

China's increasing participation in Africa's development process during the last three decades: A Development partner or a neo-colonizing power?

Kossi Hyacinthe Boko
PhD Student in International Management
Department of Management
Faculty of Administration Sciences
Laval University
E-mail: kossi-hyacinthe.boko.1@ulaval.ca

ABSTRACT

We investigate if China's participation in Africa's development in the last three decades is a development partnership or a neo-colonialism. Starting from the definition of neo-colonialism and its usual manifestations, we compared them to China's presence in Africa through trade, investments, demography, and politics before concluding that it is much more a development partnership than a neo-colonization. China had no formal colonies in Africa, and its current interventions are being done through its soft power. China's trade partnerships, investments, donations, and infrastructure development in Africa contribute to the development of many African countries, and they have strong political relations with many African countries. Despite such strong relationships between the two partners, many critiques of the Chinese development model in Africa exist. However, there are insufficient reasons to qualify the relationship between China and Africa as a neo-colonial type of partnership. China is the largest trading partner and investor in Africa. Most Africans appreciate China's influence well and aspire to follow the Chinese development pathways.

1. INTRODUCTION

“We cannot speak of Chinese colonialism; on the other hand, it is possible to say that it is today developing a form of economic imperialism. What is certain is that it is a developing hegemony” (Jean-Pierre Cabestan, 2021).

This quote clearly shows that the Sino-African relationship is ambiguous. Before asserting that this relationship is neocolonial, it is appropriate to delimit the contours of this term and, thus, be interested in knowing whether we find manifestations of neocolonialism in the Sino-African relationship. This study highlights the plurality of Chinese geopolitical issues and the actors integrated into this global China-Africa partnership. From development aid to trade to investments through diplomatic partnerships, it will be interesting to understand the power games of a pragmatic Chinese power. At this point, one question remains unanswered. Before addressing this Sino-African cooperation, the pillar or general analytical base of this analysis, it seems necessary to ask and respond to this essential question: why Africa? When we raise this issue, we seek to know what China wants from Africa rather than what China can do for Africa. A port in Madagascar, a train line in Kenya, an aerial metro in Ethiopia... Each time, China is at the financial initiative for these infrastructures. Objectively and initially, the Chinese interest in Africa remains strategic. Africa has undeniable Political, geographical, and economic advantages. There are several arguments to legitimize the increasing presence of China in the African economy, trade, geopolitics, and society. To begin with, political issues pushed China to have allies on the international scene. The China-Africa alliance allows the People's Republic of China (PRC) to gain recognition at the UN as the only representative of greater China, including Taiwan (Republic of China), to be recognized Beijing as China's representative at the UN, thanks to the vote of 53 African states (Schirer & Balluffier, 2019).

Then, African natural resources and soil are full of exploitable raw materials, which China needs to improve. 85% of African exports are oils and minerals or others. Conversely, 85% of Chinese exports to Africa are manufactured goods. Also, it is a question of how trade with Africa can increase these economic advantages. The idea is to insert this part of the world into the global value chains. Only 5% of Chinese trade was destined for Africa (Shinn, 2017). Finally, China wants to ensure stability in terms of security, which aligns with its desire to grow its trade. If this geographic area is not secure, all efforts to increase its global trade will be reduced to ashes. The objective is to counter any possible pirate, terrorist, criminal, or even illegal trafficking attacks—very simply, anything that could harm China and its business activities.

In this regard, the opening of the continent, in general, makes it possible to evoke this new phase of African globalization driven by trade, investments, and political relations between Beijing and Africa. Although the weight of economics on politics is not the angle sought, it is omnipresent. Our analysis will determine whether China's presence in Africa resembles neocolonialism. To achieve this, we will study neocolonialism from a literary perspective.

2. NEO-COLONIALISM

Neo-colonialism is a soft form of colonialism in a theoretically independent country. It is characterized by the presence of foreign military bases and metropolitan companies, a monetary policy confiscated under humanitarian and democratic pretexts.

2.1 Conceptual understanding of neo-colonialism

Jean-Paul Sartre coined the term neocolonialism in 1956: "an imperialist policy carried out by a former colonial power towards its former colony, using various methods of influence and domination, in his interest and that of his companies." This presupposes the existence of an old colonization relationship between a former colonizer (metropolis) and its ex-colony with an imperialist desire to maintain the latter under a certain domination. Therefore, it seems risky to conclude that the Chinese presence in Africa is a neo-colonization, given that China is present in several African countries that have never been its colonies, even if the connotation of imperialism and the influence goes without saying. This is why Lumumba-Kasongo (2011) states that "*Neo-imperialism and neocolonialism require new interpretations of old doctrines in new contexts and with different actors. Their meaning is generally still anchored in old European historical configuration*".

However, comparing the manifestations of neo-colonialism to the manifestations of the Chinese presence in Africa will allow us to know whether it would not be possible to relativize or update the concept of neo-colonialism despite the non-existence of former Chinese colonies in Africa to describe Chinese imperialism on the black continent better. We can take a second approach by starting from the more anchored definition of colonialism. In a strict sense, colonialism refers to an ideology advocating the exploitation by political power of territories not integrated into its national space and considered underdeveloped (economically, technologically, and culturally (Avenue, 2021).

Neocolonialism is often used to denounce colonialism's maintenance or return. It is essential to distinguish this situation from post-colonial theoretical approaches. The term “neocolonialism” is rarely positive and is often used to describe a desire for imposed (colonial) domination. History has shown us that language, currency, economy, or even governance are axes on which colonialism has an effect. More generally, neo-colonialism can designate any domination exercised by one territory over another outside of former colonial ties. It is associated with a critique of American imperialism, which can be considered a model since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991 and the end of communism. Initially designating a geopolitical relationship of “North-South” domination, it applies to “South-South” partnerships today. The roles played by China in Africa, and nowadays by Russia, are sometimes described as neocolonialism: the term *Chinafrique* is now commonly used (A.Gascon, 2022).

2.2 Illustrations of neocolonialism in general

Most of the independence obtained in African countries in the 1960s is seen as negotiated and not forced departures of the colonizer, who often finds it difficult to abandon the numerous advantages to which he was entitled during the colonial period. What follows is neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism, which are only slightly milder forms. Foreign military presence, control of the economy through foreign companies, exploitation of the country's resources, control of heads of state, and control of the currency are all means used by the neo-colonizer to maintain its hegemony in Africa.

2.2.1 Humanitarian and democratic pretexts to maintain military control.

The military control, which was used through the 3M system (Missionaries, Merchants, and Military/Soldiers) ceased in its initial form in the eyes of the world to give rise to a hypocritical form using pretexts such as the fight against terrorism, protection of civil rights or the defense of democracy, the protection of accredited diplomatic missions, the monitoring of elections, the fight against coups d'état, etc. This military presence, which involves the installation of military bases, is increasingly denounced by young people who support national armies. Mali, Burkina Faso, and recently Niger are eloquent examples. After a decade of fighting against terrorism in the Sahel, foreign military bases have lost respect and credibility among citizens. Although China does not have a colony in Africa, it installed a military base in Djibouti as did many former colonial and other powers : France (Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon), Germany (Niger), India (Madagascar), etc.

2.2.2 Foreign companies and exploitation of natural resources

Offshore installations are built to take advantage of labor at lower costs and raw materials almost free of charge, with the complicity of certain leaders who are sometimes corrupt or concerned about protection. The concern to protect democracy, which supports the presence of military bases, is no longer valid, causing constitutional coups in Côte d'Ivoire, Tchad, or Guinea.

2.2.3 Entering business deals with certain unorthodox or corrupt leaders.

Several assassinations of Heads of State took place after independence: the Case of Togo (Sylvanus Olympio was murdered), Burkina Faso (Thomas Sankara), Côte d'Ivoire (Laurent GBAGBO expelled by the French army before being acquitted by the ICC after ten years in prison). These situations explain certain African leaders' constraints in accepting the metropolis's demands for fear of coups d'état organized by the latter. Some must pledge allegiance to the Metropolitan President at the very beginning of their mandate. Fortunately, African youth are making sure not to repeat the same mistakes.

2.2.4 A monetary policy focused on debt and control of the currency of African countries: Case of the FCFA.

Loans and development aid are subject to constraints that do not always suit African countries. The structural adjustment programs to which they were subjected by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund only sometimes met the countries' needs.

“Some critics point out that neocolonialism allows international organizations, such as the WB, to control and exploit (usually) less developed countries (LDCs) by maintaining their debt. Third-world leaders grant concessions and monopolies to foreign corporations in exchange for consolidating their personal power and bribes. In most cases, much of the money lent to these LDCs is returned to favored foreign companies. So, these foreign loans would be subsidies to companies that are friendly with the leaders of the borrowing state”. (accessed on February 27, 2024, at

<https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C3%A9ocolonialisme>). The foreign exchange reserves of African countries that use the CFA Franc are kept with the French treasury. According to political activists, the monetary issue of this same currency, which nevertheless has a central bank, is carried out outside Africa. Do these neocolonial realities apply to China's presence in Africa?

3. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CHINESE PRESENCE IN AFRICA

The Chinese presence in Africa began in the middle of the 20th century and is experiencing significant growth in trade, investments, development aid, and demographics.

3.1 Historical reminder

Since 1955, the Chinese presence has been discreet. The first Sino-African meetings occurred in Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Ghana, Zambia, and Liberia. The particular position of China as an economic power of international stature and a third-world country leads George Friedman to say that China is “a great third-world country. This economic power must be put into perspective; when we deepen the analysis, we see that China is ranked 2nd in the world for its gross domestic product (GDP) but 115th for its human development index (HDI) in 2018. China is officially a developing country with great inequality.

In 1960, an African section in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was created. This is the beginning of the affirmation of Chinese political intentions towards Africa. That same year, Sékou Touré was the first African leader to make an official visit to China. In the 70s and 80s, cooperation projects (agriculture, education, health, infrastructure) saw the light of day. Capitalist logic, political desires, and economic interests are pushing the China and Africa relationship to become denser. The illustration of this relationship is the creation of the TAZARA (Tanzania-Zambia Railway). On behalf of friendship between peoples and solidarity with anti-colonialist and socialist friends, China is deploying a political showcase in Africa made of great achievements: presidential palaces, stadiums, new roads, and oil pipelines. Among these major projects, the most spectacular and politically significant is constructing the railway line linking Tanzania to Zambia.

Since the 1990s, the first Forum on *China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)* was established and held in Beijing in 2000, bringing together 52 African presidents. This forum is held alternately in China and Africa every three years, and it has grown. In 2015, President Xi Jinping presented ten major cooperation projects with Africa, making it possible to integrate the continent into Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects and thus give them greater scale and visibility.

3.2 The presence of the Chinese in Africa and land grabbing.

The information on Chinese men and women living in Africa must be more precise. According to a publication dated February 20, 2020, there are an estimated 1 million Chinese in Africa out of 80 to 100

million worldwide. Five years earlier, according to a publication dated February 3, 2015, they were estimated to be between 500,000 and 1 million people.

This large number of Chinese people implies the need for massive purchases of African land. Indeed, “22% of the world's population is Chinese and only has 7% of arable land. In 2007, the Export-Import Bank of China director encouraged landless Chinese farmers to settle in Africa. “Chinese land acquisitions represent **290,000 hectares, or** 15 times less than the United States, 6 times less than the United Kingdom” (land matrix database); in countries such as Benin, Mali, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania , Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, etc. In Cameroon, the State ceded 10,000 ha to Sino Cam Inko. Other Western powers have acquired more. It is, therefore, too early to speak of neo-colonization on this basis. These agricultural products grown on African lands could have guaranteed food self-sufficiency, but there is no certainty that they are not only intended for the Chinese market.

3.3 Chinese workers in Africa.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, Africa had 195,716 Chinese workers on the continent at the end of 2009. This number increased in 2010 to 202,604 before falling to 181,029 in 2011. A gradual increase marked the period from 2011 to 2015, the peak year which brought the population of Chinese workers in Africa to 263,659 people. Curiously, this population has decreased since 2016, going from 227,407 to 93,526 in 2021. This drastic decline raises a certain number of questions. Project workers are also counted there. A reduction in projects in Africa would undoubtedly lead to a reduction in the number of Chinese workers on these projects and, therefore, the overall number. In addition, would the Coronavirus pandemic that spread from China in 2019 to the whole world impact the acceptance of Chinese workers in African countries?

3.4 Trade

Trade between China and Africa has seen significant growth in recent years and concerns both raw materials and manufactured products, as shown by Chinese customs and UN Comtrade data.

3.4.1 Data from Chinese Customs on China-Africa Trade

According to Chinese customs statistics cited by Agency Ecofin (<https://www.agenceecofin.com>), China is Africa's largest bilateral trading partner. From 254 billion USD in bilateral trade in 2021, the year 2022 was marked by an increase of 11% to reach 282 billion USD. According to the same source, African

imports from China amount to 164.49 billion USD, while African exports to China amount to 117.51 billion USD in 2022, which mentions that South Africa is the first China trading partner with trade of USD 56.74 billion in 2022. China mainly exports finished products to Africa (textiles/clothing, machinery, electronics, etc.), while African exports to China are dominated by raw materials such as crude oil, copper, cobalt, and iron ore, resulting in a trade surplus in favor of China. Numerous economic challenges are even more serious when you are at the head of a country. These aggregate data from Chinese customs sources differ somewhat from data obtained from other sources, but they all agree to confirm the truth that China is Africa's largest trading partner.

Table 1: Trade between China and Africa	
	Year 2022
bilateral trade (billion USD)	282
African imports from China (billion USD)	164.49
African exports to China ((billion USD)	117.51
South Africa trade with China (billion USD)	56.74

Source: Chinese Customs

3.4.2 Data from UN Comtrade on China-Africa Trade

UN Comtrade database (<https://comtradeplus.un.org>) shows that from 2002 to 2022, China exported to Africa a total of USD 1,612 billion for 54 countries, an average of USD 30 billion per country compared to USD 514 billion for the United States. The first fourteen countries receiving the most Chinese exports are above the average of 30 billion dollars. These are South Africa (248), Nigeria (205), Egypt (20), Algeria (98), Ghana (72), Kenya (68), Morocco (59), Tanzania (52), Liberia (49), Angola (47), Ethiopia (44), Benin (39), Togo (35) and Libya (30). This means that 40 African countries receive Chinese exports below the mean. Among the latter, only 15 see their imports from China varying between 10 and 27 billion US dollars. The remaining 25 countries do not reach 10 billion US dollars, and their amounts range from 0.33 to 9.58 billion dollars over the entire period from 2002 to 2022.

China's imports from Africa amounted to USD 1123 billion between 2002 and 2022, compared to USD 1017 billion for the United States over the same period. The average Chinese imports from African countries are USD 21 billion per country, compared to USD 19 billion for the United States. Although the US presence in Africa dates back much longer than the Chinese presence, China imports more from Africa than the United States. Whether it is China or the USA, they all mainly import raw materials and export finished goods to Africa.

Comparing US trade relations with Africa to those of China with Africa in terms of cumulative imports and exports shows that until 2007, the United States of America traded with Africa more than China did. Despite the decline in these relations from 2008 to 2009, China remained above the USA in an upward curve before experiencing a new decline in 2015. Despite the declines observed in 2008, 2015, and 2020, the Chinese curve is above with an upward trend, while the American curve clearly shows a downward trend since 2018 with a timid recovery since 2021. This recovery is also observed in China, which has a significantly stronger rate of progression.

3.5 Chinese presence in Africa through investments

Several investments are made by China in Africa:

- Creation of 25 economic and commercial cooperation zones in 16 African countries
- 623 companies attracted to the areas. They invested USD 7.35 billion at the end of 2020 (see Annual Report on Economic and Trade Relations between China and Africa 2021)
- China holds 62.1% of sub-Saharan Africa's bilateral external debt in 2020, compared to 3.1% in 2000.

It should also be noted that Chinese companies and engineers execute infrastructure (roads, stadiums, hospitals, schools, etc.) founded by China in Africa. Almost all the equipment is imported from China. Local companies need markets entrusted to Chinese companies that recruit local workers who often complain of mistreatment. Importing Chinese equipment for work in Africa is simply an intelligent repatriation of resources to China, which impoverishes local producers of construction materials.

Regarding our subject, analyzing economic relations between China and Africa is extremely difficult to differentiate. Between public development assistance (ODA), foreign direct investment (FDI), and trade, we are faced, to a certain extent, with a form of complementarity of financing. Furthermore, we are unable to find sufficient data on these supports. China limits itself to announcing bilateral visits. To be more precise, behind the name "ODA," official development assistance is sometimes misused since China, as a donor, does not define its aid as ODA but prefers to use the terms “help” or “solidarity.” On

the other hand, and through our research, we found that according to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD DAC), ODA is defined as:

“All resource flows provided to countries and territories on the list of ODA recipients, or to multilateral institutions, and which meet the following criteria: i. Emanate from public bodies, including states and local authorities, or bodies acting on behalf of public bodies; and ii. Each operation must also: a) have the essential aim of promoting economic development and improving the standard of living of developing countries; and (b) be accompanied by favorable conditions and include a grant element of at least 25% (based on a discount rate of 10 percent)” (Official development assistance: definition and scope, OECD.org).

Another informative point regarding China's economic aspects is that this country is not a member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Therefore, it is not subject to any policy regarding tied aid. We recall that tied aid is a concept requiring compensation for the aid beneficiary. Thus, China can impose its groups and companies in bilateral cooperation agreements.

It is also necessary to briefly define investments and FDI. Direct investments abroad come from international firms or groups, i.e. multinationals. Public or private, the latter generally invest in a subsidiary and in a foreign territory – in the group's country of origin. For China, the difficulty lies as much in the definition of “public” as in “private” and thus in the exact origin of FDI. For simplicity, FDI is all investments made by Chinese companies and groups. Sino-African co-management is, therefore, partially integrated but sometimes dissociated since it represents full-fledged actors in the overall Sino-African relationship. Sometimes, Chinese investments are also put in quotation marks, implicitly indicating the difficulty of compartmentalizing ODA from FDI and vice versa. Even more, and bringing together all the "other" events between 1983 and July 2013 are donations, "solidarity" loans and concessional loans, agreements and Chinese public investments, partnerships, or conventions. These different elements of cooperation—for which the border between public and private is still vague and indistinguishable—total €246 million, or 2.05% of the total.

In short, African globalization is influenced by economic factors such as trade, investments, aid, and political relations. China is aware of these factors. However, it has thought of adding a special ingredient to build a Sino-African diplomatic relationship: *soft power* (Bénazéraf, 2014). Adapting to new conditions and new international challenges is the Chinese challenge. The French Institute of International Relations gives us a non-exhaustive definition of Chinese *soft power* as: “*all the non-*

coercive tools mobilized by the Chinese state and the actors under its direct control to serve the interests of China.” Thanks to this definition, we understand that China uses its position as a developing country and relies on the principle of South-South solidarity. We can talk about *soft power* as we could talk about an opportunistic approach to serve state interests, adding the dimension of cultural influence thanks to economic actors.

3.5.1 Chinese and US FDI according to UN Comtrade

Since 2012, Chinese direct investment flows abroad have exceeded American FDI flows. This also testifies to China's ever-growing interest in the country. From 2013 to 2021, the stock of Chinese FDI in Africa relates to sectors such as construction (31%), mining (24%), manufacturing (13%), financial intermediation (12%), Scientific and Technological Research Services (2%), rental and commercial services (3%) and others (15%) for a total of 354,601 million US dollars.

3.5.2 Chinese FDI is grouped by zone.

From 2003 to 2021, Africa benefited from only 3% of Chinese investments compared to 58% in Hong Kong, 11% in Cayman Islands, 8% in British Virgin Islands, and 21% elsewhere. According to data from the Ministry of Finance of China, Chinese aid has evolved upwards since 2003 before decreasing in 2016 to resume its evolutionary curve almost without decline until 2021.

US\$ bn unadjusted	2003 à 2021	%	2003	2021	Variation (%)
Africa	432,65	3%	0,49	44,19	8895%
Hong Kong	9949,69	58%	24,63	1549,66	6191%
Cayman Islands	1877,99	11%	3,69	229,53	6119%
British Virgin Islands	1345,07	8%	0,53	447,45	83906%
Other	3631,81	21%	3,88	514,33	13172%
World	17237,21	100%	33,22	2785,15	8283%

Source: UN Comtrade data from 1992 to2022

3.6 A political relationship or an egalitarian bilateral relationship

“The Sino-African relationship is characterized firstly by the Chinese desire to develop bilateral and multilateral relations (FOCAC): it is therefore “political”, because the decisions are mainly taken at the highest state level” (Aurégan, 2015).

Thus, “While China has provided African countries with much-needed financial support, it has also forged alliances with African countries that have questionable human rights records” (Oyewole, 2007).

- In 2004, China came to Sudan's rescue under US sanctions to save its 5% oil.
- In 2005, Robert Mugabe also benefited from support from China as he prepared for his elections after 25 years of dictatorship.

We would characterize this Africa-China partnership more as a bilateral relationship. Zambia proves to us that Africa is not in a position to submit to its Chinese partners. Indeed, on May 31, the Zambian Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) decided to ban all activities of the mining company Mwembeshi Resources (majority-owned by Hu Kaijun and stakeholders from the Chinese government). According to the Minister of Green Economy and Environment, Collins Nzovu, cited by *Reuters*, it violated certain environmental conditions which justified this order. This is not the first time an African government has acted against a mining company for violating environmental policy. We can cite the recent example of Namibia, which withdrew its lithium permit from a Chinese company in the Omaruru region for failure to comply with environmental preservation requirements and fraud in its permit application.

Conversely, a question remains unanswered. Is China taking up the Western-centric vision of Africa? Africa is a victim of false representations, poverty, human underdevelopment, unstable region, etc. We have an illustration of this trend with the logos and posters put up in the streets of Beijing just before the Sino Cooperation Forum -African (FOCAC) of 2006. A logo that subtly imposes a specific Chinese power both close to Africa and representing half of its surface area. Zebras, elephants, antelopes, and baobabs are the brand image of Africa observed by a Chinese couple in a street in Beijing between November 3 and 5, 2006. The giraffes in the setting sun would also be sellers... This tends to recall the former periods of colonization during which some metropolitans considered the inhabitants of the colonies to be less than human beings. The mentality that led to the slave trade continued. But would these images follow the same logic? Beyond this representation made in China, the ambassador's speech, Mr. Zhao Baozhen, suggested that these two states are on the same level. The objective is to have a "win-

win" relationship, establish a new international political and economic order, and ensure balanced and harmonious globalization that equitably benefits all countries (Aurégan, 2015).

3.7 A partnership that is not so “win-win.”

This partnership is not a win-win for all African countries: Some countries remain on the sidelines while others carry out valuable exports of oil, iron, manganese, cobalt, and logs or agricultural materials. These exports make it possible to obtain a profitable trade balance but in reality, it is mainly Sino-Algerian, Sino-Congolese, Sino-Angolan, and Sino-Sudanese trade. There are around ten African states which contribute to the balance of trade. However, West Africa has many disparities: Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Togo, and Senegal are largely in deficit, importing manufactured goods, textiles, or food products such as rice. According to an analysis by author Xavier Aurégan: “*Mauritania or Benin are the only ones to have a positive trade balance.*” Their exports include minerals, oil, fisheries resources, leather, and cotton. According to UN calculations, Benin is doing well with potential export outlets of \$74 billion.

Conversely, Nigeria, an oil-producing country, has no economic advantage. Its trade balance was the most unfavorable in the region, at 26 billion dollars from 1995 to 2009 (Auregan, 2012). This country has also suffered from a health crisis, leading to a serious shortage of foreign currencies and a devaluation since the COVID-19 pandemic (ONU, 2022). It should be noted that Nigeria remains the two main importing country with South Africa. Overall, 85% of trade with China is favorable in West Africa.

The idea of “globalization” will not affect all countries equally. Yves Lacoste said, “Globalization is also a Western way of representing the world: Europeans and Americans believe that globalization is already truly global». It would be an error to think that a Western model of globalization would be perfectly transferable to Africa.

4. AFRICANS’ PERCEPTION OF THE CHINESE PRESENCE IN AFRICA

We have an idea of the opinion of Africans on the Chinese presence in Africa thanks to data collection and analysis carried out every two years by the Afrobarometer network (<https://www.afrobarometer.org>), which is "a pan-African and non-partisan research network that conducts public opinion surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in more than 30 countries in Africa since 1999. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the

language of the respondent's choice with sample nationally representative surveys that provide national-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/- 2% (for a sample of 2,400) or +/- 3% (for a sample of 1,200) at a 95% confidence level. Specifically, round 6 saw nearly 54,000 respondents, African citizens living in 36 countries spread across the continent from north to south, east to west. The responses from these respondents well represent the opinions of more than three-quarters of the continent's population.

4.1 Chinese Development Model

The Chinese model is not exportable. However, as some key conclusions reveal, many Africans still aspire to the Chinese model for the development of their continent. “On average, across 36 African countries, the United States of America is the most popular national development model (cited by 30% of respondents), followed by China (24%). Around one in ten respondents prefer their former colonial power (13%) or South Africa (11%) as a model. Countries and regions vary greatly in their admiration for different development models. In Southern and North Africa, China is equal to the United States in popularity; in Central Africa, it comes out on top (35% versus 27% for the United States). In five Southern African countries (Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Malawi and Zimbabwe), South Africa is the most popular development model.”

Table 3: Africans’ perception of best development model				
African regions	US Model (%)	China model (%)	Former colonial power model (%)	South Africa model (%)
East Africa	41	24	6	10
West Africa	36	24	7	6
Central Africa	27	35	7	13
Southern Africa	24	23	2	20
North Africa	24	24	6	4
Average	30	24	13	11

Source: Afrobarometer Dispatch n° 122 | October 24, 2016, <https://www.afrobarometer.org>

4.2 In terms of influence on African countries

Given the relatively theoretical nature of the independence acquired by African countries, it is not easy to think that a country that had no colony in Africa could have significant external influence. But it is clear that China is an exception and comes just after the United States on average on the black continent, as shown by the results of the AFRO-BAROMETER network on 36 countries:

“A plurality of Africans considers that their former colonial power exercises the greatest external influence in their country (28%), followed by China (23%) and the United States (22%). France is considered particularly influential by its former colonies, including Côte d’Ivoire (where 89% of citizens consider France the greatest external influence), Gabon (80%), and Mali (73%). China's influence is perceived to be highest in Zimbabwe (55%), Mozambique (52%), Sudan (47%), Zambia (47%), South Africa (40%) and Tanzania (40%). Nearly two-thirds (63%) of Africans rate China's influence as "somewhat" or "very positive", while only 15% view it as somewhat/very negative. Favorable opinions are most common in Mali (92%), Niger (84%) and Liberia (81%).

African regions	Former colonial power (%)	USA (%)	China (%)	South Africa (%)
Central Africa	55	9	16	1
West Africa	45	22	6	1
North Africa	22	29	20	2
Southern Africa	10	16	35	16
East Africa	5	36	27	4
Average	28	22	23	6

Source: Afrobarometer Dispatch n° 122 | October 24, 2016, <https://www.afrobarometer.org>

4.3 In terms of development assistance

The development of the African continent was also the valid reason, or the alibi used by foreign powers to take an interest in it. It results in development aid policies of various forms, but which are increasingly denounced by African youth. However, in the dispatch cited above, "a majority of Africans also consider that China's development aid meets their country's needs 'fairly' or 'very' well."

Table 5: Africans’ perception of how much USA, China, and Former Colonial Power (FCP) do to help their country			
	USA (%)	CHINA (%)	FCP (%)
Help somewhat / a lot	54	47	45
Help a little bit / not at all	18	23	20
Don’t know	29	30	31

Source: Afrobarometer Dispatch n° 122 | October 24, 2016 <https://www.afrobarometer.org>

47% of Africans think China helps their country somewhat or a lot compared to 45% for their Former Colonial Power and 54% for the USA. Although relatively new on the continent compared to the USA and other former colonial powers, China enjoys a favorable perception from Africans. The authors conclude from the data that “the most important factors contributing to a positive image of China in Africa are its infrastructure/development and trade investments as well as the cost of its products. According to those interviewed, while the quality of its products somewhat affects its image, political and social considerations are secondary among the factors affecting China's image on the continent.

5. CONCLUSION

“In a complex global economy, the rules of the game are expected to include interdependence, mutuality, and dependence, making it difficult to detect instances of neo-imperialism or neo-colonialism around the world accurately» (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011). Relations between China and Africa cannot escape this reality. On the African side, the relationship varies from one country to another. The fact that mining permits can be withdrawn from unscrupulous Chinese companies in Zambia or that oil agreements are being renegotiated in Niger proves that Africans are not in a neocolonial relationship with China. This is not always the case with large Western companies. It is up to each African country to develop its own development strategy and to ensure that the arrival of emerging countries does not push them to replace one colonialism with another. In short, and thanks to the numerous elements provided in this document, to have a neo-imperialist system guided and supported by China, it would be necessary to have and maintain a monopolistic ruling class in Africa.

The simple observation of a partnership is not enough; the economic plan is only part of the answer; trade, donations, and infrastructure construction cannot determine whether China is a neo-colonialist presence in Africa. The assertion of China's presence as a neocolonial presence assumes the production of a significant segment of the African population trained and educated in Chinese institutions of higher learning. This also implies internalizing values, language, religion, and customs, such as using Mandarin as a working language, to the detriment of French and/or English.

References

- A. Gascon. (2022, Nov 25). *Néocolonialisme*. From Géo Confluences: <http://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/glossaire/neo-colonialisme>
- Auregan, X. (2012). La construction des sociétés civiles et le développement. Entre innovation, subsidiarité et action politique. In *Les cahiers de l'Association Tiers-Monde*. Suiss: Université du Fribourg.
- Aurégan, X. (2015, Septembre 1). Géopolitique de la Chine en Côte d'Ivoire. *Thèse*. Paris: Institut Français De Géopolitique – Université Paris VIII.
- Avenne, C. V. (2021). Colonialisme. *Langage et Société*, 45-5à.
- Bénazéraf, D. (2014). *Soft power chinois en Afrique : Renforcer les intérêts de la Chine au nom de l'amitié sino-africaine*. IFRI .
- Gaudiaut, T. (2023, janvier 18). *Commerce : la Chine à la conquête de l'Afrique* . From Statista: <https://fr.statista.com/infographie/26663/partenaire-commercial-premier-pays-source-des-importations-des-pays-africains-chine-france-afrique/>
- Lacoste, Y. (2003). Mondialisation et Géopolitique. *Hérodote*, 3-6.
- ONU. (2022). *Rapport 2022 sur le développement économique en Afrique*. Genève: Nations Unis.
- Schirer, A., & Balluffier, A. (2019). Pourquoi la Chine investit l'Afrique. *Le Monde*.
- Shinn, A. D. (2017, novembre 20). 5 Things China Wants from Africa. *ation , Agribusiness, and African Agricultural Development: Brazil and China in Ghana and Mozambique* . 81 , 13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.11.021>
- Abidde , SO, & Ayoola, TA (Eds .). (2021). *China in Africa: Between imperialism and partnership in humanitarian development* . Lexington Books.
- Amanor , K.S., & Chichava , S. (2016). *South-South Cooper*
- Antwi-Boateng, O. (2017). New World Order Neo-Colonialism: A Contextual Comparison of Contemporary China and European Colonization in Africa. *Journal of Pan African Studies* , 10 , 177.
- Ayabei, C. (2017). The rise of China and conflicts in Africa: The case of Sudan. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* , 11 (2), 29-35. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJPSIR2016.0914>
- Bello, W. (2007). *China Eyes Africa: The New Imperialism?* 28 (1), 23-26.
- Beuret, M., & Michel, S. (2009). Does China have a plan in Africa?: *Contemporary Africa* , n° 228 (4), 49-68. <https://doi.org/10.3917/afco.228.0049>
- Campbell, H. (2008). China in Africa: Challenging US global hegemony. *Third World Quarterly* , 29 (1), 89-105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590701726517>

- China in Africa: Between Imperialism and Partnership in Humanitarian Development* . (nd). Accessed October 1, 2023, at <https://www-tandfonline-com.acces.bibl.ulaval.ca/doi/epdf/10.1080/10220461.2022.2042374?needAccess=true>
- China's State-Business Relationship with Nigeria: Neocolonialism or Strategic Cooperation— Fangzhu Lu,* 2023 . (nd). Accessed September 30, 2023, at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00219096231154237>
- Duruşkan , S., & Altay, A. (nd). *China In Djibouti: Global Partner Or Neo-Colonial Master?*
- Eze, OC, & Anigbo , CA (n.d.). *A Book Review Of - New Scramble For Africa* .
- Full article: Is Africa China's Neo-dependency in the Making?* (nd). Accessed October 1, 2023, at <https://www-tandfonline-com.acces.bibl.ulaval.ca/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2023.2189579>
- Hadland, A. (2012). If the Hat Fits: Revisiting Chinese “Neo-Imperialism” in Africa From a Comparative Historical Perspective. *Asian Politics & Policy* , 4 (4), 467-485. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1943-0787.2012.01372.x>
- Hogwe , F., & Banda, H. (2017). *The nature of China's role in development of Africa: The case of Zimbabwe* . 15 (1), 237-247. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.15\(1-1\).2017.11](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.15(1-1).2017.11)
- If the Hat Fits: Revisiting Chinese “Neo-Imperialism” in Africa From a Comparative Historical Perspective— Hadland—2012—Asian Politics & Policy—Wiley Online Library* . (nd). Accessed October 1, 2023, at <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.acces.bibl.ulaval.ca/doi/10.1111/j.1943-0787.2012.01372.x>
- Jackson, T., Louw, L., Zhao, S., Boojihawon , R., & Fang, T. (2014). *Chinese Organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa: New Dynamics, New Synergies*1. 14 (1), 11-15.
- Karlsson, P. (2020). *China in Africa: An act of Neo-colonialism or a win-win relationship?* <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:lnu:diva-95840>
- Lachmann, R. (2010). *A Chinese World System, Again?* (Vol. 39, Issue 2, pp. 134-138). Sage Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094306110361338b>
- le Pere, G. (2007). *China and Africa: Dynamics of an Enduring Relationship* . 9 (1/2), 69-78.
- Lu, F. (2023). *China's State-Business Relationship with Nigeria: Neocolonialism or Strategic Cooperation. Journal of Asian And African Studies* . <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096231154237>

- Lumumba-Kasongo, T. (2011). China-Africa Relations: A Neo-Imperialism or a Neo-Colonialism? A Reflection*. *African and Asian Studies* , 10 (2-3), 234-266. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156921011X587040>
- Mallet, V. (2006). *The ugly face of China's presence in Africa Victor Mallet: [London 1st Edition]* . 17.
- Matingwina , S. (2020). China colonizing Africa narrative on social media: An issue activation and response perspective. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 12 (1), 23-39. https://doi.org/10.1386/jams_00009_1
- Meena, J.S. (n.d.). *Colonization Of Africa Case Study: Zambia*.
- Muhammad, M., Mukhtar, MI, & Lola, GK (2017). *The impact of Chinese textile imperialism on Nigeria's textile industry and trade: 1960-2015* . 44 (154), 673-682.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2017.1313729>
- Mogopodi Lekorwe , Anyway Chingwete , Mina Okuru , and Romaric Samson (2016), China's growing presence in Africa wins largely positive popular reviews , Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 122
- Munoriyarwa , A., & Chibuwe , A. (2022). Is this not colonization? : Framing Sino-South African relations in South Africa's mainstream press. *Communicate : Journal for Communication Studies in Africa* , 41 (1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.36615/jcsa.v41i1.1392>
- Nassanga, G.L., & Makara, S. (2016). Perceptions of Chinese presence in Africa as reflected in the African media: A case study of Uganda. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 9 (1), 21-37.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2015.1078386>
- Obeng-Odoom, F. (2022). China-Africa Relations in The Economist, 2019-2021. *Journal Of Asian And African Studies* . <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096221125423>
- Ovadia, J. S. (2013). *Accumulation with or without dispossession? A “both/and” approach to China in Africa with reference to Angola*. 40 (136), 233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2013.794724>
- Oyewole, S. (2007). *Sino-Africa Trade Relations* . 2 (1).
- Smith-Morris, DC (n.d.). *From China To Zambia: The New Chinese Migrants In Africa Under Global Capitalism*.
- Strauss, J. C. (2009). *The Past in the Present: Historical and Rhetorical Lineages in China's Relations with Africa* . 199 , 777-795. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741009990208>
- Sun, J. Y. (2022). China in Africa: Between imperialism and partnership in humanitarian development. *INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS* , 98 (5), 1826-1828. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaac185>

- Taylor, I. (2014). *Book Review: Exploiting Africa: The Influence of Maoist China in Algeria, Ghana, and Tanzania* (Vol. 220, pp. 1143-1145). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741014001258>
- Taylor, I., & Xiao, Y. (2009). A Case of Mistaken Identity: “China Inc.” and Its “Imperialism” in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Asian Politics & Policy* , 1 (4), 709-725. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1943-0787.2009.01149.x>
- 'The big brother we appreciate' or a 'mafioso'? The emergence of stereotypes concerning China and the Chinese in Angola | *Intellect* . (nd). Accessed September 30, 2023, at
https://intellectdiscover.com/content/journals/10.1386/jams.10.3.251_1
- van Dijk, M.P. (2009). *The New Presence of China in Africa* . Amsterdam University Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n2kj>
- Varani, N. (2021). Relations between a Country and a Continent: China and Africa. A first and not a simple matter..... *Geopolitical, Social Security and Freedom Journal*, 4 (2), 80-104.
<https://doi.org/10.2478/gssfj-2021-0013>
- Whiting, A.S. (1987). United Front Against Imperialism: China's Foreign Policy in Africa. By GP Deshpande and HK Gupta. [Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1986. 222 pp.]. *The China Quarterly*, 111 , 482-483.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741000051080>