard this role—which is what an aspiring imperialist country do.”³⁶⁵ While the African University's current engagement with China would be expanded, one adds that structural issues will enhance the expansion. For the latter lecturer, the African University will be “compelled to engage China more than they are doing now because while financial support from the state will be dwindling, and African states are not going to do better given their politics today.”³⁶⁶ With reduced funding, it is foreseen that China will position “itself to take advantage of that and offering to support particular departments or projects in these various universities in one or another ways and I can see these universities taking these offers.”³⁶⁷ In this case, for the lecturer, it “will not necessarily be our universities seeing that there are opportunities and potentials in engaging China and taking the initiative to do it, but it will be China thrusting itself on our system and it will be for one reason: our finances, our economy. Unfortunately, when China does that, it will go with conditionalities and I think China's interest will become huge, bigger.”³⁶⁸ He contends that this will increase the “Chinarization of Africa”³⁶⁹—where “China will take advantage of those opportunities and engage our universities in a much more increasing way than it is now.”³⁷⁰

ii. Caution

Lecturers that express caution, for instance, contend that “if the African university engage with China it will obviously be playing second fiddle not for anything but due to lack of self-confidence.”³⁷¹ And “in the absence of that self-confidence,” the lecturer continues, “the African University will be tempted to mimic and in the absence of self-confidence and engaging in that mimicry you will end up being subpar example of what we are seeking to copy. That is what I see

³⁶⁵ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

³⁶⁶ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁶⁷ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁶⁸ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁶⁹ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁷⁰ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁷¹ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

to be the problem.”³⁷² Others locate their caution in the broader knowledge production culture and access in African Universities where research is produced, not for the continent, but for an external audience. One lecturer aptly presents this point thus: “We need to domesticate and indigenously develop our home,” citing the example of his home country where “the academic in Nigeria would tell you that any journal published in Nigeria is local... and the danger of this is that my local government chairman would not have access to the knowledge I produced... and yet we say we are writing to solve problems in Africa.”³⁷³ For him, “even if we are not going to be globally visible, let us be African visible, even if we are not going to be globally recognised, let us be African relevant...”³⁷⁴ This point underscores the need to make the knowledge produced in African University accessible to African stakeholders—within the university itself and the society at large.

Another dimension of the cautious response emphasis that not everything from China is needed in Africa. One UG lecturer aptly captures this thus: “Most of the time, when you talk about engaging them [China] you think of benefit, unfortunately, what are they giving us? Can they train our people? Are they giving us grants? Are they giving us infrastructure and all that? That is a shallow way of engaging.” For this lecturer, contends that the African University should “Learn from them, know what they are doing right. Of course, they are not 100 percent. So the ones that are not good, filter it out and make adjustment to yours.”³⁷⁵

iii. Pessimism

Although a somewhat minority view, the study also noted a pessimist perspective which goes beyond caution. For this lecturer, “If I were to be Vice Chancellor, the first thing I will do would be to cut off any formal interaction with China” because “it is premature for you to engage in things you were not prepared. Have we even taken time to understand the Chinese with regards to what they do in the global context and how we fit in or fit out?”³⁷⁶ Aside raising questions about

³⁷² Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³⁷³ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁷⁴ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁷⁵ Interview in Accra, Dr. L, UG 29 July 2022.

³⁷⁶ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

why Africa is quick to embrace China (although some years back it raised similar hopes in relationship with universities in Global North), he asks two questions: “Have we even taken time to understand the Chinese with regards to what they do in the global context and how we fit in or fit out? Okay, what if the next China emerges are we going to ditch this one and follow that other one too?”³⁷⁷ For this lecturer, therefore, the African University, like China, needs to “shut the doors, prep our self, and then we engage.”³⁷⁸ China, in the view of the lecturer, at some point also did the same before it became ready to engage the world.³⁷⁹ The aforementioned pessimism is thus located in the unprepared state of the African University to engage with China. Aside, he equates engagement with China in terms of an earlier engagement Africa had that led to colonisation:

So, as a community of knowledge and learning, I think it is too premature. We are not even prepared to engage with these countries, and I am saying this from the lessons our history taught us. Our grandfathers, our great great grandfathers engaged with the missionaries from the West up till this day we have still not recovered from how tested we became spiritually and even in that state of ill-constitution. I think we have to stop. It is too dangerous.³⁸⁰

iv. The state of the African University

The context within African universities will shape the extent and nature of its response to China—whether independent and organic or dependent and China-driven. The university is confronted by local challenges that may either reduce or be compounded. It is this reservation that is at the heart of the *supposed* capability of the African University; a supposed capacity hindered by what Damtew Teferra, the director of research and academic planning at the Association of African Universities (AAU), recently referred to as the “perilous phenomenon,” where “Africa stands out as the continent with the greatest dependency on external partners to bankroll its research and development endeavours. Enough has been said about this perilous phenomenon” (Teferra, 2022). Thus, while “ordinarily, they are supposed to be the research institutions for our various countries”

³⁷⁷ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³⁷⁸ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³⁷⁹ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

³⁸⁰ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

and are to be consulted “on the way forward on technical issue,” the African University has not been able to meet this expectation.³⁸¹ But if the necessary support is provided by government to the African University in its engagement of China, one lecturer notes that the university can be a tool for the transformation of the African society.³⁸² This is contrasted with the case in China where “the state consciously supported universities.”³⁸³ The picture painted by virtually all the lecturer is not too different from those by Carayannis and Olin (2012, p. 21-22):

African universities continue to face significant faculty attrition due to excessive teaching loads, the lure of more lucrative and higher status work from the public and private sectors, NGOs, and universities outside the region, leading to a severe shortage of experienced faculty in all social science fields, including the study of Chinese politics, economics, and culture. The result is a lack of well-trained teachers to staff the burgeoning courses and insufficient numbers of advanced researchers to produce knowledge needed for national and regional development and to address pressing public problems.

6.0 TOWARDS A POLICY-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT

The African University is a component of the African society—and one that is expected to impact the development of the latter (Mkandawire, 2011; Mosha, 1986). This view is shared by many of the lecturers that participated in this study. While this potentiality can be extended to Africa’s engagement of China, the urgency of the necessary policy to support and prepare the African University in this regard cannot be overemphasised. Yet, increase in bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Africa and China has not been met with comparative significant increase in the research capacity of the African University. Bearing this in mind, some recommendations are offered in Box 1 below.

³⁸¹ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁸² Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

³⁸³ Interview on Zoom, Prof I, UI 21 July 2022.

With reference to policy-driven engagement, two important points are worth stressing at this juncture. First, this study adopts a broad conceptualisation of policy wherein the term is used to mean not only a product produced by, or targeted at government but one that advances the active participation of other stakeholders within societies. In this sense, policy is as much a tool for state as much as it is for non-state actors. Therefore, the proposed policies in this paper is targeted at both the state and non-state actors (i.e. universities). Second, the policy suggestions acknowledge the complex context within which an African-centred policy can be made. As indicated in GTSF above, this understanding appreciates that the background of the research participants can have implications for their view; views that exist within a context of state policy, elite influence, historical moments, disciplinary agency, and location. This *ecology of factors* can not only shape how universities respond to China but also the nature of outcomes and the attendant Africa-centred policy suggestions highlighted in this paper. In this regard, some of the policies will respond to the sciences as much as others speak to the social sciences.

Box 1: Key recommendations for governments and universities in Africa

How can the African University better engage Africa-China relations?

- *Deepen government-university synergy:* The disconnection between the town and gown government and the university is a problem, and some argue that “even the government that set up universities are not patronising them.”³⁸⁴ There is thus the urgent need to renew commitments to strengthening government-university synergy. This should be in terms of encouraging mutually beneficial collaborations between units of government such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Education and other relevant units and departments on one hand and the universities on the other on how best to engage China. Periodic consultations must be ensured to deepen the relationship between the town and the gown. Universities should thus be a central element of African governments engagement with China in bilateral and multilateral FOCAC. This conversation could be in preparation for bilateral or multilateral agreements or for their reviews. For instance, there is a potential opportunity in the

³⁸⁴ Interview on Zoom, Prof S, UNILAG 7 September 2022.

Lagos Ride Taxi Scheme (codenamed ‘Lag Ride’) launched by the Lagos State Government in Nigeria in March 2022. The scheme entails that 1000 brand-new cars were purchased from the Chinese manufacturer GAC (Ewodage, 2022). A university component could be built into the agreement that would seek to promote practical engineering education in one or more of the public universities in the state. Given the example of the University of Ghana Toyota School of Engineering, this could be a useful way of technology transfer and education propelled by a deeper government-university synergy.

- *Local content:* African governments have initiated local content policies for some industries. However, these policies must be linked to African universities in such a manner that relevant faculties are involved in major Chinese projects. Where, for instance, there are construction projects, faculties of civil engineering in the local universities closest to the projects must be involved. When a railway is being constructed in an African country, universities within the host country must clearly identify faculty members that can be part of the project as a means of transferring knowledge to the local knowledge community. Aside that this would expand the possibility of knowledge transfer, it would also serve as an important opportunity to begin to expose the next generation of engineers (i.e. students) to technologies that could fall on their generation to manage. Meanwhile, local universities in African countries should be involved, even if as observers, in the planning and implement of Chinese projects. The universities on their part must work towards providing government with templates to domesticate Chinese infrastructure in Africa.
- *Incentivisation:* The African University in many instances is underfunded, thereby limiting its ability to compete in a knowledge economy. However, while government’s resources are limited, it must be allocated in a manner that supports on-going efforts to understand Africa-China relations and domesticate Chinese and other technologies. The incentives could range from those that are financial and support research into relevant areas in science and technology to those that are symbolic, such as awarding universities Excellence Award when their engagement with China (or with other actors) translates into the development of new technologies—new technologies that must be patronised by government.
- *Knowledge network:* There are variations in the capacities and responses of universities in Africa to China. Yet, experts on Africa-China relations are limited and are not evenly shared across universities in Africa. The urgency of building an African Knowledge Network (AKN) on Africa-China relations within universities in Africa is thus underscored. Beyond disciplinary confines, the AKN network must take specific account of the diverse manifestations of China in Africa ranging from the sciences,

arts, to the social sciences. It is in this context that what a lecturer referred to as a “collective effort”³⁸⁵ or what another one called “epistemic cluster”³⁸⁶ is urgent and crucial. While these clusters can be national and/or regional in composition, its ultimate goal must be to, in a timely manner, share knowledge with stakeholders in Africa (like government, businesses, students, civil societies, and other relevant actors).

- *African-centred technological collaborations:* Backed by African governments (which can be strengthened with government-university synergy highlighted above), African universities themselves must more boldly initiate collaborations with their counterparts in China rather than the other way round. Unlike the 2011 UNESCO-Africa-China trilateral initiative, the proposed technological collaborations will not be established to favour the leading universities in Africa alone. While there is no gainsaying that such collaborations must be a product of adequate preparations, the limited resources available to both governments and the universities dictates that priority must be placed on those collaborations that can result in measurable technological outcomes. For instance, as hinted by a Nigerian lecturer, given the Nigeria’s power challenges, universities or a network of universities could begin to explore the possibility of building projects like power grid in Nigeria in conjunction with their Chinese counterpart—a project that could become a national template for other universities and communities. The impact of such projects can have transformational implications for communities.
- *University networks of action:* Universities within Africa must build networks of action. These network of action are zones composed of universities with close proximity and with a clear agenda for engaging their counterparts in China. Although the membership of the AAU does not cover all universities on the continent, its membership list—and forums—could be used as a launching pad for the proposed network of action. The network will primarily bring together the directors for innovation and research or similar offices across the universities. Unlike the AKN, the role of this network of action must be to identify critical Chinese projects in Africa and enter into collaborations with Chinese actors involved.

³⁸⁵ Interview on Zoom, Dr. B, KNUST 25 July 2022.

³⁸⁶ Interview in Accra, Dr. K, UG 10 August 2022.

- *Joint-teaching*: African universities will benefit from an economic of scale if they pull resources together in the teaching (and research) on the subject of ‘China in Africa.’ Although this would be confronted by challenges such as timing and resources, the possibilities that it offers can allow faculties to navigate the issue of resources while strengthening an African(-centred) faculty on the subject. Virtual visiting lectureships, for instance, which affords students the opportunities to access experts within and across Africa, can aid the proposed joint-teaching at little or no cost to university when compared with traditional visiting fellowships or exchanges.
- *Disciplinary research*: The various disciplines in the African University must be encouraged to engage with the subject of China in Africa. With this, while there are advantages in interdisciplinary studying of the subject, the need to deepen existing social sciences research as separated from the core sciences is as important as combining them. As such, while hosting a Chinese-supported laboratory may be good for a university and can contribute to providing technological ideas and solutions to national problems, for instance, the need to interrogate the political implications of such collaborations must not be overlooked or under-researched. As a recent report by the SSRC suggests, centres that collaborate with their Chinese counterparts may come under some “political pressures” (Bolin, Carayannis, Niewenhuis & Vlavourou, 2022, p. 48). There have also been concerns that the presence of CIs on the African campus can have implications for the traditional governance of universities as, for instance, it was suspected in the case of the CI at UDSM. At UDSM, “there have been concerns over the extent to which Tanzania’s Commission for Universities was consulted in the establishment of Confucius Institutes, and whether it can regularly audit quality assurance mechanisms in institute programmes, as prescribed by the Universities Act No 7 of 2005” (Ngalomba, 2015). The geo-political dimensions of the expanding presence of China in universities in Africa (such as how it impacts existing relationships with governments and actors in the US, Britain, France, Germany, etc.) must also attract scientific enquiry.
- *Independent evaluation of existing partnerships*: This report demonstrates that a number of partnerships exist between African and Chinese Universities. For instance, landmark partnerships like the 20 + 20 Higher Education Collaboration scheme established in 2009 to promote collaboration between African and Chinese universities and the Sino-Africa Joint Research Center (SAJOREC) set up in the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya in 2013 are all ripe for an independent evaluation by university faculties and experts from outside the academe.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Academic study of Africa-China relations with a focus on knowledge production is limited. Even less available are works that specifically explore the views and aspirations of university lecturers, a critical element of the academe, in relations to Africa-China encounters. This report contributes to the later by engaging lecturers in four African universities with the aim of understanding their views of Africa-China relations and how they think the African University can become a catalyst for technology transfer in its engagement with Chinese actors. Specifically, the report discussed the responses of the African University to Africa-China relations, interrogated the extent to which it can serve as a channel for technology transfer from China to Africa, and lastly highlight the views of lecturers as to how best to shape the future of Africa-China relations. In terms of its response, it could be concluded that although the response has often been a pro-active in that China tend to take the initiative and African universities keyed in, the African University is nonetheless responding to Africa-China relations.

On whether the African University can serve as a catalyst for technology transfer, the African University has the potential. This can be achieved through what was discussed as Chinese-trained faculty, institutionalised approach, Chinese-initiated approach, collective effort, and domestication. While the contextual differences in Africa and African universities must be acknowledged, nine recommendations are proposed for technology transfer and more efficient and effective response to Africa-China relations. They include: deepen government-university synergy, promoting local content, incentivisation, building a knowledge network, African-centred technological collaborations, university networks of action, joint-teaching, disciplinary research, and independent evaluation of existing Africa-Chinese universities partnerships. On the future of the African University in Africa-China relations, the expansionist, cautious, and pessimist views were discussed. Ultimately, however, the state of the African university itself will go a long way in shaping this future.

By interviewing university lecturers, not only does the report give voice to a critical segment in the African society but it highlights the options for policy-driven engagement of Africa-China relations both for the African state and the university. To become an effective and efficient

institution in Africa-China relationship, the African University must be able to offer a pool of experts to study and understand the subject, engage in Africa-centred researches and collaboration that can empower stakeholders within the continent and improve the lives of its people, and serve as a catalyst for the domestication of Chinese (as well as other) technology for the development of society. Identifying, maximising, and reproducing the limited pool of experts in African universities through a Pan-African training programme available to its students and faculty in the cheapest ways (e.g. through cross-regional classes by experts, mentoring, and knowledge sharing) will go a long way. Collaboration with experts within Chinese universities and elsewhere will also be useful in this regard.

The most important conclusion that could be drawn from the report, however, is that while the African University has the potential to better engage Africa-China relations, this can only happen where both the universities and the state take the necessary steps. Some of the recommendations in Box 1 offers a useful start towards ensuring that the African University becomes a catalyst and arena for supporting the continent's development through its engagement with China. Nonetheless, there is need for further research. This report is based on a qualitative study of a handful of lecturers at only four universities in Africa. A larger number and the adoption of a mixed method research and multi-stakeholder perspective would likely offer a deeper and more robust understanding of the subject of study. It is in this context that the need for more rigorous and periodic study of the African University and Africa-China relations, taking account of the national and regional diversities in Africa, will be useful. The views of students must also be brought into this research agenda.

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**A CASE OF SEVERAL ASYMMETRIES: INTEGRATING RACIAL QUESTIONS INTO AFRICA-
CHINA GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

By
Runako Celina
Investigative Journalist

ABSTRACT

Africa-China relations have been rocked over the last several years by reports of racism, anti-Blackness and inhumane treatment towards Africans and people of African descent in China. Social media, and the ready availability of videos allegedly depicting such incidents have propelled these issues to the fore with unprecedented vigour. Yet, for an issue that arouses such public outcry, rarely do we see it acknowledged by African or Chinese officials publicly or featuring substantially in either legislation or policy.

This paper puts forth a case for the better integration of racial questions in Africa-China governmental relations, drawing on the insights of those who experience some of these issues first hand – African community leaders in and around China, plus the communities and civil society organisations they represent. It argues that while African CSOs are well placed to develop evidence-based strategy to challenge racism in Chinese contexts, efforts to implement them must be preceded by the forming of robust financial backing mechanisms to support Africa and China-based CSOs in their work, plus systems to encourage easier communication between decision makers and CSOs on behalf of their communities. It also makes a case for the formation of longer-term strategy such as anti-racist education in Chinese schools and stronger deterrents for racism in China.

Keywords: China, Africa, racial discrimination, racism

1.0 INTRODUCTION

“China and African countries are destined to be good friends, good brothers and good partners, and China-Africa cooperation stands as a fine example of South-South cooperation.”

—**Xi Jinping**, BRICS Business Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa, July 25, 2018



Figure 1: Word cloud featuring words commonly used in China’s diplomatic discourse **Source:** author compiled.

The language of Africa-China relations, as promoted by Chinese officials across the board, but perhaps today none more than Chinese premier Xi Jinping is one of brotherhood, solidarity and of a historic friendship that has always, and will continue to stand the test of time. This prevailing narrative insists Africa-China relations will prosper despite its challenges - challenges that, we are often told, are the sole creation of meddling external actors who desire to “sow discord between China and African countries and undermine the two sides' friendship”.³⁸⁷ The narrative goes that this relationship is imbued with some kind of almost predestined success, such that any attempts to question or probe its depth would be entirely futile. Rarely, if ever, does this narrative acknowledge the possibility of challenges from **within**.

Instead, this diplomatic discourse draws on human sentiments and relational concepts of kin and

³⁸⁷ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on April 14, 2020,” n.d. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/fyrbt_1/202004/t20200414_8526621.htm.

family to paint a picture of a relationship that goes far, far beyond politics alone. It speaks of humanity. Tungkeunkunt and Phuphakdi describe this type of language as part of brotherhood discourse, explained in a Southeast Asian context as the means through which the Chinese government “has set normative principles with Southeast Asian countries, implying its expectations and their shared history”³⁸⁸. In an African context Breslin argues that FOCAC, the triennial forum on China Africa Cooperation, is also a vehicle of this narrative, used to build Africa-China ties on the two sides’ shared identity as developing countries and continents with painful colonial histories.³⁸⁹

It should be noted that in keeping with this narrative, China does publicly pledge its commitment to advancing the human aspect of the Africa-China relationship in certain ways. We only have to look to the most recent FOCAC for examples of this – scholarships and educational cooperation, training programmes for African elites, and short-term training courses in China for members of the media are some prominent examples from its most recent occurrence.³⁹⁰

These initiatives encourage the movement of people, increasing opportunities for exchange and the building of ties. Chinese government-affiliated news platform Chinafrica frequently cover stories of Africa-China exchanges with these features, such as a December 2022 story entitled *A Cultural Combination: Two young Africans perform traditional Chinese comic crosstalk in China*. The article focuses on two African students who have been learning the Chinese traditional comic show known as crosstalk from a Chinese professor, developing their own version of drama Bao Caiming with African characteristics for Chinese audiences:

“Their performances are peppered with African characteristics, giving them a fresh perspective. They worked with their teacher to develop an African version of the classic drama Bao

³⁸⁸ “Rethinking diplomatic discourse with Chinese characteristics” in *Chinese People’s Diplomacy and Developmental Relations with East Asia: Trends in the Xi Jinping Era (Politics in Asia)*. Edited by Lee, Lai To. 1st ed. Routledge, 2020.

³⁸⁹ BRESLIN, SHAUN. “China and the Global Order: Signalling Threat or Friendship?” *International Affairs* 89, no. 3 (May 2013): 615–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12036>.

³⁹⁰ “中非合作论坛,” n.d. http://www.focac.org/focacdakar/eng/hyqk_1/202112/t20211222_10474206.

Caiming...Another novel technique involves Ike beating drum while Mamisoa playing the bamboo castanets, allowing two rhythms to coexist.”³⁹¹

The article emphasises these students role in bringing their respective cultures together. Another such article from May 2022 entitled *young bearers of friendship*, is written by a young Kenyan woman who, like Ike and Mamisoa studied in China, but with the added benefit of a Chinese government scholarship :

“As an African student from Kenya studying in China for the past seven years, I see myself as an ambassador of this friendship. I have been able to study in China under a Chinese government scholarship and upon completion of my studies, I plan to go back to my country and not only promote China but also use what I have learned in China to progress my country”.³⁹²

I can personally relate to such stories, having spent almost seven years in China and completing a master’s programme whilst there thanks to a generous Chinese government scholarship. Studying alongside Chinese classmates gave me and many other international students like me invaluable experience and solid intercultural friendships for a lifetime.

Yet, there are some notable exclusions amongst many of these Chinese-government led initiatives, the forums that give birth to them, and the tales they inspire. None thoroughly address the well-documented challenges of racial questions in such Africa-China interactions, nor do they invite the participation of civil society organisations who would imaginably be best placed to identify such shortcomings in Africa-China relations that impact ordinary Africans above all else. This is all compounded by the frequent failure of Chinese and African officials to acknowledge and commit to tackling these internal challenges.

This paper utilises a series of semi-structured interviews conducted online with three leaders of African Civil Society organisations to better understand the lesson African and Chinese decision

³⁹¹ Ge, Lijun. “A Cultural Combination.” *ChinAfrica*, December 2022. Accessed October 31, 2022. http://www.chinafrica.cn/Homepage/202212/t20221212_800315948.html.

³⁹² 李凯至, “Young Bearers of Friendship-- *ChinAfrica*,” *ChinAfrica*, May 14, 2022, accessed November 6, 2022, http://www.chinafrica.cn/Homepage/202205/t20220519_800293659.html.

makers can take from their on-the-ground experience of Africa-China people-to-people engagements in which race and racism feature frequently. Interviewees either presently or previously lived in China, and represent organisations that advocate on behalf of, or work with African diaspora communities in the country. These interviews were held over a period spanning two months in 2022. I use their insights to inform this paper's response to three key research questions:

- How can African civic actors and decision makers better shape the future of Africa-China government relations via the fight against racism and discrimination?
- How do they leverage their governments?
- How are African civic organisations advocating for better integration of racial questions in Africa-China government relations?

Through these leaders' insights, I argue that the exclusions in China's human-focused Africa-China initiatives highlighted earlier has created an asymmetry in the assigned importance of human issues, such as anti-Black racism in Africa-China relations, most visible at the human level of interaction rather than governmental. This hurts ordinary Africans – those with no governmental position – over all else. And by this, I mean not only Africans in China but those at home too.

Discrimination in this paper is defined as treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their race, gender, sexuality, etc.³⁹³ Anti-Blackness is defined as the beliefs, attitudes, actions, practices, and behaviours of individuals and institutions that devalue, minimize, and marginalize the full participation of Black people —visibly (or perceived to be) of African descent.³⁹⁴ While anti-Black racism is defined as a specific kind of racial prejudice directed towards Black people, or those perceived to be Black.³⁹⁵

³⁹³ "Discrimination Definition." In Cambridge Dictionary, 2022. Accessed November 30, 2022. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/discrimination>.

³⁹⁴ Williams Comrie, Janvieve, and Antoinette M. Landor Ph.D. "ANTI-BLACKNESS/ COLORISM." Boston University. 2020. Accessed December 1, 2022. <https://www.bu.edu/antiracism-center/files/2022/06/Anti-Black.pdf>.

³⁹⁵ Williams Comrie and Landor, "ANTI-BLACKNESS/ COLORISM."

It is necessary to note here, as Huang does in *“Anti-Blackness” in Chinese Racial-Nationalism: Sex/Gender, Reproduction, and Metaphors of Pathology*, that in a Chinese context *Black* and *African* are often used interchangeably.³⁹⁶ To be Black in China, can exclusively be understood to mean African, and vice versa. With this, comes racial discrimination against Black Africans and Black people of African descent on the basis of their Africanness **and** Blackness, because these are understood to be one and the same.

Thus, in addressing issues of anti-Black racism in China or towards Africans in a Chinese context, one may find, as I did during my interviews that stratagem to tackle anti-Black racism, as defined above, are often explicitly tied to challenging pejorative views of the African continent and Africanness. Equally, some organisational efforts to unify or represent Africans in China adopt the African Union’s acknowledgement of people of African descent globally as part of the sixth region of Africa.³⁹⁷

The very nature of anti-Black racism means that absolutely any visibly Black person can fall victim. Equally, anyone can hold, or act on racist views – for Black people globally it is, in this sense indiscriminate. In tackling such widespread issues, one might expect solutions equally as wide in reach to be applied. Conversely, the impact of many of these current government-driven people to people initiatives will only be felt by a marginal number of people in both societies. While these initiatives aren’t intended to tackle racism they may indirectly help remedy it in pockets. This all means that when Chinese government representatives make statements about the “unbreakable” nature of the “China-Africa friendship”, “deeply rooted in the heart of our people”, one can sometimes be left wondering how representative such statements can possibly be of the feelings of *老百姓* - or ordinary people - on both sides.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ Positions politics editorial group. “Kun Huang, ‘Anti-Blackness’ in Chinese Racial-Nationalism: Sex/Gender, Reproduction, and Metaphors of Pathology.” Positions Politics, July 18, 2021. <https://positionspolitics.org/kun-huang-anti-blackness-in-chinese-racial-nationalism-sex-gender-reproduction-and-metaphors-of-pathology/>.

³⁹⁷ “AUC Chairperson Moussa Faki Invites the African Diaspora to Invest and Be Part of the Continental Development Agenda | African Union,” n.d. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20171115/auc-chairperson-moussa-faki-invites-african-diaspora-invest-and-be-part-0>.

³⁹⁸ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on April 14, 2020,” n.d. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/fyrbt_1/202004/t20200414_8526621.htm.

In attempting to explore the asymmetry in the assigned importance of racial issues, this paper first reviews what has previously been written and unearthed about race at the intersection of international relations and Africa-China relations more specifically. It makes a case for the centrality of this topic to a contemporary understanding of Africa-China relations. It then moves on to detail how the incorporation of issues of race, anti-Black racism and discrimination into Africa-China government relations can take place, in particular looking at the crucial role of civil society organisations and their leaders in bridging this gap and levelling out this asymmetry. A breakdown and analysis of the insights of three leaders of China-based African Civil Society organisations follows, with a case study centred on a series of instances of perceived racism in Guangzhou that came to be known as the Guangzhou Incidents. Finally, this paper closes with a summary of these interviews with some key recommendations developed off both the interview and the author's own reflections and insight on the topic.

2.0 HISTORICITY

In rebalancing the asymmetry this paper previously highlighted, it is first necessary to identify its cause.

Bodomo notes that there are two commonly cited historical events associated with the beginning of Africa-China relations.³⁹⁹

The first, tales of Zheng He's two voyages to the east coast of Africa during the Ming dynasty paint a picture of an age-old relationship between Africa and China. Federl argues that his voyage has been instrumentalized and dehistoricised to support the notion that Africa and China have held a long-standing friendship since this time⁴⁰⁰. Zheng He and his voyages have been referenced by both former Party Secretary Hu Jintao and by Xi Jinping. They also have appeared in Chinese white papers⁴⁰¹ on the nation's peaceful development and proposed interaction with the rest of the

³⁹⁹ ———. "Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Inequalities and Well-Being of Africans in China." *Asian Ethnicity* 21, no. 4 (May 5, 2020): 526–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2020.1761246>.

⁴⁰⁰ Federl, Patrick. "The Instrumental Use of Zheng He's Travels in Official Sino-African Relations' Discourse." *Asiadémica: Revista Universitaria De Estudios Sobre Asia Oriental*, no. 11 (January 1, 2018): 58–77.

⁴⁰¹ "China's Peaceful Development," September 9, 2014.

http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284646.htm.

world, including African nations. What is touched upon much less in China's diplomatic discourse, yet also occurring in the Ming & Qing dynasties, is the emergence of racial hierarchical thinking in China.

As Huang writes:

“In his *Miscellaneous Notes of Yanpu*, Zhao Yi (1727-1814), a writer during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), recorded the folklore he heard circulating in Guangdong province on the southern coast of China. One of the entries introduced readers to non-Chinese groups distinguished by skin tone. They were given such labels as “white devils,” “black devils,” and “red-haired barbarians.” Zhao Yi's narrative indicates that the colorist racial hierarchy constructed through oceanic slave trades had already become a salient epistemic framework for Chinese people to distinguish between inferior and superior groups of foreigners. Historical violence was disguised as a seemingly objective natural order: “Whites are the masters; Blacks are the slave; the noble and the base are determined from birth.”⁴⁰²

The second historical event held as the beginning of Africa-China relations is the Bandung conference of 1955, built off the spirit of Afro-Asian solidarity and closely tied to the brotherhood discourse applied to Africa-China relations today. It is on these historical foundations that this discourse finds its weight.

But this time period is significant for other reasons too. It ushered in the era of young Africans coming to China for further education, sponsored by the Chinese government. And yet, arguably a much less discussed historical reality from this time is that tales of racism experienced by African students in China are almost as old as the start of these young Africans travel to the country itself. Emmanuel John Hevi's 1963 book *An African in China* in which he details such comes to mind. Having been granted a scholarship to study in China and living there himself, Hevi identified the racist discrimination he and his fellow African students faced as an intentional effort to “make the

⁴⁰² positions politics editorial group, “Kun Huang, ‘Anti-Blackness’ in Chinese Racial-Nationalism: Sex/Gender, Reproduction, and Metaphors of Pathology.”

African accept once and for all the idea of the superiority of Yellow over Black”.⁴⁰³ He details this discrimination as one of four reasons for an exodus of African scholarship students from the country, many before their scheduled graduation. This exodus, he explains, took place in spite of all the numerous Chinese attempts to offer “attractive bait” – the scholarships, living allowances, relatively nice accommodation.

Two decades after his account, the well-documented anti-African protests in Nanjing and elsewhere in China saw anti-Black racism rear its head once more.

I make these parallels between tales of Zheng He and Bandung, and that of Hevi’s *An African Student In China*, as well as the Anti-African protests of 1988 to make a point Federl explains about the role of history in Africa-China discourse:

“If we accept the fact that history is primordially playing a role of satisfying present needs in contemporary representations, then we have to admit its biased nature, accept the fact that history may be distorted in a way to better suit our contemporary purposes⁴⁰⁴”.

In the Africa-China context, I contend that questions of race, racism and anti-Blackness are as foundational to, and persistently present in Africa-China relations as any of these early engagements that are held up as beacons of Africa-China brotherhood. Yet only the latter features regularly in narratives around the relationship, as it is convenient to the contemporary brotherhood discourse.

Fast-forward to today and we know that Africans and their Chinese counterparts are interacting more than ever before in history. According to some scholars there are more than 750,000 Chinese migrants in Africa.⁴⁰⁵ This will, of course, mean that they are interacting with Africans, some for the very first time.

⁴⁰³ Emmanuel John Hevi, *An African Student in China*, 1963.

⁴⁰⁴ Federl, “The Instrumental Use of Zheng He’s Travels in Official Sino-African Relations’ Discourse.”

⁴⁰⁵ Ronald Skeldon, “China: An Emerging Destination for Economic Migration,” *Migrationpolicy.Org*, August 27, 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/china-emerging-destination-economic-migration>.

Prior to Covid-19, upwards of 80,000 Africans headed to China to study.⁴⁰⁶ For many, the experience will have been their first time in the country. Much has, and will continue to change, grow and develop in Africa-China relations. Yet, reports of racism and discrimination, I argue, is one of the very few constants.

My own recent works, the BBC Africa Eye investigative documentary *Racism For Sale*, some two years in the making but built on several years of research and lived experience as a woman of African heritage in China speak to some of these persistent issues and attitudes also.⁴⁰⁷

The investigation starts with a single video that caused outrage amongst Africans in China, and others worldwide back in February 2020.

In it, a group of Black children are instructed by a voice off-camera to chant phrases in Chinese. But they don't understand that what they're being told to say is "I am a Black monster and my IQ is low." The word the children use, 黑鬼, is commonly cited as the Chinese equivalent of the N-word. What starts as an investigation into a single video, ultimately ends in myself and my co-investigator, Malawian Henry Mhango unearthing an entire Chinese video industry thriving off the racist exploitation of Black African men, women, and most horrifically children.

And while a forty-nine-minute visual investigation cannot possibly depict the full breadth of our findings, having poured over this content for so long myself I came across scores of content creators pumping out such material to their collective millions of followers in China. One only needs to explore subsequent investigations such as Viola Zhou's written investigation for Rest Of World to further understand the proliferation, profitability and popularity of such racist content on Chinese social media⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ "2018年来华留学统计," MOE, 2019, accessed December 4, 2022,

http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201904/t20190412_377692.html.

⁴⁰⁷ "Racism For Sale - BBC Africa Eye" (BBC Africa Eye [BBC News Africa], June 2022), accessed November 15, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0DJISqlmEw&ab_channel=BBCNewsAfrica.

⁴⁰⁸ Viola Zhou, "Racist Videos about Africans Fuel a Multimillion-Dollar Chinese Industry," Rest of World, July 7, 2022, <https://restofworld.org/2022/china-racist-livestreams-africa/>.

“The influencers portray themselves as wealthy saviors who provide locals with money, jobs, clothes, health care, housing, and food.”, Zhou writes. One of the content creators, Cheng Wei, offered his own opinion of Africans to his almost 10 million followers: “Africans are inherently savage, barbaric, you know? They only have profits in their eyes.”.

While such content creators are of course individually responsible for the content they create and their individual tastes are by no means representative of an entire nation, there certainly is an audience for this content on Chinese social media. In the three months that preceded the release of Zhou’s investigation, Cheng earned over \$5.6 million through his platform. Circling back to my own investigation for context, I found that these creators and the Africa-based industry they built had been active since 2015. That is seven years of profit built at least in part on the racist exploitation of Africans.

I provide all this context to make three points. Firstly, that questions of race – and anti-Black racism have a place both historically, and in the present navigation of Africa-China relations. Yet, outside of academia and international media, they have long been conveniently ignored domestically in both periods. Secondly, I contend that this asymmetry is hindering, rather than helping the growth of Africa-China relations at the human level, with particularly dire consequences for ordinary Africans who are most exposed to feeling this lack. Third and finally, that in providing examples of how this racism has been exported to African shores and stands to harm not just Africans in China but also those across the African continent, there is perhaps the strongest motivation for those with decision making power to act now.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Several scholars have explored the role racism plays in Africa-China interactions more broadly.

Cissé’s interviews with 120 Chinese traders in Senegal and African traders in China led to the observation that “Compared to Chinese traders in Africa, African traders in China face more social

issues in their interactions than language problems”, to include “social tensions linked to racism” that “arise in streets or markets⁴⁰⁹.”

Amoah and Castillo explore the impact of Covid-19 on African migration to China, with particular focus on Guangzhou. The pair detail reports of racial discrimination against Africans in the city, noting that “constant doubt about one’s racial identity and limited social support can be a recipe for poor mental wellbeing, and particularly among migrants”.⁴¹⁰

Cheng explored how presumed Black racial inferiority manifests on Chinese university campuses and in online social media discourse, and Frazier and Zhang explore how this impacts the reception of the increasingly large Afro-Chinese population in China using the example of biracial pop personality Lou Jing.⁴¹¹⁴¹² Exploring Chinese social media narratives around race, Lan concludes that racist comments made on Chinese forums online should be understood in the context of “the anonymous nature of the internet and the lack of anti-racist education in China”. Lan continues that “The state’s official denial of the existence of racism in China renders the general public insensitive to the negative consequences of racist remarks and the insidious spread of Western racial ideologies in popular media”.⁴¹³

Huynh and Park detail early Chinese perceptions of race with a timeline of the changing perceptions of dark-skinned people in China from being feared and admired to viewed as inferior. This “tremendous shift in race thinking”, the authors explain, can at least partially be explained by the increased presence of European powers in the country, bringing with them their own racial

⁴⁰⁹ Daouda Cissé, “South-South Migration and Sino-African Small Traders : A Comparative Study of Chinese in Senegal and Africans in China,” *African Review of Economics and Finance* 5, no. 1 (December 1, 2013): 17–28, <https://journals.co.za/content/aref/5/1/EJC148195>.

⁴¹⁰ Roberto Castillo and Padmore Adusei Amoah, “Africans in Post-COVID-19 Pandemic China: Is There a Future for China’s ‘New Minority’?,” *Asian Ethnicity* 21, no. 4 (June 1, 2020): 560–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2020.1773760>.

⁴¹¹ Yinghong Cheng, “From Campus Racism to Cyber Racism: Discourse of Race and Chinese Nationalism,” *The China Quarterly* 207 (September 2011): 561–79, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741011000658>.

⁴¹² Robeson Taj Frazier and Lin Zhang, “Ethnic Identity and Racial Contestation in Cyberspace: Deconstructing the Chineseness of Lou Jing,” *China Information* 28, no. 2 (May 19, 2014): 237–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203x14532224>.

⁴¹³ Shanshan Lan, *Mapping the New African Diaspora in China: Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging* (Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity), 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019).

hierarchical thinking, ultimately culminating in Chinese thinkers creating their own Darwin-inspired racial hierarchies.⁴¹⁴

Wang argues that “race and racial injustice are not limited to the North-South dynamic in history or modern international relations”, recommending that China too must begin to think critically of the role race plays in its relations with African and majority Black nations⁴¹⁵.

Like most of these authors, this paper endeavours to make a case for the inclusion of racial questions in Africa-China relations, but in doing so, the author also sees it necessary to both consider **why** these issues have been neglected at the governmental level, and how this can be remedied from the ground up. While this paper focuses primarily on how this plays out in China and the role of China-based African CSOs, it also recognises that ground up solutions must come from both Africans in the diaspora and at home.

3.1 Racial Aphasia

Thompson writes that race is a transnational norm or idea that can independently affect both domestic policy outcomes and international relations among nation-states.⁴¹⁶ She describes a phenomenon she terms as racial aphasia, simply put as our collective inability to speak about race, but, outlined in more detail, an intentional colour blindness that ignores race and the role it plays – markedly different to ‘racial amnesia’:

“This is not the same as amnesia, which indicates some unfortunate series of events that led to an unintentional forgetting of how the modern world system was founded on, and continues as, a hierarchical racial order. Racial amnesia obscures the power involved in purposeful evasion, suggesting that, like a B-movie plot, we must have accidentally fallen, hit our heads and forgotten our racist past. Amnesia disavows intent. Aphasia, on the other hand, indicates a calculated

⁴¹⁴ “Reflections on the role of race in China–Africa relations” in Chris Alden and Daniel Large, *New Directions in Africa–China Studies*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2018).

⁴¹⁵ Jodi-Ann Wang, “The Need to Discuss Race in China-Africa Relations,” *The China Global South Project*, July 7, 2020, <https://chinaglobalsouth.com/analysis/the-need-to-discuss-race-in-china-africa-relations/>.

⁴¹⁶ Debra Thompson, “Through, against and beyond the Racial State: The Transnational Stratum of Race,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 1 (March 2013): 133–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2012.762898>.

forgetting, an obstruction of discourse, language and speech.”⁴¹⁷

In the west, the recognition of the role race plays right up to the highest levels of international affairs and decision making is met with this aphasia due to discomfort around historical wrongdoing. To acknowledge the present impact and role of racism is to link it to a history that might preferably be forgotten.

I contend that in Africa-China contexts aphasia manifests itself too. But because the acknowledgement of racism here creates a more complicated picture of these relations that is inconvenient to brotherhood discourse. By acknowledging the existence of racism here, we must also accept that the beliefs of solidarity expressed at a governmental level, may not be shared by those who said governments govern over and are supposed to represent – the people.

This also means that instead of a simplistic, one-dimensional bilateral Africa-China relationship that works with brotherhood discourse, we instead are forced to reckon with the complexities of a multi-dimensional one – with multiple different Africa-China actors and perhaps even more divergent perspectives on one another.

Zvogbo writes that race should not simply be seen as “a perspective on international relations; it is a central organizing feature of world politics”, a point Wang draws even closer to the Africa-China context, writing that “the histories of racial prejudice are entrenched in transnational processes from which China cannot remove itself.”^{418,419}

If, then, both in global and Africa-China contexts, race and its social products racism and anti-Blackness inform so much of our interaction and treatment at all levels, discussion of them all should feature in every aspect of policy and decision-making, as items on the agenda at the likes of FOAC and more. Actors on both sides of the Africa-China relationship would do well to put themselves in the best possible position to confront it. As Castillo writes, effectively doing this

⁴¹⁷ Thompson, “Through, against and beyond the Racial State: The Transnational Stratum of Race,” March 2013.

⁴¹⁸ Kelebogile Zvogbo and Meredith Loken, “Race Is Critical to the Field of International Relations,” Foreign Policy, April 13, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/19/why-race-matters-international-relations-ir/>.

⁴¹⁹ Wang, “The Need to Discuss Race in China-Africa Relations.”

requires “more ground-up work, localised knowledge, to help us figure out how “race,” “racism,” racialisation and nationalism actually operate in Africa-China relations”.⁴²⁰ This paper attempts to take this knowledge-finding one step further, in using it to develop key recommendations for decision makers to bring about change, and African and diaspora based CSOs to maximise their ability to assist or complement them.

*“The China-Africa relationship is currently at its best in history. The 2018 Beijing Summit of the FOCAC led to a new wave in developing the China-Africa friendship, with the implementation of its results injecting new vigor into their practical cooperation in various fields.”*⁴²¹

—**Xi Jinping**, BRICS Business Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa, July 25, 2018

How should the quality and/or strength of the Africa-China relationship be judged? Who gets to decide, and what rubric or criteria should this be measured against? What metrics do we use to validate a statement such as the one written above, delivered by Premier Xi Jinping to scores of African and other world leaders in 2018? Should these metrics be identical for African sides and Chinese, given there is talk of a common destiny? Or should African actors set their own agenda, based on an assessment of African needs across all levels of society?

China-Africa trade amounted to \$254 Billion in in 2021, higher than ever before with an increase of \$67 billion.⁴²²

Just this August, China announced debt relief for 17 African nations.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ Roberto castillo, “‘Race’ and ‘Racism’ in Contemporary Africa-China Relations Research: Approaches, Controversies and Reflections,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 21, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 310–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2020.1796343>.

⁴²¹ “Xi Focus-Quotable Quotes: Xi Jinping on China-Africa Cooperation,” Xinhua, n.d., http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/27/c_1310336643.htm.

⁴²² Carlos Mureithi, “Trade between Africa and China Reached an All-Time High in 2021,” Quartz, July 20, 2022, <https://qz.com/africa/2123474/china-africa-trade-reached-an-all-time-high-in-2021>.

⁴²³ Ana Monteiro and Tom Hancock, “Bloomberg - China to Waive Some Africa Loans, Offer \$10 Billion in IMF Funds,” Bloomberg, August 2022, accessed October 11, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-23/china-to-waive-some-africa-loans-offer-10-billion-in-imf-funds>

And a 2022 report, "A new horizon for Africa-China relations", by global research firm Economic Intelligence Unit suggests China could be on track to overtake the European Union as Africa's biggest trade partner by 2030.⁴²⁴

Do these factors alone warrant such statements as the one that opened this section?

I contend that by refusing to acknowledge the problem of anti-Black racism, and other harsh realities on the ground impacting people-to-people exchange, we are in turn left with an incomplete picture of Africa-China relations – and by extension an incomplete set of criteria to judge its success by.

That a nation, or even entire continent enjoys good government-to-government relations with another does not directly suggest their *people* share the same. If the language used in defining this relationship leans so heavily on humanity, through the brotherhood discourse mentioned earlier in this paper, I argue that a significant part of the assessment of its quality should be based on *human* factors too.

I also acknowledge that there are steps that can be taken to bring the two in line, and to balance these asymmetries.

Thus far, this paper has focused on why these issues are not integrated into Africa-China government discourse, and now moves on to detail how this incorporation can take place, in particular looking at the crucial role of civil society organisations and their leaders in bridging this gap and levelling out this asymmetry.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

"... there is no racism in China because there are no Black people."

⁴²⁴"A New Horizon for Africa-China Relations," *Economic Intelligence Unit* (The Economic Intelligence Unit, 2022), accessed December 4, 2022, https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/a-new-horizon-for-africa-china-relations/#mktoForm_anchor.

—A Chinese interviewee featured in the 1996 China edition of the Lonely Planet’s Guidebook⁴²⁵

In a 2013 article, Black American historian of modern China Marketus Presswood recalls reading a 1996 edition Lonely Planet guidebook in which the author recounts an exchange with a Chinese woman during his travels. In a nutshell, the author is told that there’s no racism in China because there are no Black people. Whether or not her words would have been accurate in the nineties, it needn’t be said that they certainly would not be today. China’s present African diaspora is vast and diverse comprised of students, businesspeople, irregular migrants, embassy officials and more. While accurate data on the number of Africans in China is scarce, estimates have placed this number at as many as 500,000⁴²⁶ to 100,000 to 200,000⁴²⁷, although such estimates are considered to be at the high end. China has also been home to an African Union Representative office since 2018, plus an active group of 51 African Ambassadors⁴²⁸. In addition, almost all African countries that have established diplomatic relations with China have an ambassador in the country⁴²⁹. This makes it a crucially important site for understanding how community groups raise awareness around issues impacting them and petition their government-level representatives to act on their behalf at this frontier of Africa-China relations.

The community leaders interviewed as part of this paper represent some of the thousands of Africans living in China. They have direct experience of the challenges that have kept racism off the agenda for so long. Through two-part interviews the author presents their insights to exemplify what is presently being done to put issues of anti-Black racism and discrimination permanently on the Africa-China agenda, and where improvements need to be made.

⁴²⁵ Marketus Presswood, “On Being Black in China,” *The Atlantic*, August 27, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/07/on-being-black-in-china/277878/>.

⁴²⁶ Adams Bodomo, “Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Inequalities and Well-Being of Africans in China,” *Asian Ethnicity* 21, no. 4 (May 5, 2020): 526–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2020.1761246>.

⁴²⁷ Tania Branigan, “China Cracks down on African Immigrants and Traders,” *The Guardian*, October 6, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/06/china-crackdown-african-immigration>.

⁴²⁸ “From China-Africa to Africa-China,” *Development Reimagined*, June 2021, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://developmentreimagined.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/blueprint-final-11.06.pdf>.

⁴²⁹ “From China-Africa to Africa-China.”

All three individuals interviewed as part of this paper head civil society organisations either currently or previously headquartered in Beijing. A brief introduction to the interviewees is provided below and a more in-depth brief can be found in Annex A at the end of this paper.

Interviewee 1: Barr. Justina Ajala (President, ADiCNet African Diaspora in China Network) (Greater China-wide)

Interviewee 2: Joseph Olivier Mendo'o (Co-founder China Africa Youth Federation/CAYF - Beijing, registered in South Sudan, Kenya)

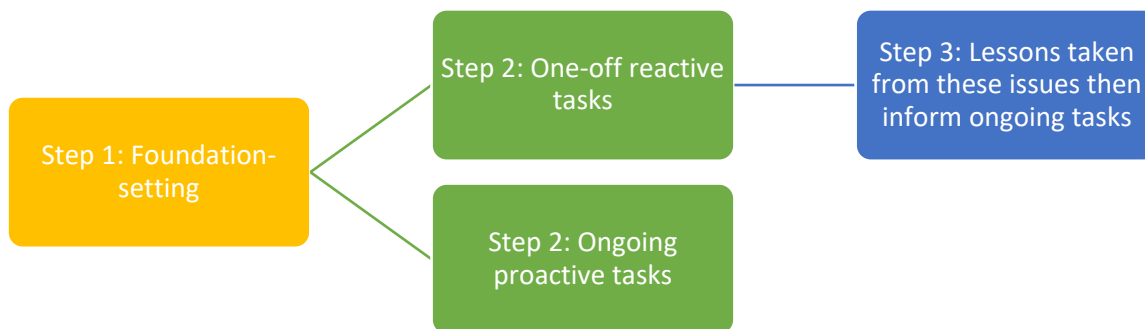
Interviewee 3: Musa Frimpong (Founder) DUAPA Africa (Ghana, Beijing)

4.2 Findings from Interviews with African Community Leaders in China

The organisations founded by the participants surveyed as part of this study were founded between 2018 and 2019. Each organisation has a different organisational structure. DUAPA isn't a membership-based organisation and is instead run by a committed team of volunteers who then reach out to members of the community to participate in their initiatives. The other, ADiCNet is a far-reaching umbrella organisation, representing over 50 African organisations across greater China. Finally, CAYF is a membership organisation representing young Africans and young Chinese – its membership is primarily taken from student organisations affiliated with, or located in different Chinese universities, but its activities serve a wider demographic. Despite their different structures, there were some recurring themes amongst all interviewees. The author has found the challenges faced by each of these leaders throughout their organisations' founding instrumental to understanding wider issues around the integration of racial questions in Africa-China government relations.

All three interviewees spoke of a process of laying the foundations of their organisation involving introducing their ideas and objectives to African officials in Beijing as a way to seek their approval or agreement, and then introducing their initiatives to their communities. This process, detailed more extensively below is about developing legitimacy in the eyes of both the communities they intended to serve and the decision makers/officials able to escalate their initiatives and concerns.

Figure 2: Flow chart of advocacy tasks. **Source:** Author



From their responses, I've identified a three-step process of advocating for issues impacting their communities, including racial issues.

Once these organisations have set their foundations, there are two broad, main types of activities they engage in to advocate for the integration of racial issues into Africa-China relations: The first are proactive initiatives, typically educational, with the view of increasing local Chinese exposure to Africans and in turn challenging racist ideas. An additional aim of these initiatives is to advocate for greater commitment at a high-level to addressing these issues, in a 'lead-by-example' fashion.

The second type of initiatives form part of reactive responses to widespread, one-off instances or a flurry of instances of racism impacting members of their respective communities.

Foundation-setting

This paper found that the leaders interviewed typically assumed their positions and founded their organisations based off the desire to tackle issues they'd experienced themselves as Africans in China.

For ADiCNet and DUAPA Africa leaders Justina and Musa, this was a recognition of the lack of unifying body for Africans in China. This is quite intentionally written into ADiCNet's objectives: To build a united and active network of all African Diaspora organizations/associations with positive influence and impact in China, Africa and globally.

Having studied and lived in China themselves prior to starting their organisations, both leaders felt that the lack of such unifying body made it impossible to know how best to champion the rights of Africans in their host country and to get a holistic understanding of what was happening across different African sub-communities in the country. Musa described that he felt the creation of a single, recognised body to bring all Africans together would be a necessity to accomplish this, as "we are stronger together". Africans living in smaller cities and irregular African migrants are amongst the hardest to reach for these organisations, so it can be expected that each will have their blind spots.

In the case of Joseph's CAYF, a key motivation in starting the organisation was the concern around the image of *Africanness* in China, and the belief that more African and Chinese interaction would correct harmful stereotypes and ideas. This was an extension of Joseph's long-held goal since arriving to Beijing, to "bring down the clichés and change China's perspective on Africa"⁴³⁰.

In all cases, leaders interviewed considered formal registration of their organisation a difficult but ultimately necessary prerequisite to their work. This was partly due to concerns around the risk of mobilising in their host country without official paperwork.

⁴³⁰ "PKU Personalities: Bridging China & Africa at Peking University," n.d., https://english.pku.edu.cn/news_events/news/people/11576.html.

Most importantly registration served the purpose of creating legitimacy for the organisations. ADiCNet, presided over by Justina, managed to avoid some of these challenges through their early affiliation to the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) in Addis Ababa but this question of legitimacy was a recurring theme during all interviews, and was described as a two-way pursuit. Through different means, organisations simultaneously seek legitimacy in the eyes of the communities they hope to represent and in the eyes of the African embassies and diplomatic corps in China who they hope will carry their agendas upwards in ways they cannot.

All three leaders said their organisations had received a minimum of verbal support for their initiatives from African embassies and the African diplomatic corps in Beijing. This ‘co-sign’ helps build community interest and trust in the organisations for several reasons.

Justina explained that the impact of embassy officials being present at ADiCNet events is two-fold. First, the officials themselves gain a real insight into life in China as an African without the privileges that come with being a diplomat. “Because their daily reality is different, they won’t always know the hardships unless they can see and hear from us”, she explains. Secondly, when those in the community see embassy officials involved in, or presence at ADiCNet events, they begin to view the organisations as the way to engage their government-level leaders who were previously considered inaccessible to them. This helps the organisations to become the centralised point of contact during times of need and builds trust in their ability to see to it that community concerns such as racism are adequately addressed. Members of the community also feel more reassured that their grievances will be resolved with the presence of those with decision-making power at a policy or governmental level. She noted the psychological impact of this presence and involvement also, stating that “people feel listened to”, even if only to vent about their personal circumstances.

After some initial difficulty, Musa’s organisation DUAPA Africa eventually managed to register as a social enterprise in Beijing, but first registered in Kenya and Ghana. He explained that registration also makes it easier to work with government institutions, embassies and key stake holders, reassuring them that cooperation with these organisations would not compromise their

positions. He describes this registration and legitimisation process as a ‘Gamechanger’ for this reason.

Challenging Despondency in the community

Another part of the foundation-setting process, expressed by two of the interviewees came in confronting a general feeling of despondency amongst some community members around Africa-China relations. Despondency here is defined as being “unhappy and discouraged” due to feeling they “are in a situation that is unlikely to improve⁴³¹”. This was described as a general attitude towards Africa-China relations at both the human and governmental levels. “We saw that Africans in China were not deeply active or involved in how they can drive the African side positively with China”, was an explanation given by Musa of DUAPA Africa. Some were more resigned about the nature of Africa-China relations and felt there was no point in organising as little would improve or result in the betterment of their communities. For some, this was compounded by a general feeling that embassy officials and other government representatives weren’t in their corner and willing to tackle sensitive issues like racism faced in China.

It is necessary to point out here that the official Chinese word on the matter is that racism doesn’t exist in China, with even high-profile instances of racism labelled as “groundless rumours”⁴³². For diplomats, officials and organisations to then create strategies to deal with racism, is to tacitly acknowledge its existence and in turn go against the Chinese narrative. Many would rather not do this.

For these reasons, some others had simply accepted the reality of racism in their host country, and instead of confronting it or seeking change had found other coping mechanisms. This resonated with Bodo’s theory of resilience amongst Africans in China, which posits that Africans find

⁴³¹ “Despondent Definition,” in Cambridge Dictionary, 2022, accessed November 30, 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/despondent>.

⁴³² Hua Xia, “Rumor Buster: Videos Showing Discrimination in China’s Anti-Epidemic Measures Are Fake,” Xinhua, April 17, 2020, accessed December 2, 2022, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-04/24/c_139005055.htm.

innovative ways to cope with inequalities in their host community or country to promote their wellbeing.⁴³³

While there were no direct mentions of fool proof ways to challenge this despondency, DUAPA Africa's Musa said he'd noted it had been offset by the success of both reactive and proactive initiatives his organisation and others like it had put into motion, plus the involvement of embassy officials. The approach was to "show what is possible".

Proactive initiatives

"You know, before you go to Africa, there are things that you have to know, right? The same as you don't want us to have some preconceived ideas about China. We also want you to understand the real Africa."

—Joseph Olivier Mendo'o – CAYF Co-founder

When asked about the solutions to anti-Black racism in Africa-China relations, all leaders mentioned education. This did not come as a surprise as all three of the organisations they represent either presently or previously have engaged in educational activities in China to this end. They share a belief that the way to advocate for the inclusion of racial issues into Africa-China government relations is to proactively lead by example, some through educating their Chinese counterparts.

In the case of Joseph's China Africa Youth Federation (CAYF), this is a core part of the organisation's objectives. Started in 2019 and, in a departure from the other organisations surveyed as part of this paper, the CAYF aims to bridge the gap between Chinese and African youth, representing both African and Chinese young people. Joseph describes it as a place in which "Africans and Chinese can come together and try to understand each other to write new narratives".

⁴³³ Adams Bodomo, "Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Inequalities and Well-Being of Africans in China," *Asian Ethnicity* 21, no. 4 (May 5, 2020): 526–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2020.1761246>.

This speaks to a main concern Mendo'o mentions - the perception of Africanness and Blackness in China, and the potential knock-on effect this can have on the treatment of Africans both in China and in engagements with Chinese actors elsewhere.

His belief here may not be without reason. In *Mapping the New African Diaspora in China: Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging*, Shanshan Lan describes lack of exposure to Africans in real life as a contributing factor to negative perceptions of Africans on Chinese social media. Reflecting on her own Chinese social network, the author also reveals that many develop their "racial knowledge" of Africans from Chinese social media.⁴³⁴ One can see here how racist views can proliferate in such a cycle.

Finally on this point, research also suggests that more exposure to racial diversity leads to less of a belief in racial essentialism.⁴³⁵ Racial Essentialism can be defined as "the belief that racial groups form discrete genetic categories; that individuals of the same racial category are biogenetically similar; and that different races are fundamentally different". Such beliefs "can cause people to perceive racial outgroup members as less worthy of affection and assistance."⁴³⁶

This all culminates to support Joseph's belief that initiatives encouraging African-Chinese interaction can help in the eradication of anti-Black racism and discrimination.

The CAYF's regular activities include volunteer trips to hold classes introducing African cultures to people in rural areas of China. At the time of our interview Joseph was preparing to leave for yet another trip. He'd previously been to more than 30 villages doing this work.

Joseph explains that he specifically targets these areas in an attempt to reach groups who might otherwise not benefit from government-backed people-to-people initiatives. They also include children in these sessions with a view of having a lasting impact on the next generation. No such

⁴³⁴ Lan, *Mapping the New African Diaspora in China: Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging* (Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity).

⁴³⁵ Jonathan B. Freeman, Kristin Pauker, and Diana T. Sanchez, "A Perceptual Pathway to Bias," *Psychological Science* 27, no. 4 (March 14, 2016): 502–17, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615627418>.

⁴³⁶ Jennifer Tsai, "How Should Educators and Publishers Eliminate Racial Essentialism?," *Journal of Ethics | American Medical Association*, March 1, 2022, <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/how-should-educators-and-publishers-eliminate-racial-essentialism/2022-03>.

nationwide educational initiative exists in China to date. CAYF's initiative aim to challenge preconceived ideas of Blackness and Africanness popular across China and touted largely online and in media. In a sense, what Joseph describes is a form of cultural diplomacy:

“You've seen in a lot of media like Douyin how Africans have been portrayed. So I start from there, and from a very young age... five six, up to 10 years old, I'm also educating them, teaching them a lot about Africa, our cultures, languages, histories. They must know it's a diverse place.”

Cultural Diplomacy can be understood as “the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding”⁴³⁷.

As expected, in the most rural of areas Joseph often comes across those who've never seen a Black person before, much less one who speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese and attends the best university in the country. I took away from this that there was a passive form of education taking place during their interactions. Joseph, in imparting his teaching in fluent Chinese is therefore a walking challenge to racist ideas about Africans.

In this far, a non-verbal exchange is taking place – previous notions that some may have held of Africans as backward, uneducated and the like are reversed as those engaging with him witness something that directly challenges it.

Joseph makes it clear though that his emphasis is less on the reception towards him as an individual, and more on challenging the conception of Africa as a continent:

“You know, before you go to Africa, there are things that you have to know, right? The same as you don't want us to have some preconceived ideas about China. We also want you to understand the real Africa.”

⁴³⁷ Cummings, M. C. (2009). Cultural diplomacy and the United States government: A survey (Cultural Diplomacy Research Series). Washington, DC.

The CAYF organise trips to African countries for Chinese young people too and are registered in South Sudan & Kenya. When physical trips are not possible, particularly during COVID-19, the organisation arranges delegations of young Chinese nationals to African embassies.

This also ensures that officials are kept abreast of the organisation's activities and participate to some extent, and again gives the organisation a feeling of legitimacy.

The opportunity for scalability here is substantial – the group's core membership is comprised of African student union presidents across Chinese universities and young entrepreneurs in China, accounting for more than 40 African countries. On the Chinese side, CAYF's cofounder gathers representatives from the bulk of universities in Chinese cities. Funding, mentioned in more detail later in this section, is one of the key challenges to scaling this initiative and yet Joseph has witnessed that even at this stage and scale, their work has positively shifted attitudes towards Africans and Black people amongst participants.

With adult and university-age participants, Joseph has found through his classes he is able to have more open, honest dialogue about racial and cultural perceptions, with some participants actively sharing that his visit led to them dismissing views that many would describe as “racist” or “ignorant”. At its most successful, he has seen participants go on to become vocal advocates of racial equality and anti-racism. In the case of the youngest locals Joseph encounters, while initial reactions to him amongst some children have been shock, or in some instances fear, it's “never too long” before this subsides. He says that he continues to receive invitations to come back, and has had his work covered in local newspapers, further amplifying his message.

For ADiCNet a different type of education is on the daily agenda. The group have established a radio station to keep Africans in China up to date with what is happening across their community and relay messages directly from the AU's main CIDO unit. The station was launched exclusively through funds collected from community members. Said members are invited to host their own radio shows on the station providing another vehicle for discussion on issues impacting the community. While its usage at the time focused quite squarely on affairs in China, Justina mentioned they also aim to keep diaspora members informed on “what's going on back home”.

She lamented the lack of ready information streams between Africans in African countries and those in China, a point explored in more depth later. She also added that while she wasn't aware of any African officials tuning in to the service, she had hopes to extend its reach to this end also – “it's another way to know what issues are on our mind most.”

Besides their radio station, ADiCNet host events and community townhalls to give community members a chance to talk openly about their challenges or concerns. By inviting ambassadorial presence and participation at these townhalls, Justina explains that they are able to once again bridge the gap between the community and their high-level representatives. Inevitably, community concerns raised in these meeting include issues of racism and discrimination, so community members are afforded the opportunity to raise awareness of ongoing problems plus seek council from officials present. To facilitate the discussion of “more sensitive” topics, townhalls are held exclusively for Africans and people of African descent, bringing different sections of the wider diaspora together to share solutions. As an umbrella body it ultimately facilitates a space for its member organisations to learn from strategies and experiences of those in other cities, sub-communities.

I dialled into a virtual ADiCNet Town Hall on June 4th, 2022, organised under the theme of ‘Collective efforts for a sustainable development’ and witnessed this first-hand.

While the more than 60 participants reflected on how to handle racism in China, the perceived risk of repercussions for speaking out about such instances was a recurring theme. Addressing this, one member gave the example of an informal community-to-media pipeline that would see African media houses at home, or African diaspora media outside of China push news of the plight of the African diaspora in China to the rest of the world, thus eliminating at least some of the risk factor for those within the country to risk retaliation when doing this themselves. ADiC Net leadership responded with the relaunch of a media and PR committee, to aid in the building of such a pipeline. China, one participant said, had its own pipelines to “tell China's story well” to Africans, and Africans must develop the same.

The desired outcome of these meetings is that ambassadors and decision-makers present will escalate these concerns at a diplomatic level and these settings are an opportunity to lobby them to do just that. One example of these sessions having their desired impact is shared later in this section.

More informally, ADiCNet's lively WeChat groups are used to spread awareness about matters of relevance to Africans in China, amongst them the proliferation of racist content on Chinese social media. A general sentiment amongst all interviewees was that the proliferation of racist content on Chinese social media equalled the increase in racism suffered by Black people in China. Therefore, working together to get racist content removed would help in the fight against racism. In one such instance, a WeChat article with a gorilla as its header image shared a series of 'jokes' about Black people in Chinese. One read:

"Children, do you know what harmful garbage is? Who can answer this question?", the teacher asked.

"Me, Me, Me!" a dark-skinned, curly haired mulatto raised his hand impatiently.

"You answered very well!" said the teacher.

Another read:

"Why don't Black people get Parkinsons disease?"

Answer: "Because they already have AIDS, God will not embarrass one person twice".

Another took specific aim at Africans in Guangdong province: "Proposal for the Two Sessions: Recommended to do the utmost to solve the problem of Black African people in Guangdong with strict measures".

Group members rallied each other to share these articles far and wide and report them, to get them taken down. This strategy, as in several other instances, proved successful. An official notice on the no longer available pieces soon read: "This content broke the rules and cannot be viewed".

Alongside trying to get such content removed, members also adopt a method of mass-posting positive news about Black people to rebalance the narrative around Blackness on Chinese platforms, and uplift each other. These are just a few examples of how these ADiC Net members have used the organisation to address racism on Chinese social media.

Redressing balance in existing initiatives

Another fairly pressing preoccupation of these leaders shared during the interviews was redressing the balance in pre-existing Africa-China people to people initiatives. Interviewees were asked whether they knew of any African government-driven, backed or founded people-to-people initiatives focusing on Africa-China ties – no one could name a single one. The opposite was the case for Chinese government initiatives – the China Africa Youth Festival, the China-Africa Youth Forum on Volunteering, the China-Africa Youth Video Contest, China-Africa Youth Exchange Program on Poverty Reduction and Development, the China-Africa Young Leaders Forum and the Future Leaders forum, China-Africa Youth Gala – most of these are names that were recited to me during interviews.

Two of three interviewees had attended at least one of these events, and all three praised the initiatives as important, yet there was also consensus that this can lead to the creation of an asymmetry. Through such initiatives are ‘China-Africa’ in name, in practice many seem to be heavily skewed towards showcasing China to Africa(ns). With our previous mention of exposure as a contributing factor to the elimination of discrimination in mind, this means that any prejudices towards China and its people held by the young Africans in attendance are given room to be challenged through exposure. Africans in attendance are expected to leave such events with views favourable to China and its people. But the reverse, of Chinese people towards Africans, not so much. Both Joseph and Musa of DUAPA Africa shared a belief that their organisations would be in a better position to tackle racial and cultural prejudice towards Africans through equivalent African-led government initiatives.

Both leaders specifically mentioned lobbying for an African-government backed initiative of this kind to correct what Joseph termed as a “passive” African approach to this in leadership. But

where progress is slow, they instead try to proactively claim space in pre-existing Chinese-led initiatives. Joseph gave the example of the yearly China Africa Youth Festival, a Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiative linked to FOCAC for which he was invited to lead the African delegation two years in a row. In his first year in attendance in 2020, he recalls immediately being struck by this imbalance in representation, with Chinese culture and perspectives heavily outweighing African.

“There are still a lot of asymmetries... there are a lot of institutions, a lot of platforms, but it is primarily government to government. And when it’s not, there are a lot of Africans coming to China, but the other way around, we’re still falling behind. There are no African government led or funded initiatives focused on Africa-China, people to people...but see in China there are.”

I found an October 2021 video report on the China Africa Youth Festival by Xinhua, or New China TV quite illuminating in underscoring the need for African alternatives.⁴³⁸

The 2-minute video opens with a clip of the event’s opening ceremony. A group of 8 Chinese musicians on stage traditional Chinese music, before panning to show a mixed Chinese African audience, before we see speeches being given, and then a series of shots of African students taking part in two Chinese cultural and arts activities.

Next, a speech by Wang Jiarui, president of the Soong Ching Ling Foundation:

“We hope that these site visits, together with what you feel and share will help gain an in-depth understanding of China, the Communist Party China and the Chinese people. We also hope that you will share with your family and friends the stories of China-Africa friendship and your personal experience in China so that more people could join the cause of promoting China-Africa friendship and contribute to the continuous development of China-Africa cooperation.

His words suggest the initiative to be a one-way exercise more than an exchange. The first mention of Africa comes when Joseph himself appears on screen almost one and a half minutes in,

⁴³⁸ New China TV, “GLOBALink | 6th China-Africa Youth Festival Opens in Beijing,” October 20, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IRgelFPG10>.

reminding the audience that Africa is a very diverse and promising place. And, in line with his views as expressed to me in the interview, he is also the first here to make reference to the need for two-way exchange.

“I directly talked to the diplomats. I told them that if you look at the whole settings, it is just like us coming and learning about China. I said no. It is called China *Africa* Youth Festival”.

Before attending for the second year, Joseph brought this to the attention of the organisers and was subsequently invited to devise an Africa plan to the festival. Joseph’s experience suggests that there is willingness on the Chinese side to rebalance when presented with such recommendations.

By showing the fruits of their own work in this regard, these organisation leaders hope to encourage higher-level African participation in such initiatives - if not the formation of African alternatives, with the ultimate aim to see “more African agency”. This is in turn perceived as the way to incorporate questions of racism and discrimination into the Africa-China conversation, as well as challenge negative perceptions.

When asked what African alternatives to such events could look like, Joseph mentions the scaling of initiatives that already exist, started by their own organisations, but with an added online component to allow wider attendance by people from across China.

Another example is the work of China and Ghana-based social enterprise and consultancy Kente & Silk⁴³⁹ who launched the first ever ‘Africa Week’ in Beijing back in 2018. Held yearly, the week has many similarities to the China Africa Youth Festival, with its heavy focus on cultural experience and performance. But at Africa week, the sole focus is Africa.

On the cultural front, the week has featured everything from African dance classes, cooking lessons, to fashion shows and head-wrapping classes. But beyond culture, the week also invites it’s Chinese and international attendees to come face to face with more sensitive topics. Take, for example the 2020 offering of *By the Fireside*, “a response to the “misrepresentation of Africans

⁴³⁹ Martina Schwikowski, “The Racist Face of the Chinese Presence in Africa,” Dw.Com, November 9, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/the-racist-face-of-the-chinese-presence-in-africa/a-46223068>.

and the African diaspora” in China.⁴⁴⁰ Through performance, and presentations across the night, or China, Africa and race relations. More specifically this sought to leave attendees informed around “the impact that portrayals such as those carried out by performers in Blackface have on the Black community in China and at large.”⁴⁴¹

This mix of cultural showcase, plus the more intentional educational elements make it a strong example of the type of initiative that could, with funding, be extended to every Chinese city. There is much talk about telling China’s story well – events like this help in contributing towards the African equivalent with the intended consequences of diminishing harmful racial prejudice and stereotypes.

Reactive Initiatives

Outside of these proactive activities, these groups most vocal stances against racism take shape in their reaction to unexpected one-off incidents or a string of incidents of perceived racism and discrimination. There have been many such instances over the years but the most recent large-scale example, and the example used in this paper is that of the ‘Guangzhou incidents’.

5.0 CASE STUDY: THE GUANGZHOU INCIDENTS AT A GLANCE

“How you treat our ambassador is very important...but how you treat our citizens is even more important”

–Then Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila to then Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Zhou Pingjian

⁴⁴⁰ Giovanni Martini, “Discussing African Representation With Poet, Mystic, Ahead of Kente & Silk’s ‘By the Fireside,’ Mar 20,” The Beijinger, March 16, 2021, <https://www.thebeijinger.com/blog/2021/03/15/qa-poet-mystic-ahead-kente-silks-fireside-mar-20>.

⁴⁴¹ Martini, “Discussing African Representation With Poet, Mystic, Ahead of Kente & Silk’s ‘By the Fireside,’ Mar 20.”

Between late March and early April of 2020, reports of anti-foreign sentiment⁴⁴² and acts of anti-Black racism in China cropped up repeatedly on social media, fuelled in some Chinese circles by viral stories of foreigners refusing to adhere to pandemic prevention protocol and reports of imported Covid cases.

In late March in Beijing, a Black couple reported they were told by staff they couldn't eat at a popular restaurant because management had a rule barring all Black people from entry.⁴⁴³ Some days later, another Black man took to WeChat with a four-minute-long video after being asked to get off a bus in rural China because of his race.

On April 1st, several viral news reports and videos made a bad situation worse. A video of a dark-skinned foreign man in Qingdao cutting in line ahead of locals at a nucleic acid test went viral on Chinese social media sparking widespread anger amongst Chinese netizens.⁴⁴⁴

The same day brought reports of Covid cases imported into China from overseas:

"Six new COVID-19 cases from overseas were identified in Guangdong yesterday (April 1), all in Guangzhou, two from Nigeria, one each from the US, the UK, Ireland and Malaysia. Through April 1, the province has recorded 1,507 confirmed cases, of which 154 were from abroad."⁴⁴⁵

These reports did not explicitly state that an influx of foreigners was responsible for these cases, but people coming from overseas (nationality undisclosed) – this could have been Chinese nationals returning to China. But by the time Guangzhou authorities stated five Nigerians had

⁴⁴² Lily Kuo and Helen Davidson, "'They See My Blue Eyes Then Jump Back' – China Sees a New Wave of Xenophobia," *The Guardian*, July 1, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/29/china-coronavirus-anti-foreigner-feeling-imported-cases>.

⁴⁴³ Editorial Team, "'Making Our Money Do the Talking' and Other Responses to Racism in China," *Black Livity China*, August 4, 2020, <https://blacklivitychina.com/2020/03/22/making-our-money-do-the-talking-and-other-responses-to-racism-in-china/>.

⁴⁴⁴ The editors, "Three Americans Get Heat for Cutting in a COVID-19 Testing Line in Qingdao; Local Government Apologizes on Their Behalf," *The China Project*, November 21, 2021, <https://thechinaproject.com/2020/04/01/three-americans-get-heat-for-cutting-in-a-covid-19-testing-line-in-qingdao-local-government-apologizes-on-their-behalf/>.

⁴⁴⁵ "GD Reports 6 New and 2 Asymptomatic Cases 广东新增无症状感染者2例和境外输入确诊病例6例," 微信公众平台, n.d., https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/E7DqOr37yjph_8JuZXjAVA.

tested positive for Covid-19 on April 7th, the narrative in more nationalist spaces on Chinese social media that foreigners, Africans in particular were responsible for the influx of Covid blew up.

When later that same day a video of a crying, bleeding Chinese nurse surfaced online, alongside contested reports that a covid positive Nigerian male in Guangzhou had bitten her in an attempt to evade hospital quarantine, things deteriorated even further.

African students reported being targeted on campus, asked to test for Covid despite not having left the country or in some cases their campus, private landlords evicted their African and Black renters, with signs cropping up in some apartment buildings forbidding Black people from entering. Some Africans in the province had their passports seized, or were stopped in the street and carried off to quarantine hotels. In scenes that became synonymous with the Guangzhou Incidents, groups of Africans were thrown out of hotels and apartments in Guangzhou, forced to sleep outside in the streets. While the bulk of these issues took place in Guangdong province, these incidents are situated in a longer period of heightened discrimination towards Black people across China. In recognition of this, some Caribbean and North American embassies released advisory warnings for their Black nationals in the same period as a result⁴⁴⁶.

ADiCNet were instrumental to the African on-the-ground response to these incidents. Naturally a large part of the initial response to these reports was to assist people in need of accommodation, food, legal advice and more. Several volunteer and donation initiatives were started to this end. But ADiCNet leaders also mobilised to lead the drive in establishing the facts around what took place, and to ensure they were dealt with by decision makers through a series of actions.

Evidence Gathering:

Knowing that they navigate a particularly sensitive political space, ADiC Net President Justina explains the most effective way to prompt government leaders to act on matters of racism is through what I've termed the gathering and presenting of undeniable evidence.

⁴⁴⁶ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3079497/us-warns-african-americans-avoid-guangzhou-after-reports-black>

In consultation with community members, ADiC Net leaders collaboratively compiled a report detailing the ongoing issues in Guangzhou. Their structure as an umbrella consortium of all African organisations in China allowed them to work fast and accurately – they’d already established themselves as a trustworthy, well-connected body so obtaining accurate information from the African community in Guangzhou was not a challenge.

A mix of human accounts and video evidence was compiled, and ADiC Net’s findings were presented urgently to the group of African Ambassadors in Beijing, where they relayed the experiences and perspectives of Africans living across Guangdong province. During a particularly chaotic time across China’s African diaspora, ADiC Net leadership were able to cut through the noise and feed detailed first-hand experiences of perceived racist treatment succinctly to these officials.

The perceived instances of racism included:

- Africans being kicked out of hotels and accommodation, forced to stay on the streets
- A rise in Anti-African sentiments emboldening some local people to make racist comments in the street and online
- Selective home quarantine applied only to Africans and informed forcefully.
- Enforced Hotel Quarantine of Africans
- Selective Covid-19 testing only for Africans
- Threats of arrest, visa revocation or deportation
- Denied entry from some supermarkets, hospitals and restaurants
- The story of Daisy and Derrick, a Ugandan couple who told of how a pregnant daisy was barred from a hospital on racial grounds, then later bribed by said hospital to retract their statement is one such example⁴⁴⁷.

⁴⁴⁷ David Love, “Couple Blocked from Entering Chinese Maternity Hospital Releases Audio of Chinese Officials Asking Them to Deny Discrimination, Declare Government Treated Them Well,” Atlanta Black Star, April 29, 2020, <https://atlantablackstar.com/2020/04/29/chinese-officials-tried-to-get-couple-to-deny-discrimination-and-record-video-declaring-chinese-government-has-been-good-to-them/>.

They detailed recommendations for leadership in addressing these issues and took advice from the officials back to their communities in turn.

Shortly after, their findings were used as both motivation and material for an incredibly rare group letter of protest, released collectively by the African ambassadors in Beijing. The strongly worded letter expressed that the ambassadors “immediately demand the cessation of forceful testing, quarantine and other inhuman treatments meted out to Africans”⁴⁴⁸.

Justina says this experience showed that African embassies were not afraid to take action where they deemed necessary, a welcome discovery for Africans in China. Yet, the experience did highlight a challenge and recurring theme expressed during all interviews – the realities of ambassadors and government officials were so far removed from the ordinary African that without this proactive step taken by ADiC Net, this first-person, community account of this issue might potentially have never been heard or escalated.

In the eyes of many Africans in China, this rare outspoken display by African officials was at least partially responsible for the relatively swift handling of these issues. Chinese authorities set up a new phone number for all foreign nationals to report instances of discrimination, accommodation was found for those impacted by the evictions, and the government issued renewed reminders of China’s commitment to a ‘zero-tolerance’ policy against discrimination.

Evidence Dissemination

While not practiced by these CSOs themselves, another contributing factor to the rapid resolution of the Guangzhou incidents is the role of evidence dissemination. The media, both international and African/diaspora, played a substantial role in raising awareness about the ongoing incidents in Guangzhou and ensuring they couldn’t be ignored. While international media like CNN began covering the Guangzhou Incidents from the 10th of April⁴⁴⁹, it’s important to note that three days prior, African

⁴⁴⁸ Reuters Staff, “African Ambassadors Complain to China over ‘discrimination’ in Guangzhou,” U.S., April 13, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-africa-idUKKCN21T0T5>.

⁴⁴⁹ Jenni Marsh, Shawn Deng, and Nectar Gan, “Africans in Guangzhou Are on Edge, after Many Are Left Homeless amid Rising Xenophobia as China Fights a Second Wave of Coronavirus,” CNN, April 13, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/04/10/china/africans-guangzhou-china-coronavirus-hnk-intl/index.html>.

diasporic media had started publishing content on what was happening, citing Africans in China as their sources. A 7th of April article on the Nigerian citizen journalism site Sahara Reporters ended by stating affected Africans were “calling on the African Union and United Nations to intervene to stop the ongoing eviction in Guangdong and Fujian Province.”⁴⁵⁰

On the same day, two YouTube videos by an African-American and a Nigerian respectively broke the same news.⁴⁵¹ Less than 24 hours later, Wode Maya released a strongly-worded video featuring a voice message an African in China sent to him, asking him to spread the news -“I hope our leaders will know what is going on in China”- to date, the video has amassed over 200,000 views⁴⁵².

Such platforms played a critical role in the information dissemination around these incidents and in this sense contributed to pressure on Chinese and African authorities to ensure it came to an end.

What follows is a breakdown of how, exemplified by the ‘Guangzhou incidents’, the CSO leaders interviewed leverage their governments/embassies on matters of racism and discrimination.

The ‘Big Brother’ Role

In the case of CSOs operating in China, all interviewees seemed to recognise their own limitations when it comes to advocating on behalf of their communities. While in home contexts one might expect CSOs not to shy away from physical protests or social media to raise awareness around issues, being based in China restricts these possible ways because of the perceived danger in doing so, explored in more depth later. For example, while there is technically no mention of protest

⁴⁵⁰ <https://saharareporters.com/2020/04/07/chinese-ejecting-africans-homes-hotels-over-claims-importing-coronavirus-country>

⁴⁵¹ Pharaoh Said That, “Africans Getting Mistreated In China,” April 7, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VohWu6cUHK>; Inspire Me With Maram, “China Makes Africans Home*less Due To Pande*mic,” April 7, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYCv9rEQH4E>.

⁴⁵² WODE MAYA, “Chinese Discriminate Africans Because Of Covid-19?,” April 7, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCeal0IKpc0>.

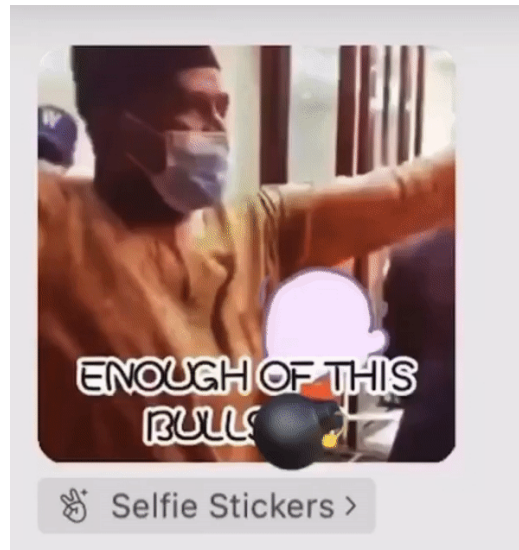
being illegal in Chinese law, none of the interviewees would ever employ such methods to raise awareness of racism or other issues.

Thus, these organisations instead seek to leverage their governments and representatives as '*big brother*', '*elders*' or '*reinforcement*', to push through their agendas. This is particularly the case for incidents that are perceived as institutional problems. In the case of the Guangzhou Incidents, and when major instances of discrimination occur, they pass the proverbial baton to the high-level decision makers who, as diplomats enjoy a protected status that they do not share. This type of cooperation can be seen in the two-step process of ADiCNet gathering and presenting their evidence, and the ambassadors then using this to make public demands on behalf of the Africans impacted.

In conclusion, this shows that with enough evidence or strong enough incentive officials can be leveraged for the good of the community in this way.

The question of incentive also speaks to another way in which both CSOs and members of their community seek to encourage officials to act on their behalf – through what I've termed giving credit where credit is due.

Credit Where Credit is Due



(LEFT: A GIF OF MR LAWAL, CREATED ON CHINESE MESSAGING APP WECHAT BY MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN CHINA)

The strongest example of the approach I've termed 'giving credit where credit is due' comes in the case of a Nigerian diplomat Mr Razaq Dayo Lawal who went viral for confronting Chinese authorities sent to confiscate the passports of a group of Nigerians in Guangzhou.

A video of Mr Lawal defending the group was uploaded to Facebook, garnering over half a million views and thousands of comments expressing admiration.

Members of the African diaspora in China even nominated Mr Lawal for a Pride of Africa Asia award.⁴⁵³ The award show is the largest of its kind recognising and celebrating the achievements of Africans in Asia Pacific, founded by a member of ADiC Net's inaugural working committee. Lawal became a sort of community icon that year, winning and accepting the award for African Man of the year and even becoming the object of gifs and memes on social media.

⁴⁵³ By Admin, "Pride of Africa Asia Awards," Appreciate Africa Network, 2022, accessed December 10, 2022, <https://awards.appreciateafricanetwork.com/>.

This level of appreciation might seem simple, but as one interviewee put it, it shows a different approach to engaging African officials on issues affecting the community. Early in this section the author mentioned the despondency interviewees recalled amongst some in their communities. They mention a feeling that embassy officials actively avoid addressing their citizens requests or concerns that might be diplomatically sensitive. In some instances, this sentiment has manifested in the vocal public critique of officials. But here, by doing the opposite, community members employ a new method to positively reinforce the stances taken by officials that suit their needs and interests - in this instance the direct confrontation of discriminatory practices. This marks a positive approach to advocating for the better integration of racial questions in Africa-China government relations, used to both recognise such acts of assistance and encourage others in positions of power to follow suit.

5.1 Challenges and Limitations

Interviewees also directly or indirectly mentioned several challenges in the various stages and processes of their work detailed above.

Self-Censorship?

While not mentioned in explicit terms by interviewees, it should be mentioned here that there do seem to be tensions between ‘what works’ in getting racism addressed in China and what leaders feel they either can or ought to do under the banner of their organisations.

ADiC Net in particular, by virtue of its registered status and affiliation to the African Union, is quietly “cautious” rather than “vocal” in approach to racism against Africans in its host country.

There is arguably good reason for African organisations to be this caution. One reason is the precedent that exists in the country for charges of “inciting subversion of state power” and “Picking quarrels and provoking trouble” being levelled against human rights activists, carrying sentences of up to five years⁴⁵⁴.

⁴⁵⁴ “China: Subversion Charges Target Lawyers,” Human Rights Watch, October 28, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/14/china-subversion-charges-target-lawyers>.

It is not difficult to see then, how organising and mobilising around issues inseparable from human rights such as racism and discrimination in the country can be dangerous.

In a recent case, labour activist Wang Jianbing and journalist and Me Too campaigner Sophia Huang were arrested and charged for their involvement in weekly private meetups at Wang's house where they discussed challenges faced by activists and civil society in China.⁴⁵⁵ The pair have not been seen since.

This atmosphere of fear seems to have been heightened even further by the testimonies of some Africans during the Guangzhou incidents.

Buzzfeed News reporters spoke to multiple Africans who said they'd received visits from police after posting videos online about racism being faced by Africans in China. A Ugandan woman interviewed recalled police warning: "We have to work with [the authorities] — if not, we'll not be nice"⁴⁵⁶.

In another instance, the Black American media platform Atlanta Black Star were sent a video by a Ugandan man who managed to secretly film himself being interrogated by Chinese police again for posting online:

"Daniel, who's using an alias to protect his identity, told Atlanta Black Star exclusively that Chinese police arrived at his home Thursday requesting his documents and the names of everyone he knows in Guangzhou. He was asked to explain his relationship with Ugandan politician and activist Bobi Wine, who's working closely with Atlanta Black Star CEO Neil Nelson to airlift those impacted by racism in China back to their home countries"⁴⁵⁷.

⁴⁵⁵ "CHINA: Activists Charged with Subversion," Amnesty International, May 27, 2022, accessed October 30, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.ca/ua-urgent-action/china-activists-charged-with-subversion/>.

⁴⁵⁶ Lester Feder, "This Woman Got A Visit From The Police After Posting A Video About Racism In China," BuzzFeed News, April 29, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/china-racism-africa-coronavirus>.

⁴⁵⁷ Tracy T., "Exclusive: Ugandan Businessman Secretly Records Chinese Officials Interrogating Him About Anyone He Knows In Guangzhou Region Where Black People Are Facing Discrimination," Atlanta Black Star, April 24, 2020, <https://atlantablackstar.com/2020/04/24/exclusive-ugandan-businessman-secretly-records-chinese-officials-interrogating-him-about-anyone-he-knows-in-guangzhou-region-where-black-people-are-facing-discrimination/>.

Even Ghanaian YouTuber Wodemaya has reported being contacted and warned to take down his videos critical of racism in China, despite no longer living in the country. During a Twitter Space held by BBC News Africa following the release of *Racism For Sale*, he recalled receiving a frenzied phone call from an old professor in China, stating he would be detained at the police station until Wodemaya deleted the videos in question.

This environment puts Africans in China, and the organisations and leaders that seek to advocate on their behalf in a very difficult position. Adopt tried and tested, but risky techniques, or play it safe and lobby decision makers to do their bidding instead?

In her personal capacity, ADiC Net committee member Dr Samantha Sibanda once led the charge to get a viral ‘racist’ exhibition in Wuhan, China removed.

The 2017 exhibition infamously featured the faces of Black Africans juxtaposed next to images of monkeys and other animals as part of a photo collection titled 相由心生 xiāng yóu xīn sheng – “outward appearance follows inner reality”. On seeing it, Sibanda and others mobilised to call the exhibition out on social media, leading to the exhibition’s removal. However, neither the museum hosting the exhibition or the photographers made an apology. Sibanda then took to the net to announce a petition and arranged a meeting with the photographers. She flew from Beijing to Wuhan to meet them face to face. It took two days of back and forth, but she managed to secure a written apology, much to the excitement of many in the African community.⁴⁵⁸

While this initiative was successful in its objectives and didn’t seem to put its initiators in any danger six years ago, it is unclear whether today such an initiative would take off in same way at least in part because of this atmosphere of fear.

One Ugandan man interviewed at the time of the Guangzhou incidents summarises this sentiment:

⁴⁵⁸ Kyle Mullin, “Photographers of Racially Charged Wuhan Exhibit Apologize After Meeting With Beijing-Based Activist,” *The Beijinger*, November 2017, accessed November 18, 2022, <https://www.thebeijinger.com/blog/2017/11/01/photographer-racially-charged-wuhan-photo-exhibit-apologizes-after-meeting-beijing>.

“You’re supposed to just stay in their lane. You’re not supposed to speak up if you’re violated in any way.”⁴⁵⁹”

Africa-based CSOs and responses to racism

Africa-based CSOs also reacted to events in Guangzhou. For example, a collective of over 300 CSOs and human right groups plus 1,800 activists from across Africa mobilised to write an “Open letter on the Xenophobic, racist and inhuman treatment of Africans in China”, calling out “these despicable events and other recurrent complaints regarding illicit activities by Chinese businesses in Africa.” Addressed to the African Union, and covered widely in the press, the letter demanded that a framework of cooperation be formed to “establish clear standards of mutual accountability” between China and Africa, “with active participation of African citizens.”⁴⁶⁰

It continued that “the participation of African people in defining the framework of partnership will ensure that going forward China-Africa partnership has a human face and is reflected in Chinese business conduct in Africa and our mutual solidarity is also a reality reflected on the streets of Chinese cities and provinces... We believe that without strong mutual accountability frameworks, the message of solidarity preached by China towards Africans, will ring hollow.”⁴⁶¹

There is a notable difference here. In the case of ADiC Net, it was left to African decision makers to decide on their course of action based on the evidence gathered by the organisation. This subsequently resulted in the letter mentioned earlier. Here, amongst Africa-based CSOs, a different approach is taken – a letter in their own names addressed to African decision makers encouraging several key actions.

Beyond Guangzhou, in the aftermath of the BBC Africa Eye investigation Racism for Sale, Malawian CSO University of Malawi Child Rights Legal Clinic organised a protest. Activists

⁴⁵⁹ Feder, “This Woman Got A Visit From The Police After Posting A Video About Racism In China.”

⁴⁶⁰ Open Letter on the Xenophobic, Racist and Inhuman Treatment of Africans in China - DefendDefenders,” DefendDefenders - East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, April 16, 2020, <https://defenddefenders.org/open-letter-on-the-xenophobic-racist-and-inhuman-treatment-of-africans-in-china/>.

⁴⁶¹ Open Letter on the Xenophobic, Racist and Inhuman Treatment of Africans in China - DefendDefenders.”

marched from the village the racist video that sparked the investigation was filmed in, all the way to the Chinese embassy. On arrival they presented a representative of the Chinese embassy with a petition of demands ranging from compensation for the victims to ensure a trial for the alleged racist video maker in a Malawian court.⁴⁶²

They since have also floated the idea of local government visiting rural areas of the country teaching the most vulnerable local people their rights vis a vis racial discrimination as a strategy to prevent this type of racism from rearing its head again.

These African-based and China-based CSO navigate markedly different terrains, and as a remedy to the challenges faced in doing their work in both, it is perhaps necessary to consider how better pipelines of communication between these counterparts could help mitigate some of this risk and establish multipronged approaches to the problem at hand.

Sustainability

Though the Guangzhou Incidents saw positive examples of these CSO leaders leveraging their governments in the fight against racism, on reflection Justina notes that this action is yet to lead to the installation of a permanent strategy to deal with such issues as they arise – this raises questions around the sustainability of the current working model for these organisations.

The perception amongst all participants was that most Africans they encountered did not intend on staying in China forever, and desired to go home eventually. This raised the question of sustainability, as typically these CSOs are run by a handful of passionate volunteers who are often spread thin across several organisations or commitments.

Besides heading up ADiCNet for example, Justina, is also an advisor for the Africa - China Leadership platform (ACL), Pioneer Acting President of Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO), ambassador of the African Youth Diaspora Organization (AYDO) and a PhD candidate.

⁴⁶² Owen Khamulo, “Protesters Hit LiLongwe Streets over Susu,” Malawi Nyasa Times - News From Malawi About Malawi, June 21, 2022, <https://www.nyasatimes.com/protesters-hit-lilongwe-streets-over-susu/>.

Similarly, outside of his role at CAYF, Joseph is President of ACL, head delegation of the African youth in China and is often invited as a commentator on CGTN.

This can cause fatigue amongst leaders who both passionately believe in the objectives of their organisations, but also recognise the challenge they face in taking on so much in their individual capacities. This over reliance on them as individuals can also mean that once they leave, new leaders then have to forge relationships with officials and embassies from scratch and start the ‘foundation-setting’ and legitimisation process outlined earlier in this section from the beginning.

With much of the infrastructure built around a few crucial people, there can sometimes be fears that everything could crumble should they leave. Justina expressed a fear that when all members of their present working committee inevitably leave China, with no funding or otherwise substantial support from African governments, the progress the organisations make in advocating for these issues can be lost or even reversed.

For this reason, amongst others, both DUAPA Africa and the CAYF hoped to expand the remit of their work to their respective countries of origin over time so as to ensure their continuation. Joseph defines sustainability in this regard as “when I am able to bring what I set up here back home”. DUAPA have successfully achieved this change, with Musa now fulfilling his duties from Ghana, but Joseph found the lack of ‘follow-up mechanism’ or network for African graduates of Chinese universities to be a barrier to building such communities at home. Joseph, who himself studied up to PhD level in China, spoke of the USA’s YALI initiative as an example of such a mechanism.⁴⁶³ Such networks identify other Africans with similar skills, interests or backgrounds, in this instance interest/experience of China, and are useful for building teams in new locations to continue the CSOs work.

This could be resolved, at least partially, if another challenge mentioned throughout this paper is addressed – funding.

⁴⁶³ “Young African Leaders Initiative |,” U.S. Agency For International Development, n.d., <https://www.usaid.gov/yali>.

Financial support

A theme amongst all participants was that embassies were more than willing to offer verbal and physical support to their CSOs, but did not offer, or perhaps could not offer financial support. While there were expressions of gratitude and recognition of the benefit of this verbal support, as detailed earlier in this section, all participants felt that the lack of financial support was stunting their ability to advocate on their communities' behalf to the maximum of their ability. Musa reflected that this should be a takeaway for African governments more generally, "most [funding] goes to trade, but a lot should go to people-to-people initiatives."

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

This final section of the paper structures the findings from these interviews into key recommendations for:

- A)** Africa-based, and/or China-based CSOs representing the interests of Africans as it pertains to China and Chinese actors, and
- B)** Decision makers with power to influence the integration of racial questions in Africa-China relations.

Capacity building:

The overarching theme for many of the author's recommendations in this section is capacity building. The information and knowledge gap amongst African actors about China and the experiences of ordinary Africans in China is hampering African actors, state or community level, from having the resources to adequately address racial issues. Racial dynamics that play out in China can equally, and have already in some instances, manifested in African contexts too, making this in the interest of all actors. Thus, this paper contends that there is a desperate need to build capacity to address these issues in the following ways.

A + B) African decision makers and those in government harness a power that small scale organisations rarely do. What those who operate at the higher-level may lack in community insight and awareness of what happens on the ground, they have in insight into how to escalate issues at the diplomatic level. The development of a sturdier, more defined framework for cooperation between CSOs and decision makers is a necessity for the successful and continued integration of racial issues into Africa-China government relations.

This could take many forms, but this paper proposes the following:

B) At the beginning of this paper the author highlighted the size of the African student population in China. When returning home, these students still possess cultural and other first-hand insight into the country, its way of working and what it is like to exist as an African in Chinese spaces. This is a human resource African decision-makers could tap into and incorporate in the decision-making process, in this case on questions of race and discrimination. These students can also serve as liaison officers or points of contact for CSOs to communicate community issues including sensitive issues to government, which can then be condensed and presented to decision makers in a digestible format. African countries with established China Alumni networks are already well-placed to do this. In Rwanda the Rwanda China Alumni Organization (RCAO) states it is a Non-Governmental, Non-political Organization founded by former graduates from China. While at present, it describes one of its core objectives as “providing skilled labors on the Rwandan market for Chinese investors”, such a body could also be a starting point to exploring the creation of liaison mechanisms. In Ghana, there’s a Mofcom Scholars Alumni Association of Ghana (Mosaag), a body Musa, interviewed as part of this paper sits on. The opportunity is there, and this suggestion is with the aim of building a better knowledge pipeline and challenging the disconnect that exists between ordinary Africans and their ambassadors or official government representatives.

(A) China-based organisations such as those highlighted in this paper and their African CSO counterparts at home would do well to forge ties with each other, linking issues of racism in China to manifestations of it at home will likely help make a stronger case for the creation of long-term government strategy to tackle it. Additionally, while methods may

differ, these organisations may find cross over in their goals and find ways to collaborate that help, not hinder both.

Visibility/Accessibility

A) While there is an expectation that governments and decision makers play a greater role in leading the drive to understand issues such as these that impact their citizens CSOs can facilitate this process by making their own findings and on-the-ground knowledge most accessible. ADiCNet radio is a good example of this, but the author recommends increasing the visibility of such initiatives to lower barriers to accessing and understanding ongoing issues.

Provide financial backing mechanisms

B) While African CSOs in China find ways to advocate for an end to racism and discrimination in Africa-China relations through their own initiatives, they lack the financial backing to build these models to a scale that could reach and impact the Africa-China relationship overall. All participants felt that this was the leading factor in the asymmetry in Africa-China people to people relations, contributing to the proliferation of issues of race and prejudice in Africa-China interactions. Thus, this is where there is room for increased collaboration between decision makers and those working on the ground.

African decision makers should build capacity to develop funding specifically for people-to-people initiatives. Making a financial commitment of this kind does not need to mean reinventing the wheel or completely starting initiatives of this kind from scratch. Through collaboration, they can scale pre-existing efforts, or work with active CSOs to reformulate existing CSO-led offerings.

Groups such as those surveyed and highlighted earlier in this paper are doing such work already.

Equally, beyond financial commitments, decision makers must make a time/effort commitment to these issues by engaging CSOs and their communities proactively. African organisations with limited resources are creating publicly available resources to allow those interested to tap into what

is happening at a community level – ADiCNET radio is one example of an initiative, freely accessible online.

While there should be private mechanisms to share sensitive community issues between CSOs and their government representatives, as recommended above in the form of liaison officers, government level leaders should also find ways to proactively keep an ear to their community. This, the author contends, should form part of a long-term strategy to keep issues of racism part of the agenda.

Research

A + B) More research must be done on the experiences of ordinary Africans in Chinese spaces. In the student context, the educational outcomes of African graduates of Chinese universities remain understudied and there are no wide-scale student satisfaction surveys to assess these experiences. Similarly, quantitative research on the experiences of Africans and people of African descent in China as it pertains to their race or ethnic background is scarce. Using the Guangzhou incidents as example, the author contends that the proliferation of evidence and data around these matters can support calls for their greater integration into Africa-China negotiations. This can be done collaboratively between relevant CSOs with government backing, or CSOs could also conduct such research themselves and present their findings to those with decision making power to act on them.

Incentivisation

A) There's another way research can support calls for the greater integration of racism into Africa-China negotiations. In an article on instances of racism towards Africans at home, Dr Steve Tsang, Director of the SOAS China Institute makes the point that he believes "China's governing elite does not really have a strong incentive to deal with bad behavior of citizens. They leave that to the African authorities."⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶⁴ Martina Schwikowski, "The Racist Face of the Chinese Presence in Africa," Dw.Com, November 9, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/the-racist-face-of-the-chinese-presence-in-africa/a-46223068>.

The reader is left wondering: What might incentivise Chinese decision makers to take action?

Emmanuel John Hevi's words from over fifty years ago may contain some answers. In *An African in China*, quoted at the top of this paper, Hevi writes on African students' decision to leave China due to racism and other factors in the 60s: "the Chinese realised, as we also did, that every student returning home in disillusionment constituted an argument against China."⁴⁶⁵

The answer - Reputational damage

Far from an act of charity towards Africans, the eradication of racism in Africa-China interactions is of benefit to China and its reputation too and should be marketed as such.

With the rise of social media and citizen journalism, the impact of a single student returning would be greatly amplified by a message online about these experiences.

Research on the impact of African twitter commentary during the Guangzhou incidents shows that "the impact of global Twitter, and the international coverage of these events posted online, not only empowered the Black community but influenced African perceptions of China and its contemporary role in Africa."⁴⁶⁶

The occurrence of acts of racism like in Guangzhou are in nobody's favour, and as this study shows when news of them spread, they negatively influence African views on China.

Some CSOs engage in citizen journalism themselves to this end, or engage other platforms to build awareness of their issues. And while this paper acknowledges such strategies may not be appropriate for China-based or government-affiliated CSOs, those that do fall in this category may want to consider how partnering with CSOs who do find such strategies within their remit could help with such incentivisation. Ultimately, these are just different routes to advance the same cause.

⁴⁶⁵ Hevi, *An African Student in China*.

⁴⁶⁶ Anwar Ouassini, Mostafa Amini, and Nabil Ouassini, "#ChinaMustexplain: Global Tweets, COVID-19, and Anti-Black Racism in China," *The Review of Black Political Economy* 49, no. 1 (March 3, 2021): 61–76, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034644621992687>.

Advocate for long term strategy

A + B) Both CSOs and African decision makers need to collaborate towards longer term strategies to challenge racism and discrimination. This should change the over-reliance on reactionary one-off initiatives to combat these issues. Instead, off the back of evidence gathered by African CSOs, decision makers can lobby their Chinese counterparts to institute more robust mechanisms and long-term country-wide initiatives with a view to eliminate racial discrimination, instead of tackling individual high-profile instances as and when they occur.

An example of this would be lobbying Chinese decision makers to incorporate racial diversity studies in the Chinese education system, a sign of China's commitment to Africa-China brotherhood at all levels of society.

As highlighted previously in this paper, racist narratives allowed to proliferate on social media, the lack of anti-racist education and lack of exposure to Africans and people of other heritage are all contributing factors to racism in China or in Chinese interactions elsewhere.

The Anti-Bias curriculum is used in children's education and acknowledges the different sources children develop their ideas about race and identify from. It is "an active process, using these outlets to foster exposure and later conversations about differences, diversity and, as the child develops, a sense of self."⁴⁶⁷ Such a curriculum could be adapted for China and rolled out in classrooms across the country.

The other side to this could be lobbying Chinese decision makers to implement legally-binding deterrents for acts of discrimination. The country has previously made provisions for entire advertising campaigns about the illegality of wildlife smuggling to be placed in public places such as train stations with strongly worded reminders that such behaviour will be punished. What deterrents exist around racial discrimination, racial violence and the like?

⁴⁶⁷ "The Importance of Promoting Diversity in Early Childhood Programs | The Infant Crier," n.d., <https://infanterrier.mi-aimh.org/the-importance-of-promoting-diversity-in-early-childhood-programs/>.

African governments and decision makers at this level are well-placed to match the efforts of CSOs by developing strong mechanisms to communicate on the ground issues to their Chinese counterparts and see that they manifest in the form of real sustainable strategy to bring about change.



7.0 CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that the brotherhood discourse used in Africa-China relations must reflect realities of the relations between ordinary Africans and Chinese citizens on the ground.

It ultimately recommends that African decision makers lobby their Chinese counterparts to invest in new, long terms initiatives to tackle racism, with full awareness that this is in China's best interests too. A better mechanism for cooperation between Africa-based CSOs and African decision makers to help in information sharing and solution building must also be built. It also recommends the conducting of more research as a way to support calls for the greater integration of racial issues into Africa-China negotiations.

Where there exists a discrepancy between the diplomatic narrative and the actual lived experiences of Africans, African decision makers must combine efforts with CSOs in efforts to bring the two in line. Government level leaders are in the best position to use community insights garnered from their collaboration to both support CSO initiatives and lobby their Chinese counterparts on the integration of racial issues, leading to long term, sustainable solutions.

The author also acknowledges the limitations of this research and posits that future research should be conducted in this area with an aim to understand the unique challenges faced by non-diaspora CSOs based in African countries who do similar work, and on how racial issues impact Africans 'at home' in the Africa-China governmental context.

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Annex A

Name of interviewee and position	Objectives	Activities & membership
<p>Barr. Justina Ajala (President, ADiCNet African Diaspora in China Network) (Greater China-wide)</p>	<p>For collaboration with the African Union and its intergovernmental council to ensure that identified projects by members of the African Diaspora in the China aligns with African development agenda.</p> <p>1. What can we do to help build a bridge between motherland Africa and our countries of residence with a view to foster creation of, and enable environments which nurture creativity and intellectual growth on the African continent?</p> <p>2. How can we use our skills and, especially networks, to foster leading lights on the continent to spearhead</p>	<p>ADiCNet Radio:</p> <p>ADiC Net radio is poised to bring the best in music, talk shows, news, sports, current affairs and business analysis etc. Our vision is to tell the beautiful stories of Africa from the point of Africans in China to change the negative narrative. We believe we can make a positive impact through the radio and spread the good of Africa.</p> <p>Membership: over 800 members, mainly gathered via WeChat and Telegram. 42 African countries and 9 countries of the sixth region of the African Union (diaspora) represented.</p>

	<p>sustainable growth and improve the standard of living of our brothers and sisters in Africa?</p> <p>3. How can we ensure that such efforts are strategically and equitably distributed to benefit the whole of Africa? Our united voices paint a picture of what we desire for ourselves, for future generations and the continent.</p>	
<p>Joseph Olivier Mendo'o (Co-founder China Africa Youth Federation - Beijing, registered in South Sudan, Kenya)</p>	<p>A platform for communication and friendly consultation among the youth engaged in economy, culture, education, and other areas.</p> <p>Where African and Chinese can come together, try to understand each other try to write new narratives.</p>	<p>Membership organisation representing young Africans and young Chinese – its membership includes young entrepreneurs and the heads of student unions for more than 40 african countries in China. Representatives “from almost every major Chinese city”</p> <p>Activities:</p> <p>Embassy visits</p> <p>Visits to African countries for exposure</p> <p>Workshops in rural areas on African cultures, traditions and diversity</p>

<p>Musa Frimpong (Founder) DUAPA Africa (Ghana, Beijing)</p>	<p>A platform driving the socioeconomic transformation and sustainable development of Africa and the world through innovative solutions.</p>	<p>DUAPA doesn't have a formal registration process, but works with a small volunteer team who execute their main programmes.</p> <p>DuapaAfrica Magazine - dedicated to authentic African content in the areas of trade, investment, culture, tourism, technology, innovation, startups, talent, governance, education sports and all things positive about #Africa.</p> <p>Other activities include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - China-Africa career and employment bootcamp <p>#AfcFTGhanaConnect – a networking programme for young Africans interested in the AFCFTA.</p>
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