

SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY:  
CONSISTENCY AND COMPLEXITY

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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Sino-African Engagement**

As a result of China's global rise, with average growth rates of approximately 9% for the past three decades, scholarship pertaining to the rise of China has flourished. Amidst China's heightened sense of global hegemony, the rising power has indisputably maneuvered itself closer to African states since the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since 2000, Chinese net trade with African states has grown from \$10 billion to more than \$180 billion in 2012, surpassing the United States as the continent's biggest trading partner.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, outward foreign direct investment from China to Africa has grown from \$9 billion in 2000 to \$62 billion in 2008.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, Chinese citizens are rapidly migrating to Africa and, of the five

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<sup>1</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Idem, p. 13

million Chinese citizens estimated to be abroad, over one million of these citizens are in Africa.<sup>3</sup>

The special relationship China has cultivated with its African counterparts is significant insofar that China-Africa area studies is emerging as a new field of research that merits greater attention, as argued by Monson and Rupp.<sup>4</sup> The role that China will play on the African continent has the potential to reshape global power dynamics. If China is able to forge closer security, military, and political relations with African states, extract precious resources from these countries, and take advantage of the growing consumer market in Africa, it will constitute China's deepest foray into international politics outside of the East Asian region, and will be the primary pillar of China's "Go Global" strategy (*zou chuqu zhanlue*), initiated in 1999. In short, the future dynamics of Sino-African relations could reveal important insights that indicate a slow shift in global power dynamics, and possibly the creation of a bipolar world order, as argued by Rinehart and Glitter.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, many scholars across a variety of disciplines, such as Shinn and Eisenman, are attempting to unveil the unique nature of Sino-African relations, and research covers a vast range of themes, including historical accounts of Chinese involvement on the continent, present policy engagements between China and its African counterparts, and the consequences of augmented Sino-African relations.<sup>6</sup> Most scholars engaged in Sino-African area studies are concerned with understanding China's motivation for such a rapid and intense engagement with

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<sup>3</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 88

<sup>4</sup> Monson and Rupp, 2013, p. 22

<sup>5</sup> Rinehart and Gitter, 2015, p. 13

<sup>6</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 1-5

African states, as well as evaluating how Chinese policies impact African regime stability, cultural integration, development, and state capacity. Although Sino-African relations are a relatively new, yet expanding, area of scholarship, there are already intense debates concerning the nature, intentions, and implications of Beijing's reengagement with the continent. This chapter will first examine the three predominant modes of understanding Sino-African relations. These are categorized by me as: the "Chinese Imperialism" argument, the "Great Power Rivalry" argument, and the "Economic Engagement" argument. The remainder of this chapter critically reviews these schools of thought on Sino-African studies and their branch sub-theories, illustrating the difficulty in attempting to categorize all Sino-African engagements under just one of these theoretical approaches. This chapter also introduces the concept of non-interference, which will be used in Chapter 2 as a new mode of understanding Sino-African relations. One important argument of this thesis is that if China's non-interference policy is shown to be more than just Communist Party rhetoric in its foreign policy, then most existing approaches to Sino-African studies have to be seriously reconsidered. This is because the three existing approaches (and key sub-schools within them) assume that China is executing a grand and highly interventionist strategy, but differs in terms of the *ultimate* target of China's strategy (e.g. United States, individual African countries) and contrast in terms of China's underlying motivations and incentives (e.g. economic gain, political or military power, etc.). One problem is that China never explicitly declares a grand strategy in public nor reveals its "true," underlying motivations. Thus, these are most often read into what *is* empirically observable. By

contrast, “non-interference” – although sometimes vague and requiring much contextualization within a Chinese context – is a long-standing and declared policy of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) since 1955. Indeed, utilizing comprehensive datasets on China’s voting record in United Nations resolutions (formal, political-institutional channels), of which 1,217 resolutions were read, coded, and analyzed in Chapter 3, and the behavior of Chinese multinational enterprises (MNEs) in Africa (informal, economic channels), the two empirical chapters of this thesis illustrate that China’s non-interference policy is surprisingly consistent in its implementation, raising questions about existing Sino-African theoretical approaches.

### **Overview of Sino-African Theoretical Perspectives**

To briefly summarize, leading researchers can be divided into three schools of thought in terms of defining Sino-African relations as an example of: (1) 21<sup>st</sup> century Chinese Imperialism, (2) Great Power Rivalry and the coming of a new cold war in which Chinese foreign policy is governed by countering and undermining Western policy objectives, or (3) in purely economic terms, though scholars disagree over the benefits that accrue to African countries. Moreover, within each school of thought, there is a group of scholars who either support or reject that particular approach. Below, I briefly summarize each school of thought before offering a more in depth and critical reading of the relevant literatures.

### *Chinese Imperialism*

The Chinese Imperialism school of understanding Chinese actions in Africa consists of two distinct groups of researchers. The first group of 'imperial' thinkers holds that China is a rising imperial power in Africa. They argue that Beijing seeks to establish an empire, using Africa as a peripheral region to expand Chinese influence through political and military domination, such as incorporating members of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in African peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Moreover, this school of thought contends that China wishes to unleash the power of arms deals and gifts to pariah regimes that have the potential to make African militaries reliant upon and even dominated by Chinese economic, political, and military policies.<sup>7</sup> Many African states are coined as puppet governments for the PRC based on this interpretation and China is viewed as a dominating power in Africa. On the other hand, advocates against this imperialist argument, like Sun, contend that China is a benign actor, engaging with African states without any intentions of establishing a global Sino-empire.<sup>8</sup>

### *Great Power Rivalry*

Scholars who support the claim that China is invested in a Great Power Rivalry contend that Chinese engagements with African states should be viewed with skepticism by Westerners based on the belief that China is intentionally courting African elites to undermine Western global hegemony and restructure the current world order. Great Power Rivalry differs from Chinese Imperialism in that

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<sup>7</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 97

<sup>8</sup> Sun, 2014, p. 2

the ultimate object of political struggle for China is “the West” as part of a global strategy, whereas in imperialism, it is restricted to just the African region or individual countries. These adherents view China as a direct threat to the future success of Western economic and political growth around the world, suggesting that Beijing is systematically executing a foreign policy agenda to thwart Western interests. Yet, researchers arguing against the Great Power Rivalry interpretation of Sino-African relations firmly maintain that Chinese engagements in Africa are wrongly framed by Westerners as fueling a Great Power Rivalry.

### *Economic Engagement*

While both the Chinese Imperialism school and the Great Power Rivalry school focus on Chinese strategies, motivations, and goals, the ‘Economic Engagement’ school is equally focused on the *consequences* of China’s economic actions on the continent. Researchers who both support and oppose this method of interpretation believe that China’s augmented role in Africa is predominantly driven by economic motives to sustain the high levels of growth China has experienced throughout the past three decades. A point of contention within this school of thought occurs in evaluating the consequences of Chinese economic actions in Africa. On one side of the debate, there are researchers who interpret these economic transactions as undermining development and primarily benefiting corrupt elites in various African states, ultimately making weak African economies increasingly *dependent* on China. This argument leads many researchers to conclude that China is a rising neocolonial power in Africa. Contrarily, others view China’s



economic actions as mutually beneficial to both China and its African counterparts, engendering development through the construction of basic infrastructure in countries and contributing to the growing African consumer market.

### **Critical Review of Theoretical Perspectives**

An important aspect of these three schools of understanding (Chinese Imperialism, Great Power Rivalry, and Economic Engagement) is that scholars have often treated them as mutually exclusive, leading researchers to adhere to only one perspective. For instance, one may argue that China is an imperial power and try to characterize all Sino-African engagements within the context of imperialism whereas another scholar holds that all Sino-African engagements are part of a grand scheme to undermine the West. A number of flaws emerge once these schools of interpretation are considered mutually exclusive. In reality, Sino-African relations are diverse and have different effects on different African states. Moreover, many of the claims concerning Chinese actions in Africa are seemingly based on the preconceived notions that one has concerning China. For instance, due to the diversity of Sino-African engagements, it is possible for one to find evidence to support any of the previously mentioned schools of thought.

This section identifies a number of reasons for a lack of accord in the existing literature on Sino-African relations. First, this area of research only emerged in a significant way in the early 2000s when China 'reengaged' with Africa. Prior to the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Sino-African relations did exist but on a much more limited scale, especially compared to American-African relations or the vast post-colonial

literature on European-African relations. Additionally, there has been a tendency to make grand conclusions that attempt to define and encompass all Sino-African relations, but based on limited regional or country-based case studies. Thus, the field suffers from problems of external validity in its empirical work. There are fifty-four internationally recognized states in Africa, all of which have different methods of conducting affairs with foreign states and China, in particular. Moreover, Chinese provinces have a degree of autonomy in conducting foreign relations with other sovereign states.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, creating broad, overarching frameworks that seek to encompass all Chinese engagements in Africa can be misleading.

By contrast, this thesis considers 'non-interference' as a more appropriate overarching concept, but the difference is that non-interference is an explicit, formal, often utilized and guiding foreign policy principle for China. Thus, there should be a more apparent empirical footprint that can be evaluated. Furthermore, in my review of the literature, it appears that many researchers seemingly have predetermined assumptions about China, which can lead to incorrect interpretations of data and other relevant information - points that I will expand upon later in this chapter. Again, by highlighting 'non-interference,' this thesis points to important evidence that runs counter to some built in assumptions about Sino-African relations, including the idea that China possesses an active, even aggressive, grand strategy, and that African countries are relatively passive actors, even victims, of Chinese dominance. Finally, the secretive nature of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and many African states can make it difficult to definitively

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<sup>9</sup> Zhimin and Junbo, 2009, p. 14

know the true nature of Sino-African relations and the consequences of these interactions. For these reasons, it is important to conduct more systematic empirical research, which as much as possible analyzes the full population of existing data – something that Chapter 3 attempts by examining the *full population* (1,217 UN resolutions) of China’s voting record in the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly.

### *Critical Review of Chinese Imperialism*

The Chinese Imperialism argument is by far the weakest of the three, since supporters generally fail to offer a clear definition of imperialism. Most subscribers to the belief that China is an imperial power in Africa derive from Western media outlets and various Western governments, which use stern rhetoric against the Chinese but, in actuality, do little to address the ‘imperial threat’ of China. Other researchers who argue that China is an imperial power, such as Tiffen<sup>10</sup> and Okeowo,<sup>11</sup> fail to define imperialism and intertwine a potential definition with their analysis. Thus, one consistent problem that has emerged pertaining to this school of Sino-African understanding is that researchers often fail to clearly define their central concept of imperialism, an already politically loaded word which must be differentiated from other concepts to have analytic utility. Part of the complexity in defining imperialism is that there are a great deal of differing imperial theories from a variety of political theorists such as Marx, Hobson, Schumpeter, Luxemburg, and Angell. However, *domination* of lesser powers by global or regional hegemons is a

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<sup>10</sup> Tiffen, 2014, par. 4

<sup>11</sup> Okeowo, 2013, par. 2

key feature to these theories and will be closely associated with imperialism in this study.

An exception to this overarching issue of not specifically defining an author's concept of imperialism is found within the work of Foster.<sup>12</sup> Foster effectively argues that imperialism is dynamic and modern imperialism will look drastically different from "traditional" forms of imperialism. However, Foster does not further define the specific features of her interpretation of imperialism.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps because of their lack of analytical clarity, other researchers reject the interpretation that China is an imperial power. Namely, Junbo and Frasher, <sup>14</sup> Alden,<sup>15</sup> and Power et al.,<sup>16</sup> have argued that China is certainly not an imperial power based the fact that China has no known unilateral fighting force on African soil.

Moreover, in attempting to draw connections between Sino-African relations and empire-building, it would be advantageous for scholars, such as Foster and Tiffen, to consider arguments concerning the establishment of an American empire in Africa and, by turn, highlighting similarities and differences between Chinese and American actions in Africa. According to Ikenberry, an empire refers to the political domination and control of the periphery by a more powerful state.<sup>17</sup> He further characterizes the possibility of an 'informal empire,' in which the most powerful state exerts 'decisive influence' within a lesser-developed country. Informal empires, Ikenberry argues, are based upon a clear hierarchical structure that

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<sup>12</sup> Foster, 2015, p. 1

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Junbo and Frasher, 2014, p. 138

<sup>15</sup> Alden, 2008, p. 46

<sup>16</sup> Power et al, 2012, p. 189

<sup>17</sup> Ikenberry, 2004, p. 146

subjects the periphery to the will of the center.<sup>18</sup> In terms of Sino-African relations, these ideals could be evaluated by scholars to better define imperialism and determine whether China is an imperial power in Africa. Perhaps it would be advantageous for researchers to conceptualize whether China is a neo-imperial power, differing from traditional interpretations of imperialism.

By contrast, the complex nature of African politics is adequately captured in Robinson and Gallagher's interpretation of imperialism: "any theory of imperialism grounded on the notion of a single decisive cause is too simple for the complicated historical reality of the African partition."<sup>19</sup> In other words, although one may be able to cite a specific theory of imperialism and try to apply this theory to all Sino-African interactions, the intricacy of African politics, let alone Sino-African politics, is far too complex to capture within the framework of just one imperial theory.

### *Critical Review of a Sino-Great Power Rivalry*

Those who view China's 21<sup>st</sup> century engagements with Africa as a calculated, Great Power Rivalry generally adhere to one of two beliefs: (1) Chinese leaders have a grand strategy to undermine Western hegemony through deliberate policy choices, whether to compete with American, unipolar hegemony or to oppose Western hegemony more generally or (2) the West wants to undermine China's global rise and is falsely portraying China as a belligerent actor in Africa. The former perspective holds that China is deliberately executing a policy that is entirely based on undermining Western policy goals, using Africa as a pawn in its strategy.

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<sup>18</sup> Ikenberry, 2004, p. 146

<sup>19</sup> Mommsen, 1977, p. 102

The latter argument relies on the assumption that China is simply responding to Western accusations, attempting to project an image as a benevolent leader of the developing world. Nonetheless, both perspectives rely on the assumption that the object of China's power is the West, not domination over African states, as in the imperialism understanding.

It is imperative to keep in mind that many political, military, and cultural dimensions of China's interactions with Africa have been interpreted through the lens of Great Power Rivalry, upon which I will further elaborate, but they could equally be considered Chinese Imperialism also. Certainly a lack of clarity in defining and applying imperialist arguments to Sino-African relations has muddied the ability to clearly categorize some dimensions of Chinese engagements with African states, leading some researchers to use evidence to strengthen their claims when, in reality, the evidence could be interpreted as falling under different modes of understanding Sino-African relations.

Scholars who contend that China is executing a calculated policy agenda to undermine Western hegemony primarily include Rinehart and Gitter<sup>20</sup> and O'Rourke.<sup>21</sup> According to these researchers, China does want to expand its influence at the expense of Western powers around the world. O'Rourke draws upon Chinese efforts to stabilize anti-Western states, such as Zimbabwe, Libya, and the Sudan, through enormous aid, both monetary and in the form of military arms.<sup>22</sup> In fact, China sent military equipment to Qaddafi during the 2011 Libyan Civil War.<sup>23</sup> For

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<sup>20</sup> Rinehart and Gitter, 2015, p. 6

<sup>21</sup> O'Rourke, 2015, p. 9

<sup>22</sup> Idem, p. 12

<sup>23</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 32

O'Rourke, the fact that China circumvents Western sanctions is significant enough to illustrate that China wants to thwart Western hegemony in the international arena.<sup>24</sup> Others argue that China's diplomatic intervention during civil unrest within Sudan, without initially including Western powers, also illustrates China's desire to act in its own interests, continuing to purposely exclude and even undermine Western influence in Africa.<sup>25</sup>

Rinehart and Gitter believe that China is beginning to militarize the continent to supersede US military power and objectives within Africa.<sup>26</sup> They cite that China has tactically begun to increase its military presence in Africa in a number of ways. First, China is investing more PLA peacekeepers to UN peacekeeping operations in Africa than any other state. Second, although China has no military bases in Africa, the PLA Navy (PLAN) has naval vessels off parts of the African coasts and has used them to evacuate Chinese citizens from conflict zones.<sup>27</sup> Rinehart and Gitter also claim that China is using Africa as a training ground for PLA troops in an effort to expand its military operations around the globe. The PLA has not fought in a ground war in over three decades and Rinehart and Gitter contend that China's new policy of contributing to combat forces in UN operations is a way to expose PLA troops to real military exercises.<sup>28</sup> Arguing that China is deliberately attempting to undermine Western growth and power dynamics is, inevitably, difficult to prove because China has, and probably never will, admit to doing so regardless of its validity.

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<sup>24</sup> O'Rourke, 2015, p. 22

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, p. 16

<sup>26</sup> Rinehart and Gitter, 2015, p. 13

<sup>27</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 10

<sup>28</sup> Rinehart and Gitter, 2015, p. 14

A number of researchers, conversely, have concluded that China is not executing a plan to purposely undermine great powers, despite the fact that China's rise inevitably impacts power relations in the international arena. Shinn depicts China's engagement with Africa in a perspective of US unipolarity and Western dominance in multilateral forums.<sup>29</sup> He holds that Sino-African relations, despite being motivated by pragmatic political or economic reasons, inherently impact US hegemony. For instance, Shinn and Eisenman<sup>30</sup> and Puska<sup>31</sup> emphasize China's "One China" policy, in which China only invests in states that officially recognize Beijing and not Taipei. This policy has resulted in the growth of Chinese 'yuan diplomacy,' in which China gives out loans and aid projects to its political allies who do not recognize Taiwanese sovereignty.

Two aspects of the One China policy are important in understanding the impact of Sino-African relations in a Great Power Rivalry perspective. First, Chinese "aid for trade" projects in Africa, low interest loans, and a lack of conditions on monetary aid for political allies predictably influences African elites to continue having positive relations with China, as argued by Thrall<sup>32</sup> and Shambaugh,<sup>33</sup> who believe that Beijing uses monetary incentives, such as low interest loans, to undermine the ability of Western powers to influence the domestic policies of recipient states.<sup>34</sup> Thus, China has been able to rely upon the 'African bloc' to

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<sup>29</sup> Shinn, 2009, p. 44

<sup>30</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 237

<sup>31</sup> Puska, 2008, p. 26

<sup>32</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 89

<sup>33</sup> Shambaugh, 2013, p. 101

<sup>34</sup> Idem, p. 253



increase its influence in international forums, such as the United Nations and World Trade Organisation, posing a power rivalry to Western states.

Second, China's desire to court African leaders has led to China creating its own forums and relationships with multilateral organizations, of which China is not a member. For instance, Shinn and Eisenman<sup>35</sup> examine how China's relationship with the African Union (AU), which China built a \$200 million headquarters for in Addis Ababa, and the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China's primary method of conducting affairs with African leaders, has fostered a great deal of African support for China. An example of China's augmented prestige in the AU is the election of African Union Commission Chairperson, Jean Ping, who is half Chinese.<sup>36</sup> The United States and other Western powers are excluded from many of these multilateral forums, such as FOCAC.<sup>37</sup> Essentially, since China reinvigorated its relations with African states, its desire to find political allies and peacefully engage with the continent does have clear implications for Western hegemons.

Moreover, Euka<sup>38</sup> and Nesbitt<sup>39</sup> argue that Beijing's arms deals with violent pariah regimes and the construction of Chinese-funded, light arms weapons factories for African leaders, which often circumvents Western-imposed sanctions, have been cited as fueling a Great Power Rivalry, in which African militaries rely on Chinese weapons to succeed. Brown and Siram,<sup>40</sup> Euka,<sup>41</sup> and Thrall<sup>42</sup> include an

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<sup>35</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2013, p. 366

<sup>36</sup> Idem, p. 368

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Euka, 2011, p. 18

<sup>39</sup> Nesbitt, 2011, p. 3

<sup>40</sup> Brown and Siram, 2008, p. 256-257

instance when China was notoriously criticized for selling arms to both Khartoum's forces as well as militant rebel groups in the Sudan's western and southern provinces, attempting to illustrate that China is actively seeking ways in which African militaries can become proxies for Beijing.

Other researchers argue that China's recent relations with African states are based on China's desire to be viewed as a benevolent leader and responsible stakeholder for the developing world. Taylor,<sup>43</sup> Thrall,<sup>44</sup> and Shambaugh<sup>45</sup> contest that China's motivation to be viewed as a cooperative leader for developing states is a reaction of the Western media portraying China as a negative influence on African governments and democracy, especially since the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.<sup>46</sup> Some view the expansion of Chinese soft power in Africa as a counter to the West's false assertion that China is a global threat. Anshan<sup>47</sup> as well as Hanauer and Morris<sup>48</sup> discuss how Chinese medical aid to Africa has been a major source of Sino-soft power politics. Similar to Médecines Sans Frontières, Chinese medical teams have been dispatched throughout the continent to train doctors, help patients, conduct research, and introduce traditional Chinese treatments to African doctors. Shinn and Eisenman<sup>49</sup> include that between 1963 and 2005 more than 15,000 Chinese medical personnel have been dispatched to 47 African states. Soft

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<sup>41</sup> Euka, 2011, p. 18

<sup>42</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 94

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, 2004, p. 23

<sup>44</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 77

<sup>45</sup> Shambaugh, 2013, p. 96

<sup>46</sup> Idem, p. 19

<sup>47</sup> Ashnan, 2009, p. 9

<sup>48</sup> Hanauer and Morris, 2014, p. 79

<sup>49</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 151

power, in the form of medical aid to African states, has allowed China to try and oppose Western claims that China is an irresponsible stakeholder in Africa.

He Wenping mentions that “Africa is perhaps the most important testing ground for the promotion of Chinese soft power,” depicting the importance of Africa in fostering China’s soft power expansion, especially in the media.<sup>50</sup> Rather than interpreting soft power projection as a form of cultural imperialism, He,<sup>51</sup> Shinn and Eisenman,<sup>52</sup> King,<sup>53</sup> and Jaques<sup>54</sup> hold that the main objective of Chinese soft power in Africa is to uphold its image as a positive developer despite Western accusations arguing the contrary.

The importance of soft power and the media in projecting Chinese power abroad, as shared by these authors, includes the fact that Xinhua, China’s largest state-run news broadcaster, is currently Africa’s largest single news agency. Moreover, China Radio International (CRI) and China Central Television (CCTV) broadcast throughout the continent. Since the 1980s, Xinhua news wires are free for all Africans who can access it but cannot afford to pay.<sup>55</sup> Most importantly, Xinhua will often hold workshops and write editorials for African newspapers in an effort to depict China as a benevolent developing partner on the continent. Unlike Western media outlets on the continent, most Xinhua’s stories in Africa are not defamatory towards the West. Instead, Chinese state media outlets seek to increase China’s prestige and reputation without actively undermining Western media

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<sup>50</sup> He, 2009, p. 115

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 214-215

<sup>53</sup> King, 2013, p. 177

<sup>54</sup> Jaques, 2009, p. 399

<sup>55</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 202-204

organizations.<sup>56</sup> Soft power in the form of media is important to the Great Power Rivalry struggle due to the influence wielded by the media. The rapid expansion of Xinhua, CRI, and CCTV throughout Africa, as well as the generally positive reception of Chinese media by African leaders, illustrates that Chinese media outlets are competing against the influence of Western media sources in Africa.

Finally, Confucius Institutes (CIs) and Chinese cultural exchange programs with African states are perhaps the greatest representations of China's soft power and its impact on a potential Great Power Rivalry, according to King<sup>57</sup> and Yang.<sup>58</sup> Kurlantzick states that CIs are 'reminiscent' of the British Council and Alliance Française, making their scope and expansion significant.<sup>59</sup> China's Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) uses CIs as a way to facilitate a greater local understanding of China's culture, language, and increase its global prestige. Additionally, the 2003 *Addis Ababa Action Plan*, according to Shinn and Eisenman, has fostered cultural exchange programs between China and most African states and continues today.<sup>60</sup>

It appears, according to the previously mentioned authors, that China's soft power projection in Africa, especially through CIs, is being perceived as being motivated by Western accusations of negativity towards China. Therefore, successful cultural exchange programs and the growth of CIs are a way for the Chinese to pursue a positive reputation in Africa and, consequently, gain influence in

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<sup>56</sup> Shambaugh, 2013, p. 101

<sup>57</sup> King, 2013, p. 180

<sup>58</sup> Yang, 2010, p. 238

<sup>59</sup> Kurlantzick, 2009, p. 69

<sup>60</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 266

the continent. Power et al.<sup>61</sup> and King<sup>62</sup> contend that one of China's greatest benefits from the expansion of soft power in Africa was the African bloc's backing of China in the Olympic bid process, resulting in Beijing hosting the 2008 Olympic Games.<sup>63</sup>

### *Economic Engagement*

A third argument for understanding Sino-Africa relations is that of purely economic motivations and their consequences for African states. In essence, these authors believe that China needs resources to sustain high economic growth and Africa has the necessary resources to foster Chinese development. One fundamental difference exists between the interpretation Sino-African economic engagements. The first holds that China is promoting sustainable development for Africa, thus establishing *mutually beneficial* relations. The second division suggests that Sino-African economic deals favor Beijing and ultimately undermine African development, in which China is accused of being a *neocolonial* power engaged in unequal relationships. This ideal suggests that African states, the periphery, are *dependent* upon Chinese money, resources, and technology to make significant gains.<sup>64</sup> One shortcoming of Sino-African economic research is a lack of reliable data due to issues of corruption, transparency, and illicit economic activities conducted by companies, often deeply connected to Chinese and African states. Another potential issue with this view is that China has only been Africa's largest economic

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<sup>61</sup> Power et al., 2012, p. 98

<sup>62</sup> King, 2013, p. 180

<sup>63</sup> Power et al., 2012, p. 192

<sup>64</sup> Eureka, 2011, p. 50

partner since 2009, and the long-term impacts of Chinese economic maneuvers in Africa are yet to be fully seen.

Enuka <sup>65</sup> and Nesbitt <sup>66</sup> firmly perceive China's augmented economic relationship with Africa as neocolonial, resulting in negative developmental impacts to African states for a number of reasons. Because Chinese aid comes with no conditions, it often ends up in the hands of corrupt officials who use the money for their own use or use foreign aid to undermine legitimate opposition groups. Many African leaders, therefore, are reliant upon Chinese funds to stay in power and increase their own personal wealth – a dependency that China can use to its own advantage. Moreover, many believe that medium and small Chinese, privately owned businesses are taking jobs away from indigenous Africans despite the fact that many African consumers are dependent upon Chinese businesses to provide goods to the market at a cheap price. Although many of the nearly one million Chinese citizens living in Africa are unskilled and poorly educated, their connections with manufactures in China are more extensive than that of African businessmen and women. Thus, it is possible for Chinese businesses to import Chinese products and sell them in African markets cheaper than it costs to produce the product within Africa.<sup>67</sup>

Illicit activities by Chinese nationals have also plagued China's economic relationship with many Africans. Poor working conditions, labor rights violations, low wages, and illicit mining and trade on the black market for items such as ivory

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<sup>65</sup> Enuka, 2011, p. 22

<sup>66</sup> Nesbitt, 2011, p. 2

<sup>67</sup> Idem, p. 15

are just a few of the many grievances some Africans have expressed regarding China's economic policy on the continent, according to Hanauer and Morris,<sup>68</sup> Kurlantzick,<sup>69</sup> and Thrall.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, many African economies dependent upon the Chinese extractive industry and these labor violations and poor conditions continue to endure. Already, four democratic countries, Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, and Benin, have passed laws restricting how many Chinese citizens could enter the country and open their own businesses, illustrating the dissatisfaction some Africans are beginning to feel towards Chinese citizens in their country.<sup>71</sup>

Mol's incorporation of the World's System Theory, a theory first discussed by Immanuel Wallerstein<sup>72</sup> to Sino-African relations, asserts that an 'environmentally unequal exchange' exists between ascending world powers and peripheral regions. For Mol, this indicates that China is not a partner in African development, but rather an expanding neocolonial power.<sup>73</sup> Mol,<sup>74</sup> Thrall,<sup>75</sup> and Shinn and Eisenman<sup>76</sup> have cited instances of the Chinese moving environmentally hazardous industries from China to Africa, where environmental regulations in some states are more laid back, taking advantage of African laborers and resources to unilaterally further Chinese. Zambian copper mines, for example, have been prone to environmental exploitation by Chinese SOEs, potentially explaining why anti-Chinese sentiments are so strong

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<sup>68</sup> Hanauer and Morris, 2014, p. 65

<sup>69</sup> Kurlantzick, 2009, p. 69

<sup>70</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 12

<sup>71</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 44

<sup>72</sup> Williams, 2013, p. 202

<sup>73</sup> Mol, 2011, p. 785

<sup>74</sup> Idem, p. 787

<sup>75</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 36

<sup>76</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 121, 133

in Zambia, according to Hare.<sup>77</sup> In general, these scholars hold that an inherently unequal economic reality exists in which some countries, in this case China, benefit at the cost of nearly powerless peripheral states, Africa.

By contrast, some argue that Chinese economic engagements with underdeveloped African states will stimulate mutually beneficial growth for both China and its economic partners in Africa. These authors cite the fact that China gives more aid to African states than any other country and its policy of no conditions makes aid more readily available to recipients than loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and Western industrial powers. For instance, Shinn and Eisenman cite that following Sierra Leone's bloody civil war, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf stated that it was crucial for the international community to quickly help rebuild roads to foster economic growth and peace building measures in her country.<sup>78</sup> Western aid mechanisms took too long to reach a consensus on the conditions attached to the aid. Thus, China was able to efficiently send an aid package to Liberia as Western powers struggled to agree on what an aid package should constitute. King<sup>79</sup> and Ramo<sup>80</sup> contend that China's aid and development policies are forming a Beijing Consensus, providing an alternative to the Western-led, Washington Consensus.<sup>81</sup>

In light of such sparse data, Strauss relies on ethnographic studies and concludes that China has positively contributed to African development. Strauss acknowledges that Chinese loans have made it possible for African states to produce

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<sup>77</sup> Hare, 2008, p. 86

<sup>78</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 125

<sup>79</sup> King, 2013, 183

<sup>80</sup> Ramo, 2004, p. 40

<sup>81</sup> Idem, p. 49



foundational infrastructure necessary to engender future industrialization.<sup>82</sup> Strauss,<sup>83</sup> as well as Foster et al.,<sup>84</sup> discuss Chinese funded construction projects that have resulted in new harbors, roads, electrical grids, water treatment centers, oil refineries, and, most well known, the TAMZAM Railway.

Still, other scholars, particularly Alden<sup>85</sup> and Park,<sup>86</sup> recognize that it is difficult to categorize all Chinese economic investments in Africa as either contributing to economic growth or taking advantage of an already weak African economic structure. Park's ethnographic research in Lesotho and South Africa contends that South Africans generally believe that Chinese investors and small business owners are 'filling gaps' in the economy and contributing to economic gains rather than taking away opportunities from South Africans.<sup>87</sup> On the contrary, Park found that in Lesotho, people view Chinese investors as hostile foreigners who are opening businesses and taking jobs from the indigenous population (due to the cheap manufacturing costs in shipping goods from China to Africa).<sup>88</sup> Alden also reaches a similar conclusion of economic complexity. He sees similarities between Sino-African economic relations and the 'Flying Geese' development model of East Asia, in which Japan, an industrialized power in the region, led the way for economic development in the region. Alden recognizes the influx of Chinese investment and the potential for it to help other African states maintain growth rates similar to China. On the contrary, Alden also believes that Chinese investments are not

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<sup>82</sup> Stauss, 2013, p. 163

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Foster et. al, 2009, p. 86-134

<sup>85</sup> Alden, 2008, p. 126

<sup>86</sup> Park, 2013, p. 132

<sup>87</sup> Idem, p. 134

<sup>88</sup> Park, 2013, p. 111

significantly diversifying African economies and much of the aid China gives to Africa ends up in the hands of pariah regimes.<sup>89</sup>

Mommsen's concept of developmental neocolonialism holds that disproportionate economic relations and developmental aid to weaker states results in those states becoming so reliant upon the donor state that a neocolonial dependency emerges. This developmental neocolonial interpretation further contends that the center, in this case China, extracts natural resources from a dependent states while simultaneously exporting goods and capital to the lesser-developed state on unfavorable terms for that client state.<sup>90</sup> In a context of Sino-African relations, one could consider Chinese development aid, resource extraction from pariah regimes, and selling Chinese goods in African markets, which many times undermines indigenous businesses, as having elements of this interpretation of neocolonialism.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Sino-African relations are clearly complex and, despite the existing theoretical modes of understanding these often difficult relations, scholars cannot singularly agree on the best way to characterize China's reengagement with Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This chapter has defined the major schools of interpreting Sino-African relations, outlining the various flaws in these schools of understanding. Due to the intricacy of Chinese actions in Africa, the following chapter provides a

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<sup>89</sup> Alden, 2008, p. 126

<sup>90</sup> Mommsen, 1977, p. 126

different lens, that of China's non-interference policy, by which Sino-African relations can be better understood and explained.

## Chapter 2:

### Non-Interference & Reconceptualizing Sino-African Engagements

#### Introduction

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the current Sino-African literature is that there is a great deal of conversation *within* each school of interpretation but a surprising lack of communication *amongst* these schools of thought. This lack of communication has resulted in researchers attempting to categorize all Sino-African engagements into one school of thought, largely ignoring the diverse nature of Chinese foreign policy. One important goal of this thesis is to take China's declared policy goals, strategies, and motivations seriously and study whether it is simply political rhetoric, or acts as a true guiding principle for China when engaging with Africa.

Clearly, if China truly abides by the spirit of non-interference, then this may undercut many of the aforementioned theories, including neo-imperialism, Great

Power Rivalry, and possibly even neocolonialism. This is true because the three schools of thought regarding Sino-African affairs assume that Beijing has a grand strategy to intervene in Africa to build an empire, compete against the West, or make African economies and leaders dependent upon Chinese policies, knowledge, aid, and technology to expand. Thus, if Beijing closely adheres to its non-interference policy, which is generally based on peaceful coexistence, mutually beneficial relations, and not meddling in another state's domestic policies, these elements of non-interference run counter to arguments that China is an imperial power, using Africa as a proxy to wage a Great Power Rivalry, or a neocolonial presence in African. All three of these schools of thought suggest some sort of interference in African politics for Beijing to succeed.

However, I argue that using China's policy of non-interference as a mode of understanding Sino-African engagements provides greater insight into the true nature of this complex relationship and can help explain China's justifications for its diverse actions in Africa. One goal of this chapter is to show the legitimacy behind China's non-interference policy, ultimately showing that this policy should not only be taken seriously, but should be considered by other Sino-African researchers when attempting to categorize and interpret Chinese actions in Africa.

### **Non-interference Policy**

Beijing has used a policy of non-interference as its guiding principle when interacting with other states since the 1955 Bandung Conference, in which Chinese delegate, Chou En-Lai, Indian Prime Minister Nehru, and Burmese Prime Minister U

Nu agreed upon *5 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (5 Principles)*. The *5 Principles* are: (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) mutual non-aggression, (3) mutual non-interference in each other's affairs, (4) equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful co-existence.<sup>91</sup> These ideals are the basis for China's policy of non-interference. However, the guidelines of the *5 Principles* are very general and, therefore, Beijing has been able to reinterpret its non-interference policy over the decades to suite the current needs of the CPC.

This chapter will evaluate five key elements that often are used to define Sino-African relations: pariah regimes, Beijing's "One China" policy, Chinese involvement in multilateral forums, aid non-conditionality as well as trade imbalances, and Beijing's soft power projection. These five dimensions of Sino-African relations are perhaps the most contentious and widely used by theorists adhering to all three schools, and their sub-categories, of understanding Sino-African relations. By analyzing these topics through China's non-interference policy, this chapter illustrates Beijing's justifications for its diverse foreign policy acts in Africa, which the CPC considers to be in accordance with the *5 Principles*. Ultimately, this Chapter will show that researchers should take China's non-interference policy seriously as a way to better understand Sino-African engagements than the three predominant schools of thought. Additionally, this chapter illustrates how authors adhering to multiple modes of interpretation often use these various dimensions of Sino-African relations to uphold their argument, indicating that it is exceedingly difficult to characterize these elements into one single mode of interpretation.

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<sup>91</sup> Neuhauser, 1968, p. 3-4

Before beginning, however, it is important to point out that ‘non-interference’ does not mean ‘non-engagement.’ The latter is an isolationist idea, which clearly is not China’s intent in Sino-African relations. Rather, ‘non-interference’ has more to do with respecting and protecting the sovereign integrity of countries China engages with, and it generally favors the existing or ruling governing party. Thus, it is a conservative, status quo approach to bilateral relations. This can be quite amorphous too, and China defines it in certain ways, as illustrated below through the five examples.

### *Pariah Regimes*

China’s relationship with authoritarian, pariah regimes has been a point of contention when determining how to interpret Sino-African relations. Zimbabwe, Qaddafi’s Libya, Sudan, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are key economic and political allies for Beijing in Africa. China has upheld these regimes with monetary aid gifts, arms deals, circumventing Western-imposed sanctions regimes through trade agreements, and even constructing weapon-manufacturing factories for the Sudanese and Angolan government at Chinese expense.<sup>92</sup> However China seemingly views its relationship with African states as being consistent with its non-interference policy.<sup>93</sup> In other words, China claims that it seeks to not interfere with the domestic politics of another country and, as a result, remains neutral, apolitical, and largely engages with other states in purely economic terms. Chinese arms deals with pariah regimes and circumventing Western imposed

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<sup>92</sup> Nesbitt, 2011, p. 5

<sup>93</sup> Adem, 2010, p. 343

sanctions, which O'Rourke largely criticizes as the most apparent method of China working to counter Western hegemony, is interpreted by Chinese officials as falling under the policy of non-interference because China does not want to involve itself with the domestic politics of another state.<sup>94</sup> Thus, selling arms to the Sudanese government and Sudanese rebel forces during the Darfur genocide was justified by the CPC as remaining apolitical and simply making economic transactions through arms deals rather than attempting to pressure Khartoum through sanctions.<sup>95</sup>

Nonetheless, Rinehart and Gitter<sup>96</sup> and O'Rourke<sup>97</sup> believe that China is intentionally executing a systematic agenda to undermine Western expansion (Great Power Rivalry) and restructure the current world order so that China can become the unipolar global power, using its relationship with pariah regimes as a means to achieve this end. Because many of these pariah regimes hold hostile views towards the West, the fact that China is providing a sense of elite stability, through money and arms, leads some to assume that Beijing is rallying as many anti-Western states to its side as possible to undermine Western influence in international forums, such as the UN. Moreover, the isolation that many of these states face has made them arguably reliant on Chinese monetary funds and arms deals to stay in power (neocolonial).<sup>98</sup>

China's relationship with African pariah regimes is also scrutinized for undermining development given the deplorable human rights record and high levels of corruption that plague many African states. Adherents of this belief contend that

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<sup>94</sup> Adem, 2010, p. 12

<sup>95</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 89

<sup>96</sup> Rinehart and Gitter, 2015, p. 6

<sup>97</sup> O'Rourke, 2015, p. 9

<sup>98</sup> Nesbitt, 2011, p. 16



China is allowing pariah regimes to continue bad governance practices with few consequences; African elites can therefore continue ruthless practices with Chinese funding.

On the other hand, sanctions can be detrimental to civilian populations and, despite largely not knowing how Chinese aid is used, Beijing is providing these states with aid projects.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, those who believe that Chinese engagements with African states are generally positive suggest that China's close relationship with many pariah regimes has helped resolve conflicts such as the Sudan-South Sudan crisis. As Sudan and South Sudan fought over natural resources in disputed territories, Chinese officials helped the two sides reach an agreement and even negotiated with Khartoum to allow a UN peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), to enter its border and foster greater stability in the region.<sup>100</sup>

### *"One China" Policy*

Beijing's "One China" policy is one of the CPC's guiding foreign policy doctrines. Through the policy, China states that it will only hold diplomatic relations with states that recognize Beijing rather than Taipei.<sup>101</sup> China justifies this policy in terms of non-interference. Although one could argue that Beijing's One China policy is a form of interfering with a country's domestic politics by pressuring that state to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC) over the Republic of China (ROC),

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<sup>99</sup> Green, 2013, p. 88

<sup>100</sup> "UNAMID Facts and Figures," 2015

<sup>101</sup> Power et al., 2012, p. 224

the CPC holds that this policy is by no means a violation of a state's sovereignty. The CPC interprets the "Taiwan issue" as its own domestic policy. Thus, if a state chooses to recognize Taiwan and defend Taiwanese independence, Beijing argues that that state is inherently interfering in China's domestic politics and, therefore, interfering with China's domestic affairs. The consequences of this policy have been received differently by many scholars and illustrate the inability to define even just this aspect of Chinese foreign policy within one school of interpretation. In fact, Beijing's One China policy is often used by researchers within all three schools of understanding Chinese actions in Africa, depicting the complexity of Sino-African relations.

Much of the PRC's and ROC's efforts to win political support and recognition from other states has taken the form of 'dollar diplomacy,' in which aid projects, monetary gifts, and favorable terms of trade and investment are given to states in return for their recognition. Some argue that this relationship is mutually beneficial because Beijing may receive recognition from another state and, in return, helps to develop the infrastructure of and invest in that state.<sup>102</sup>

Conversely, African states that are heavily dependent upon Chinese investments and its 'yuan diplomacy' practices, such as South Africa, are politically restricted from changing their official recognition (neocolonialism). For instance, following the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa, the new government desired to recognize both Beijing and Taiwan, a clear violation of the CPC's One China policy. As a result, China threatened to withdraw its investments in the South

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<sup>102</sup> Puska, 2008, p. 26

African economy, cut its aid and low interest loans to the country, and severed diplomatic ties between the two states. Ultimately, South Africa only recognized Beijing in the fear that China pulling its investments would shatter its economy and cripple its development efforts.<sup>103</sup> This instance has been interpreted by adherents of the neocolonial argument grounded in the fact that South Africa was so dependent on Beijing's economic involvement in the country that it was unable to make policy decisions for itself without facing imminent economic turmoil. In essence, China exerted political control over the South African government in terms of the Beijing-Taipei issue due to South Africa's dependency on Chinese economic engagements. There is concern that China could threaten similar consequences for states that disagree with current and future territorial claims made by the Chinese. Perhaps this is why many African states have refrained from scrutinizing Beijing over its territorial expansion in the South China Sea.

Furthermore, some interpret the One China policy as fueling a Great Power Rivalry. Taiwan has long been a US geostrategic island that receives arms deals from the United States.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, courting countries to stop recognizing Taiwan inherently takes away influence that the United States has in East Asia and isolates Taiwan from legitimate involvement in many international forums. Beijing's ability to gain international favor over Taipei, resulting in the Beijing replacing Taiwan in the UN in 1971, especially fuels what some consider to be a Great Power Rivalry. The US voted against Beijing replacing Taiwan in the UN, taking the particularly important UN Security Council P-5 seat, illustrating that the US lost a key ally in the

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<sup>103</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 345-346

<sup>104</sup> Gilley, 2010, p. 45

Security Council.<sup>105</sup> Thus, as Beijing continues to court other states to switch recognition, it becomes increasingly difficult for the US to recognize and propagate an autonomous Taiwan, constraining US ability to pursue this stance that has been undermined by decades of Chinese efforts.

### *Multilateralism and Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations*

China's invigorated efforts to join with and establish new multilateral forums and UN PKOs, when viewed in a context of non-interference, further illustrates that the current methods of interpreting Sino-African relations are not mutually exclusive. The establishment of multilateral institutions, FOCAC, provides the CPC with forums in which it can discuss current affairs and international policies without violating the territorial sovereignty of a state (non-interference).<sup>106</sup> If China were to solely pursue bilateral relations with smaller, weaker African states, it may appear that the CPC is coercing these states into pursuing Chinese interests through uneven bilateral discussions, which would undermine China's policy of mutual benefits and equality. However, multilateral forums provide the CPC with a sense of legitimacy, backed by its promise of non-interference, in state-to-state relations. Due to the fact that a great number of African states willingly send delegates to these multilateral forums, it is more difficult for Sino-critics to single out China as diplomatically coercing these states in pursuing policies that favor Beijing, especially given that all states have equal rights and are at a more level playing field within these forums.

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<sup>105</sup> Hellström, 2009, p. 60

<sup>106</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 188

Some argue that China's increased involvement in these organizations, such as the WTO, as well as the establishment of new forums, proves that Beijing wants to 'play by the rules' of the international community and become an active participant in world affairs.<sup>107</sup> This interpretation of Chinese multilateralism, therefore, is used by some to contend that China is, by no means, seeking to undermine Western hegemony given the fact that the CPC has joined international institutions that require it to abide by a particular set of regulations. Conversely, others point to how the CPC has acted, once a member of multilateral forums, and argue that there is a Great Power Rivalry at play. The clearest example of this can be seen in how China has acted in the Human Rights Council (HRC). China has incorporated its multilateral policy and non-interference to shield itself from criticism concerning human rights violations and political freedom. The CPC adheres to a belief that each state has a different understanding of human rights and governing. It is a violation of that state's domestic policy and a breach of non-interference policy, therefore, to punish a state for governing a certain way or interpreting human rights differently than another state. In essence, China promotes an ideology that each developing state, based on its unique cultural norms and domestic politics, has its own way of developing and Western conceptions of human rights and 'good' governance should not be imposed upon other states.<sup>108</sup>

For this reason, China justifies blocking Western sanctions regimes based on human rights violations and governance structures in the name of non-interference. More importantly, China's ability to frame human rights and governance structures

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<sup>107</sup> King, 2013, p. 177

<sup>108</sup> Alden, 2008, p. 22

as part of a country's domestic policy has protected Beijing from similar criticisms and repercussions. Since the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, China has rallied developing, through the pretense of non-interference, to try and deter Western criticisms.<sup>109</sup> For this reason, China has largely been protected in the HRC and other multilateral forums responsible for human rights oversight and political freedom.

Since China's augmented engagements with the developing world, through multilateralism, the CPC has similarly reinterpreted its policy of non-interference to legitimize Chinese involvement in UN PKOs. The CPC initially rejected UN PKOs and considered them to be an intrusion upon another state's sovereignty, based on the principle of non-interference and not impeding upon another nation's domestic affairs. However, since the growth of China's multilateral foreign policy agenda, the CPC now uses non-interference to justify its involvement in UN PKOs. UN PKOs are justified through non-interference policy as long as a state invites the PKO into its borders. As a result, China, for the first time in its history, volunteered PLA troops to the UN PKO in Sudan (UNAMID) and in the 2011 and 2013, Beijing sent its first combative troops to help in the South Sudan (UNMISS) and Mali (MINUSMA) respectively.<sup>110</sup>

This policy change has alerted some to interpret China's involvement in PKOs with skepticism. Mali, Sudan, and South Sudan, are all states with close economic ties to Beijing, have important raw materials that are exported to China, and have large Chinese-funded infrastructure projects. Thus, these relationships could be interpreted as China creeping towards the establishment of an empire (Chinese

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<sup>109</sup> Alden, 2008, p. 132

<sup>110</sup> "United Nations Peacekeeping," 2015

Imperialism) now that it has a legitimate way to send its armed forces abroad under the pretext of non-interference and multilateralism. Others argue that there is a Great Power Rivalry at play due to the fact that China, rather than Western states, is increasingly represented in these operations and able to better coordinate efforts and lead missions.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, Strauss holds that PKOs are meant to uphold peace and establish an environment in which development is more achievable. Thus, despite whether China is involved in these operations to protect its own economic interests, it is inherently attempting to bring stability to an unstable country.<sup>112</sup>

Beijing has defended its actions in multilateral forums based on its policy of non-interference. However, clearly there are different interpretations of the impact of and motivations behind each policy. The disunity that emerges amongst research from a single policy decision, such as China sending combative forces to Mali, elucidates the complexity of Sino-African engagements and the inability to precisely make all Sino-African engagements fit within the confines of one school of interpretation. Rather, the complex nature of Chinese actions in Africa often incorporates features prominent in all three interpretations.

### *Soft Power*

Chinese soft power expansion into Africa can be better explained in a context of non-interference policy. As a rising power, China seeks to spread its influence where necessary but must also carefully act within the guidelines of non-interference. Consequently, soft power has provided Beijing with a means to exert

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<sup>111</sup> Power et al., 2012, p. 94

<sup>112</sup> Stauss, 2013, p. 163

its influence while still adhering to the *5 Principles*. Soft power expansion has primarily occurred in Chinese-funded media projects, Confucius Institutes, and cultural exchange programs between China and its African counterparts. Because African states allow China to exert this form of non-military power, Beijing can legitimize its actions as respecting the sovereignty of a state while simultaneously promoting a better understanding of Chinese ideals and cultural norms (non-interference policy).

Currently, soft power has been interpreted as contributing to all three previously mentioned schools of interpreting Sino-African relations. Those arguing that China is an imperial power state that China's soft power, particularly through media expansion and Confucius Institutes, is a form of cultural domination in which the CPC seeks impose Chinese culture upon weaker African states. Adherents, such as Kurlantzick, to the ideology that China is involved in a Great Power Rivalry, as well as many of those who believe China is an emerging imperial power in Africa, argue that Chinese soft power is a way to counter the West.<sup>113</sup> Western media outlets in Africa have been critical of Chinese engagements with African states, especially authoritarian regimes with questionable human rights records. These scholars believe that China, now the continent's largest media investor particularly through the state-run media outlet, Xinhua, is a way to push Western ideology out of the continent and replace it with CPC propoganda. For instance, Xinhua will often

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<sup>113</sup> Kurlantzick, 2009, p. 69



work alongside its African counterparts and publish rhetorical articles in support how Beijing interprets the status of Tibet, Taiwan, and the South China Sea.<sup>114</sup>

Conversely, many believe that China is benignly expanding its media presence around the world and countering false Western accusations of imperialism and neocolonialism. A number of independent media outlets and NGOs have applauded Xinhua for providing media service infrastructure, many of which are free, to Africans who would not have access to such information otherwise. Moreover, Xinhua is sometimes perceived as being more reliable and providing more transparent information than the states within which it operates, especially hyper-corrupt states.<sup>115</sup>

On the other hand, researchers who believe that Chinese soft power in Africa relations is inherently good for development and mutually beneficial point to various examples of Chinese initiatives that foster development. For instance, since the 1960s China has sent medical teams to African states to transfer knowledge and train personnel to better handle health crises.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, China often grants large sums of money to African universities that allow CIs to function and prosper. Furthermore, China uses FOCAC to have cultural exchange programs with a majority of African states. These exchange programs constitute venues where China and African states can better understand the cultures of one another through displaying artwork and other cultural practices.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> King, 2013, p. 180

<sup>115</sup> Park, 2013, p. 132

<sup>116</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 243

<sup>117</sup> Idem, p. 245

### *Aid Without Conditions and Asymmetrical Trade Relations*

China's foreign aid policy states that there must not be conditions on aid given to recipient states. In essence, the CPC does not attach conditions to the aid it gives to African states. In the context of non-interference, China is abiding by this principle by not putting conditions on the aid that it gives, regardless of whether the aid is use irresponsibly by corrupt or violent leaders. Putting conditions on foreign aid would violate Chinese non-interference policy because these political conditions are meant to pressure and change the way a government governs, a principle directly against non-interference policy. Thus, China is simply allowing recipient governments to have the sovereignty to use the monetary aid as they see fit.

Shinn and Eisenman,<sup>118</sup> King,<sup>119</sup> Ramo,<sup>120</sup> Stauss,<sup>121</sup> and Foster et al.<sup>122</sup> interpret Sino-African relations as being motivated through purely economic means with mutually beneficial ends. These researchers cite the fact that China's policy of aid without conditions provides fast and necessary aid to governments experiencing instability or want to fund development projects. Moreover, Shinn and Eisenman argue that Chinese-funded construction projects, in which one third of Chinese-funded construction projects outside of China are now based in Africa, engender industrialization and technological transfers to lesser-developed states. Alden further suggests that China may be emulating the 'Flying Geese' model of development in Africa, acting as a developer similar to Japan in East Asia.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 2012, p. 28

<sup>119</sup> King, 2013, p. 177

<sup>120</sup> Ramo, 2004, p. 55

<sup>121</sup> Stauss, 2013, p. 160

<sup>122</sup> Foster et. al, 2009, p. 182

<sup>123</sup> Alden, 2008, p. 127

Conversely, Euka,<sup>124</sup> Nesbitt,<sup>125</sup> and Thrall<sup>126</sup> view Sino-African relations as asymmetrical, in favor of China, and exploitative. These authors point to trade imbalances and large debt payments, as a result of Chinese loans, that many African states experience when economically engaging with Africa as well as the fact that many Chinese small business owners in Africa undermine indigenous markets by selling cheaper goods imported from China. Moreover, Chinese arms sales to African pariah regimes and militia groups, many of which circumvent Western-imposed sanctions regimes, further undermine African development. Finally, Mol contends that China is pursuing a policy of exporting environmentally hazardous production networks, from China to African states, thus exposing African people to dangerous chemicals, polluting waterways, and destroying arable land.<sup>127</sup>

Although many of the instances that these authors cite, on both sides of the Economic Engagement argument, are legitimate, clearly it is impossible to define all Sino-African engagements into one school of interpretation, despite attempting to do so within just one school of thought. However, if one more closely considers these interactions in a context of China's non-interference policy, it is easier to understand that regardless of certain engagements being considered mutually beneficial or exploitative, there is a underlying policy of non-interference which China uses to justify its actions and researchers should use to explain why China acted certain way.

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<sup>124</sup> Euka, 2011, p. 18

<sup>125</sup> Nesbitt, 2011, p. 46

<sup>126</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 27

<sup>127</sup> Mol, 2011, p. 786

The issue of aid without conditions is used by researchers who argue that China is benignly developing Africa, by those contending that China is exploitative, and by scholars holding that China is involved in a Great Power Rivalry. However, the diversity of interpretation within this topic can be better understood through Beijing's non-interference principle. Because China's non-interference policy constrains it from dictating how countries ought to spend their aid, China has the ability to distance itself from the consequences of the aid. In other words, whether the aid has positive or negative ramifications, China holds that it cannot tell a country in what ways the aid must be spent. Therefore, if the aid is siphoned into the hands of corrupt leaders, or if the aid is used to build crucial developmental infrastructure, China can point to its policy of non-interference as legitimizing any sort of aid given to African states. Thus, the recipient country is considered responsible for determining the 'best' use of the aid.<sup>128</sup>

By turn, it is impossible to define aid without conditions as being exclusively mutually beneficial, exploitative, or fueling a Great Power Rivalry because the way in which the aid is spent varies from state to state. For instance, a pariah regime may use the funds to augment its military capabilities while a transparent government may choose to invest the funds in education or expanding the country's health infrastructure. Some interpret Chinese aid to pariah regimes as fueling a Great Power Rivalry as well. China is now the largest single aid donor to the African continent and some, namely Ramo, believe that its ability to quickly send aid resources to developing states is establishing an alternative to the Washington

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<sup>128</sup> Nesbitt, 2011, p. 2

Consensus: the Beijing Consensus, in which human rights, good governance, and democracy are not necessary for effective development.<sup>129</sup>

As Beijing continues to fund developmental projects throughout Africa, some African elites are increasingly reliant on China to provide funds to solidify their rule. This dependency model can be understood as a form of neocolonialism in which certain states are so dependent on Chinese aid grants that they have little political freedom to diverge from Beijing's international policy agenda.<sup>130</sup> Sudan, which is isolated from much of the world as a result of a Western-imposed sanctions regime is an example of a state that is so dependent upon Chinese aid grants, it has acted as political safe haven for Beijing and constant source of raw materials, namely oil.

Moreover, by incorporating China's non-interference policy to Chinese-favored trade imbalances, which are used by adherents of all three schools of interpretation as evidence to support their claims, further prove that there is significant overlap in Sino-African engagements that cannot be classified solely within the confines of one school of thought. Beijing claims, based on its assurance to not interference with the domestic politics of another country, that China is not responsible for directing the economy of another country.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, China does not need to diversify the economy of another state or ensure that trade is balanced.

However, trade imbalances can be used as evidence to indicate a neocolonial relationship, in which African states are increasingly dependent on Chinese exports and investment in raw materials. On the other hand, it is possible to argue that trade

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<sup>129</sup> Ramo, 2004, p. 3

<sup>130</sup> Mommsen, 1977, p. 57

<sup>131</sup> Hess and Aidoo, 2010, p. 367

imbalances exploit the fragile economies of African states, especially when a Chinese merchants undermine indigenous production networks by providing cheap goods to the market.<sup>132</sup> Even more, some would suggest that trade imbalances are a natural consequence of Sino-African relations, due to the overwhelming size of the Chinese economy relative to its African counterparts, and any technological transfer is beneficial despite trade deficits (mutual benefits).<sup>133</sup> Even Great Power Rivalry adherents cite trade imbalances as making African states align with China over Western states based on increased dependency from China.<sup>134</sup> Evidently, interpreting trade imbalances through a lens of non-interference proves that there is significant overlap amongst all three schools of interpretation, highlighting the complex and diverse nature of Sino-African relations and illustrating that Chinese acts in Africa cannot be viewed exclusively within the confines of either imperialistic, a Great Power Rivalry, or good or bad for development.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Although Sino-African relations have been largely interpreted through the lens of Chinese Imperialism, a Great Power Rivalry, or Economic Engagement, China's policy of non-interference provides a new, and useful, mode of explaining Chinese engagements in Africa more broadly – one which takes China's declared policies seriously. However, whether declared principles are just rhetoric or reality

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<sup>132</sup> Park, 2013, p. 144

<sup>133</sup> Strauss, 2013, p. 158

<sup>134</sup> O'Rourke, 2015, p. 35

can never be adjudicated by words alone. Actions must back up rhetoric. The following chapter will empirically examine the degree to which China follows its policy of non-interference when conducting foreign relations.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **An Evaluation of Chinese Non-Interference Policy: Taking China Seriously**

#### **Introduction and Findings**

As Beijing increasingly expands its engagements with other states outside of the East Asian region, understanding China's intent in pursuing more robust relations with other countries as well as the consequences of engaging with China have become important topics of debate. The PRC publically, most recently through its 2013 White Paper, holds that it strictly pursues "an independent foreign policy" based on the 1955 Bandung Conference's *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* (*5 Principles*): mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's affairs, equality and mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence. Beijing asserts that it has been consistent in abiding by



this foreign policy doctrine, more commonly referred to as ‘non-interference policy.’<sup>135</sup>

In the context of Sino-African relations, Chinese non-interference policy has faced enhanced scrutiny by those who perceive the policy as a mechanism through which Beijing can forge close relations with pariah states and circumvent Western-imposed sanctions on internationally condemned governments. Essentially, there is a growing concern that China’s non-interference policy is not practiced in reality and is simply used as propaganda by Beijing to maneuver itself into a position to rival Western foes. Moreover, as China continues to bolster its relations with African states, many scholars contend that Beijing’s non-interference policy will be unsustainable as the CPC will be forced to choose between protecting its national interests abroad or continuing to abide by a policy that is over half a century old.<sup>136</sup>

In contributing to this debate, this chapter seeks to determine the legitimacy of the PRC’s assertion that it abides by this unique policy through its voting record in the United Nations since 2000, the year in which China began vigorously investing in African economies. This chapter outlines number of patterns in an analysis of China’s votes in the UN, based on a full population of 1,217 UN resolutions that I read, coded, categorized, and analyzed. It ultimately suggests that China does, in fact, closely follow its non-interference policy based on the principle of national sovereignty. The patterns of China’s UN voting record include:

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<sup>135</sup> Kurlantzick, 2009, p. 69

<sup>136</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 78

- 1) China abstaining from or voting against any draft resolution that would attempt to encourage free and fair, democratic elections in a Member State,
- 2) China rejecting the expansion of any UN monitoring or investigatory mission in a Member State that lacks the consent of the Member State that would be hosting the mission,
- 3) China abstaining from or voting against draft resolutions that would invoke, or threatens to invoke, *Article 41* of the United Nations Charter, which gives the Security Council power to impose sanctions on governments, organizations, and individuals,
- 4) China not supporting any resolution that would directly subject people to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or criticizes the human rights of a specific Member State,
- 5) China refusing to support any UN resolution that would force it to decrease its weapons stockpiles, especially that of nuclear weapons,
- 6) China abstaining from any resolution that specifically refers to disputed territories between two states,
- 7) China failing to support the acceptance of any potential Member State that has diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (ROC or Taiwan).

Nearly all Chinese abstentions or votes against a certain UN draft resolution, both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly since 2000, fit within the confines of these seven patterns (out of the 1,217 resolutions incorporated in this study).

Moreover, Chinese voting record patterns definitely illustrate its dedication to its

non-interference policy. These patterns have serious implications for Chinese non-interference policy in Africa as Beijing and its African counterparts grow increasingly closer. This chapter will first outline the methodology used to evaluate Chinese non-interference policy, then briefly elaborate on each pattern from the findings, and finally investigate how these patterns impact each school of thought concerning Sino-African relations, ultimately giving greater validity to the arguments that China is invested in a Great power Rivalry and is invested in a mutually beneficial economic partnership with African states while undermining the claim that China is an imperial power in Africa. Ultimately, this chapter shows that non-interference can be used best to interpret, explain, and analyze Chinese engagements with African states.

### *Methodology*

Because Chinese non-interference policy is intimately connected with China's interpretation of sovereignty, in which China believes each state has the right to wholly and legitimately determine its own policies without foreign influences formulating that state's policy, I sought to find a method to determine how committed China is to its non-interference policy. However, given the secretive nature of Chinese foreign policy, it was necessary to find data that could represent Chinese desires. As such, I began collecting and examining UN voting records in the Security Council, in which China is a P-5 Member State with veto powers, and the General Assembly, in which China is one of 193 voting Member States. These two UN bodies are the only organs within the UN system that draft and ultimately pass

resolutions, of which only Security Council resolutions are legally binding whereas General Assembly resolutions set international norms and standards that countries should follow. The Security Council is composed of five permanent Member States (P-5) and ten temporary states that serve two-year terms. Conversely, the General Assembly is a plenary body where every UN Member State is present, all states have one vote, and no states can exercise a veto. The concept of the UN is based upon peaceful development and protecting the sovereignty of Member States. Thus, I was able to build a database of Chinese votes since 2000 in both bodies and, from my findings, determined the various patterns of Chinese policy as well as how close the PRC follows its non-interference policy. The list of voting records starts in 2000 to encompass China's reengagement with African states that began at that time.

While collecting voting records on Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and draft resolutions, I first compiled a list of every UN resolution that was not passed unanimously in both the Security Council and the General Assembly (a full population of 1,217 resolutions). I then noted each time China abstained from or voted against a particular resolution in the Security Council and read through each resolution or draft resolution to find patterns. The same technique was employed for the General Assembly - I looked through each General Assembly resolution that was not adopted unanimously, indicating that there was at least one abstention or one vote against that particular resolution and took note of every resolution China did not vote in favor of or abstained from a resolution. This allowed me to begin to group similar resolutions together and find a number of clear patterns. Finally, I coordinated my findings of Chinese votes in the Security Council

with Chinese votes in the General Assembly and concluded that China, based on these clear patterns, does strictly adhere to its policy of non-interference.

## **Chinese Votes in the UN and Implications for Non-Interference Policy**

### *Pattern 1: Democratic Reforms and Free and Fair Elections*

China has decisively rejected any potential resolution that calls for democratic reforms as well as free and fair elections in a specific country. This pattern is consistent with China's publically stated non-interference policy due to the fact that the CPC is refusing to inject itself into influencing the political governance structure of a state. Some key resolution topics advocating for democratic reforms, all of which China vetoed in the Security Council, include: calling for a democratic political transition in Syria,<sup>137</sup> demanding that the Assad regime allow all people to have the right to peacefully protest and establish democratic governance,<sup>138</sup> calling on the Syrian government to adopt democratic reforms through the League of Arab States' initiative,<sup>139</sup> encouraging democratic reforms in Zimbabwe,<sup>140</sup> and advocating for democratic rule in Myanmar.<sup>141</sup> In the General Assembly, China has similarly been reluctant to support any draft resolution that calls for democratic change in a Member State. For instance, China abstained from efforts to promote and consolidate democracy around the world,<sup>142</sup> as well as abstaining from a number of other resolutions that specifically call on a state to

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<sup>137</sup> S/2012/538

<sup>138</sup> S/2012/77

<sup>139</sup> S/2011/1612

<sup>140</sup> S/2008/447

<sup>141</sup> S/2007/14

<sup>142</sup> A/RES/55/96 and A/RES/59/206

democratize, such as promoting democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>143</sup> and investigating election flaws in Belarus.<sup>144</sup> Interestingly, although China does not support any draft resolution that propagates the establishment or consolidation of democracy in a Member State, it does vote in favor of resolutions that specifically reaffirm the democratic nature of the UN system.<sup>145</sup>

When applied to China's non-interference policy, it is clear that this voting pattern of rejecting the UN's call for democratic reforms in a *specific* state, while supporting *general* democratic norms in the UN, is inherently in line with non-interference. Generally, having a multilateral organization call upon a state to change its domestic governance structure, whether for better or for worse, does impede upon the sovereignty of that nation from China's perspective. Therefore, urging a state to adopt a new model of governing suggests that a number of states in the UN want to influence and ultimately change some of the key domestic policies in that state. Conversely, China's support of democratic norms in the UN is acceptable under its non-interference policy because no specific state is being coerced into changing the structure of its government.

One key aspect of this pattern in Chinese voting records is that China is not inherently against democracy; rather, the PRC rejects the attempts by the UN to impose different forms of governance, whether democratic or nondemocratic, on a Member State. This distinction is most apparent in China's support for democracy in the UN system. If China fully rejected democratic rule, one would assume that it

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<sup>143</sup> A/RES/58/196

<sup>144</sup> A/RES/62/169

<sup>145</sup> A/RES/63/189 and A/RES/63/167

would not have supported A/RES/63/189 and A/RES/63/167, which upholds the democratic nature of the UN. However, China wants to have a say in the UN and the democratic norms under which the UN governs itself do not directly impede upon the sovereignty of a specific Member State.

*Pattern 2: Expanding UN Monitoring Missions*

A second pattern or ‘red line’ in China’s non-interference policy concerns the role of UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs). China is only supportive of PKOs when the host country where the operation will take place supports the creation of that PKO. However, China has rejected all attempts by the Security Council to expand PKOs and monitoring missions without the consent of the host nation. For instance, China supported the initial mandate of United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and has voted in favor of continuing to renew its mandate each year. However, attempts to expand the operation beyond its initial mandate, which was not approved by the South Sudanese government, were rejected by Beijing. This is strong evidence that China supports the integrity of national sovereignty over the interventions of international operations. It is important to note that the Security Council is the only body that can establish PKOs and monitoring missions in the UN. In voting, China abstained from authorizing the expansion of the African Union (AU) mission in the Sudan<sup>146</sup> and establishing an international human rights monitoring group in South Sudan as a subsidiary body to

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<sup>146</sup> S/RES/1564

UNMISS.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, China additionally abstained from expanding UNMISS<sup>148</sup> and the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)<sup>149</sup> while vetoing the expansion of the United Nations Preventative Deployment Force (UNPREDEP)<sup>150</sup> in the former Yugoslavia. All of these resolutions and draft resolutions would have expanded a UN PKO without the consent of the host country, illustrating China's commitment to respecting a country's national sovereignty.

Even more, China's refusal to support the expansion of UNMISS illustrates that Beijing will adhere to its policy of non-interference even at times when its national interests may not be furthered by it. Following the kidnapping of Chinese workers from South Sudanese oil fields in 2012, UNMISS has been crucial in ensuring the security of the extractive industry from militant violence. Thus, it is surprising that China would vote against an expansion of this PKO given its growing interests as an economic stakeholder in South Sudan. However, China respected the South Sudanese's desire to not expand the operation. Clearly, China's non-interference policy can even trump its national interests abroad.

Although China rejected the expansion of various PKOs and monitoring missions, China has supported the creation of these same PKOs. For instance, China supported the creation of UNMISS,<sup>151</sup> UNAMID,<sup>152</sup> and UNPREDEP.<sup>153</sup> This distinction is important because for a PKO to be established, a Member State must allow the UN to enter its borders. In essence, although a PKO may take place in a

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<sup>147</sup> S/RES/1556

<sup>148</sup> S/RES/1706

<sup>149</sup> S/RES/1945

<sup>150</sup> S/1999/201

<sup>151</sup> S/RES/1663

<sup>152</sup> S/RES/1769

<sup>153</sup> S/RES/1186



certain state, China ensures that the state accepting the operation is in agreement with it occurring within its borders. However, attempts in the UN to expand these operations without the consent of the host state has been a point of contention for China and it has not voted in favor of any resolution of this nature.

This pattern of only voting in favor of UN missions invited by the host country is in line with Chinese non-interference policy. According to Beijing's policy, expanding a mission without the consent of the state where the mission will take place is a clear violation of that state's sovereignty. In other words, if a state does not want international monitors or peacekeepers to work within its borders, China sees this as directly undermining that state's right to choose what happens within its territory. Conversely, if a state openly invites a UN PKO or monitoring mission to exist within its borders, China believes that the establishment of a certain mission is not a violation of sovereignty due to the fact that the state appealed to the UN to establish an operation.

### *Pattern 3: Article 41*

*Article 41* of the UN Charter mandates that the Security Council can impose economic sanctions, embargoes, asset freezes, and travel bans. In essence, it is a tool consisting of economic sanctions through which the international community can punish states that are allegedly undermining international norms. However, China has chosen not to vote in favor of any resolution that would invoke *Article 41*, or even threaten to invoke *Article 41*, if a country fails to change its policies. Therefore, China has abstained from a number of Security Council and General Assembly

resolutions that have attempted to invoke, through the Security Council, or threatens to invoke the use of *Article 41* against a certain Member State. Some of the topics of these resolutions include, but are not limited to, invoking asset freezes on certain members of the Taliban government in Afghanistan,<sup>154</sup> imposing economic sanctions, an arms embargo, targeted asset freezes, and travel bans against the Sudanese government,<sup>155</sup> establishing individual asset freezes against the Libyan government and military officials,<sup>156</sup> and enacting an arms embargo against Eritrea.<sup>157</sup>

China's decision to reject resolutions that reinforce the Security Council's ability to enact economic punishments through *Article 41* illustrates China's devotion to its own policy of non-interference. Effectively China is depoliticizing *Article 41*, contending that economic measures should not be a form of punishment but should be carried out without regard to the political situation in a Member State. Thus, *Article 41* directly undermines Chinese non-interference policy because it is a tool for the UN to punish a state, ultimately desiring to change that state's policies. However, coercing a state to alter its policies suggests that the UN is attempting to have some sort of say in the politics of that country, thus intruding upon the sovereignty of that state to pursue any policy it wishes. In effect, China has shown its discontent with *Article 41* and, in doing so, stays loyal to its non-interference policy.

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<sup>154</sup> S/RES/1333

<sup>155</sup> S/RES/1564, S/RES/1556, S/RES/1593, and S/RES/1591

<sup>156</sup> S/RES/1973

<sup>157</sup> S/RES/1907

#### *Pattern 4: Human rights and the ICC*

Since 2000, China has not voted in favor of any UN resolution that specifically targets a Member State's human rights record or seeks to subject a Member State to the International Criminal Court (ICC), of which China is not a member after rejecting the *Rome Statute*.<sup>158</sup> China is perhaps particularly sensitive about this topic not only due to its allegedly poor record on human rights, but also based on the long history of conflict between China and Western countries, especially the United States, on this topic, in which some Western politicians, such as presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton, have publically pressured Beijing to better its human rights record. Moreover, in 2008 many human rights activists, outraged that Beijing was hosting the Olympic games despite its human rights record, coined the Olympics as the "blood games."<sup>159</sup>

Nonetheless, when considering China's voting record in the in the General Assembly, China has abstained from human rights-based resolutions targeting the Democratic Republic of the Congo,<sup>160</sup> Turkmenistan,<sup>161</sup> the Islamic Republic of Iran,<sup>162</sup> Syria,<sup>163</sup> and the former Yugoslavia.<sup>164</sup> Moreover, China has consistently voted against General Assembly resolutions exclusively targeting human rights abuses in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,<sup>165</sup> Myanmar,<sup>166</sup> Belarus,<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Jia, 2006, p. 5

<sup>159</sup> Thrall, 2015, p. 72

<sup>160</sup> A/RES/57/117, A/RES/56/173, and A/RES/57/233, A/RES/57/232 and A/RES/56/174

<sup>161</sup> A/RES/58/194 and A/RES/59/206

<sup>162</sup> A/RES/60/172 and A/RES/59/206

<sup>163</sup> A/RES/66/176

<sup>164</sup> A/RES/67/243

<sup>165</sup> A/RES/66/225 and A/RES/63/190

<sup>166</sup> A/RES/64/176

<sup>167</sup> A/RES/62/169

Uzbekistan,<sup>168</sup> and Sudan.<sup>169</sup> In the Security Council, Beijing abstained from establishing human rights monitoring missions and subjecting individuals to the ICC in Sudan,<sup>170</sup> Eritrea,<sup>171</sup> and Libya<sup>172</sup> while vetoing resolutions that would subject Syria,<sup>173</sup> Zimbabwe,<sup>174</sup> and Myanmar<sup>175</sup> to human rights monitors and the ICC.

It is interesting to note that China's voting record in the UN on human rights and the ICC closely resembles that of *Pattern 1: Democratic Reforms and Free and Fair Elections*. As previously stated, China does not support resolutions that target a specific state to promote democratic proliferation. However, the PRC supports democratic norms within international forums. A similar pattern exists concerning Chinese votes on human rights. This pattern suggests that Beijing rejects any resolution that targets a specific country for alleged abuses while supporting broad-based human rights resolutions that do not target particular Member States and do not result in substantive action being taken by the UN in reforming the domestic laws of Member States. For instance, China voted in favor of having representative geographic distribution of Member States in human rights bodies<sup>176</sup> and the *Optional Protocol of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.<sup>177</sup> The latter of which does not call upon Member States to sign the document but merely asks them to consider it. Moreover, there are no repercussions for choosing not to adopt the *Optional Protocol*. Fundamentally, China only supports broad based

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<sup>168</sup> A/RES/60/174

<sup>169</sup> A/RES/57/230

<sup>170</sup> S/RES/1290, S/RES/1564, S/RES/1593, and S/RES/1591

<sup>171</sup> S/RES/1907

<sup>172</sup> S/RES/1973

<sup>173</sup> S/2012/538, S/2012/77, and S/RES/2011/612

<sup>174</sup> S/2008/447

<sup>175</sup> S/2007/14

<sup>176</sup> A/RES/63/167

<sup>177</sup> A/RES/63/192

human rights resolutions that do not attempt to pressure Member States into changing their own domestic laws while rejecting resolutions that seek to monitor and ultimately change the current status of human rights in a state.

This pattern very strictly resembles a compliance with Chinese non-interference policy. A major part of China's foreign policy formulation is based upon the notion that each state has a unique perception of human rights and it is unjust for the UN to try and punish a state for its 'abuses.' China even rejects resolutions that denounce the death penalty<sup>178</sup> and honor killings<sup>179</sup> because a resolution that does so could result in the UN attempting to punish states that have laws allowing for the death penalty, like the United States and China, or honor killings, like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. Therefore, China clearly views resolutions that seek to punish a state or change a state's domestic policy as interference. However, broad human rights resolutions, in which no state is subject to scrutiny on its human rights record, do not interfere with a state's sovereignty and have been supported by Beijing through its non-interference policy.

#### *Pattern 5: Disarmament and Weapons Stockpiles*

Disarmament, especially that of nuclear weapons stockpiles, is one of the most visible policy issues within the UN system. In fact, the first resolution ever passed in the General Assembly, A/RES/1/1, established a commission to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic weapons, illustrating the significance of nuclear non-proliferation in the UN. However, China has decisively rejected

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<sup>178</sup> A/RES/59/197

<sup>179</sup> A/RES/55/66

resolutions that would pressure Beijing into eliminating or significantly decreasing its nuclear arsenal. For example, China has abstained from any resolution that advocates for the total elimination of nuclear weapons globally,<sup>180</sup> promotes “reducing nuclear danger,”<sup>181</sup> which includes nuclear disarmament and reducing state’s readiness to use nuclear weapons, or enforces obligations under the *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* (NPT) for Member States to disarm their nuclear stockpiles.<sup>182</sup> In addition to rejecting attempts by the UN to disarm nuclear arsenals around the world, China also abstained from additional resolutions that call for the prohibition of mines<sup>183</sup> and ballistic missile stockpile reductions.<sup>184</sup>

In terms of understanding Chinese non-interference policy, it is clear that China’s voting on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons stockpiles is captured under non-interference policy. From the point of view of a Chinese diplomat, states have the autonomy and sovereignty to build up their military arsenals within their own borders. Thus, urging Member States to reduce or eliminate their military stockpiles is an intrusion upon the sovereign right of that state to pursue the policies it pleases. From nuclear weapons to mines and ballistic missiles, China contends that there is no place for the UN to intrude upon a Member State’s sovereignty and ultimately attempt to sway that state into reducing its military capacity.

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<sup>180</sup> A/RES/33R, A/RES/56/124N, and A/RES/57/78,

<sup>181</sup> A/RES/64/37 and A/RES/65/60

<sup>182</sup> A/RES/66/28 and A/RES/68/35

<sup>183</sup> A/RES/59/84 and A/RES/58/53,

<sup>184</sup> A/RES/65/37 and A/RES/65/60.

### *Pattern 6: Disputed Territories*

China has been very careful in abstaining from all resolutions that deals with internationally disputed territories since 2000, including the legal status of these territories and their peoples. For instance Beijing abstained from upholding the territorial integrity of Ukraine,<sup>185</sup> determining the legal status of on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in Abkhazia, Georgia,<sup>186</sup> defining the status of the Armenian occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan,<sup>187</sup> and identifying the territorial integrity of Cyprus,<sup>188</sup> which is occupied by Turkey in its northern regions. Although these resolutions are diverse in substance, for instance A/RES/68/262 focuses on Ukraine's territorial integrity while A/RES/64/296 focuses on IDPs and refugees, China continuously abstains from involving itself in any aspect of these territorial disputes. Perhaps Beijing's rational for doing so is based on the fact that China struggles with its own territorial disputes, namely that of Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea. I will expand upon this idea in the following section. China views its own territorial disputes as an internal problem, in which Beijing refers to Taiwan as its 'rogue province.' As an internal issue falling under the jurisdiction of a sovereign Chinese state, non-interference policy promotes the ideal that it is not up to another state or the UN to get involved in these disputes. Thus, China is following its own policy of non-interference by abstaining from any resolution that deals with these territorial disputes.

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<sup>185</sup> A/RES/68/262

<sup>186</sup> A/RES/68/274, A/RES/66/307, A/RES/63/307, and A/RES/64/296

<sup>187</sup> A/RES/66/35

<sup>188</sup> A/RES/68/143

Abstaining from, rather than voting ‘no’ on these sensitive resolutions is important because a negative vote could notion Chinese support for a certain state that claims the disputed territory. For example, if China were to vote against A/RES/68/262 on Ukraine’s territorial integrity, it may be interpreted as a sign of support to Russia and its territorial aspirations in eastern Ukraine. Consequently, China has followed its principle of non-interference by choosing not to become involved in the affairs of disputed territories.

*Pattern 7: Admission of States Supporting Taiwan*

When compiling these data, I found that China abstained from S/RES/1290, in which the Security Council recommends that Tuvalu be admitted as a Member State into the UN. In order to explain this seemingly strange vote, it was necessary to research older (pre-2000) votes on the admission of new states into the UN, in which it became clear that that China has not supported the admission of any state that recognizes the ROC instead of the PRC.<sup>189</sup> This portion of research focuses Chinese voting patterns concerning resolutions admitting both former UN Trust Territories and aspiring UN Member States into UN. UN Trust Territories were territories that were not yet self-governing states following the Third Wave of Democratization and decolonization. Thus, the UN’s Trusteeship Council worked with neighboring Member States to build the capacity of the Trust Territories with the goal that these territories would eventually become independent states with a seat in the UN. Given that there are no UN Trust Territories, the Trusteeship Council

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<sup>189</sup> S/RES/1290



only convenes on an ad hoc basis.<sup>190</sup> After collecting data on whether these territories recognized the PRC or ROC, it became clear that the ‘Taiwan issue’ does inherently influence how China votes in the UN.

While it is not a former Trust Territory, Tuvalu was one of the last states to be admitted into the UN. By focusing on former Tuvalu’s relations with the PRC and ROC, China’s abstention from S/RES/1290 is much clearer. Tuvalu gained independence from the UK in 1978 and subsequently recognized the ROC the following year.<sup>191</sup> As part of Beijing’s “One China” Policy, in which states who desire to have diplomatic relations with the PRC must only recognize China and denounce diplomatic relations with Taiwan, China was clearly dissatisfied with Tuvalu’s decision to support the ROC. In fact, the ROC is the only nation that has a resident embassy in Tuvalu.<sup>192</sup> Thus, China’s decision to abstain from S/RES/1290, in which it views Tuvalu’s relations with Taiwan as a violation of Beijing’s sovereignty and, therefore, an interference with Chinese domestic policy, is much easier to comprehend. China has followed this same pattern in many other votes on admitting Member States into the UN.

Palau, a former Trust Territory that gained independence from the United States in 1994, was granted a seat at the UN in the same year. After being admitted into the UN, with Chinese backing, the country decided to forge diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1999, cutting off ties with the PRC.<sup>193</sup> Similarly, the Marshall Islands gained UN membership in 1991, with Chinese support, but did not recognize Taiwan

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<sup>190</sup> “The UN Trusteeship Council,” The United Nations

<sup>191</sup> “CIA World Factbook: Tuvalu”

<sup>192</sup> Ibid

<sup>193</sup> “CIA World Factbook: Palau”

until after 1998.<sup>194</sup> In addition, the Solomon Islands were granted UN membership, with support from Beijing, in 1978 but did not recognize Taiwan until 1983.<sup>195</sup> Kiribati, which gained a seat at the UN in 1999 with China's support, did not switch its recognition from the PRC to the ROC until 2003.<sup>196</sup> Similarly, Nauru also gained UN membership in 1999, with China's support, and later switched recognition from the PRC to the ROC. In these cases, new states were admitted into the UN with Chinese support and only switched their recognition to the ROC after being admitted into the UN. More so, as a result of China's One China policy, the states that recognize the ROC have no official diplomatic ties with China. Perhaps these previously aspiring UN Member States knew that Beijing would reject their admission if they recognized Taiwan, which would explain why so many of these states switched their recognition from the PRC to the ROC after being admitted into the UN.

Papua New Guinea and Western Samoa, two former Trust Territories that were administered by Australia and New Zealand respectively, now recognize the PRC. Both Papua New Guinea and Western Samoa, because they were directly administered by sovereign states, already had de facto recognition of the PRC because their administering states held diplomatic relations with the PRC beginning in 1972 (one year after it took the ROC's seat in the UN).<sup>197</sup> Thus, granting both Papua New Guinea and Western Samoa UN membership in the 1975 gained Beijing's support because neither aspiring state recognized Taiwan and both nations were

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<sup>194</sup> "CIA World Factbook: Marshall Islands"

<sup>195</sup> "CIA World Factbook: Solomon Islands"

<sup>196</sup> "CIA World Factbook: Kiribati"

<sup>197</sup> "CIA World Factbook: Guinea"

being administered by states that had full diplomatic relations with only the PRC. Since independence and UN membership, both Papua New Guinea and Western Samoa have only recognized the PRC. Micronesia similarly was granted a seat in the UN with the support of the PRC in 1991 and has never recognized Taiwan as a sovereign state.<sup>198</sup>

The admission of Bangladesh into the UN further shows the importance of the Taiwan issue in formulating Beijing's voting record. China vetoed S/10771 in 1972, which recommended to the General Assembly to admit Bangladesh into the UN. However, Bangladesh had not yet recognized the PRC and did not until it was officially admitted into the UN in 1975 (a simple majority in the General Assembly is sufficient to admit new Member States). It appears that if states recognized Taiwan prior to their UN bid, Beijing did not support their admission into the UN. This pattern of rejecting the admission of states that recognize the ROC is directly related to China's policy of non-interference. Taiwan is perhaps the most sensitive territorial disputed for the PRC and supporting Taiwan is, in effect, infringing upon the sovereignty of Beijing in attempting to influence the affairs within its own territories. Thus, Beijing rejects any notion of a state infringing upon its own sovereignty defined by its interpretation of non-interference policy.

The seven patterns previously identified illustrate China's dedication to its policy of non-interference in the international arena. It appears that Beijing acts in the UN with strict accordance to this policy to a point of predictability in how the PRC will vote given a specific agenda item. Rather than arbitrarily voting for a

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<sup>198</sup> "CIA World Factbook: Western Samoa"

resolution given current circumstances around the world, it appears that China is more concerned with consistently staying true to its principle of non-interference. Thus, a similar pattern has emerged in which Beijing only supports the admission of states into the UN if they recognize the PRC instead of the ROC.

### **Chinese Voting Patterns Applied to Interpretations of Sino-African Relations**

In assessing the various schools of interpreting Sino-African relations, the aforementioned patterns I have established can be applied to each method of interpretation (Chinese Imperialism, Great Power Rivalry, and Economic Engagement), providing greater validation for some arguments while delegitimizing others. Although many aspects of Chinese foreign policy are kept secret, as is the case with nearly every state, China's voting record in the Security Council and in the General Assembly does provide a great deal of insight to the true nature of Sino-African affairs. The pro-imperial and neocolonial arguments are significantly weakened when applied to the patterns within Chinese voting records. Conversely, there is evidence in these patterns suggesting that there may be elements of a great power rivalry when interpreting Sino-African relations.

#### *Imperialism*

These findings most clearly delegitimize the argument that China is an imperial power in Africa with the hope of establishing a modern empire, while providing validation to the position that China is not, in fact, a rising imperial power in Africa. As previously outlined, China appears to strictly adhere to its policy of

non-interference, which is contradictory to empire-building. In other words, China's policy of non-interference is clearly defined in various PRC white papers, and Beijing stays true to this ideology as discussed in the prior section. In short, Beijing's foreign policy rhetoric matches the actions it takes in reality. In turn, African leaders continue to do business, forge agreements, and establish multilateral forums with China. More importantly, in these multilateral Sino-African forums, such as FOAC, there is no one country that is granted disproportionate voting power. Rather, each state is represented quite equally regardless of its size or geostrategic importance. Thus, it would be difficult for one to argue that China is attempting to subject African states to submit to Chinese influence and essentially become part of a Sino-Empire.

One can apply *Pattern 2: Expanding UN Monitoring Missions* to Sino-African engagements to illustrate that accusing China of trying to establish a global empire is farfetched. China's rejection of expanding UN missions is entirely based on the willingness of the host state to have an augmented operation within its borders. Thus, China rejects undesired military intervention in a country and, therefore, seems to not be involved in attempting to completely dominate African states to establish an empire.

### *Great Power Rivalry*

Based on my findings, there seems to be evidence supporting the possibility that China is involved in a Great Power Rivalry against the West. *Pattern 1: Democratic Reforms and Free and Fair Elections* can be applied to strengthen the

argument of those who believe Chinese policy deliberately challenges the West. The primary goal of the UN is to enforce and protect the sovereignty of its Member States. However, promoting democratic governance and free and fair elections does not necessarily protect the sovereignty of a state. Rather, it attempts to change a state's domestic governance structure to spread Western democratic forms of governance. Therefore, Chinese efforts to curb governments, particularly Western governments, from using the UN to promote democracy in particular states suggests that there *may* be a Great Power Rivalry at play.

It is important to note that China's voting record in the UN, in which it does not support promoting democratic reforms in specific countries, can be used to support advocates of the pro-Great Power Rivalry understanding of Sino-African relations. However, one must remember that promoting any form of governance would be a violation of Chinese non-interference policy. Unfortunately, there are no UN resolutions promoting any other sort of governance, be it a monarchy, theocracy, oligarchy, or one party rule, similar to China's governance structure. If such a resolution existed, it would be far easier to understand Chinese intentions. For instance, if China supported a resolution that called upon a democratic Member State to adopt governance reforms similar to the Chinese system, one would be able to quickly realize that China is more concerned with promoting its brand of governance around the world. However, if China rejected such a resolution, one could readily conclude that China is more concerned with following its non-interference policy than fueling a Great Power Rivalry.

Furthermore, *Pattern 5: Disarmament and Weapons Stockpiles* clearly represents the possibility of Chinese involvement in a Great Power Rivalry. One key element of Chinese global hegemony is the fact that the PRC has a nuclear arsenal, large military, and long-range ballistic missile capabilities. China's unwavering position to protect its military capabilities, especially nuclear capabilities, from UN scrutiny suggests that it wishes to continue to be a rising nuclear power. If Beijing were to promote policies in the UN to disarm nuclear warheads across the globe, one could more easily dismiss claims that China is involved in a Great Power Rivalry. However, in order to militarily compete with other nuclear armed states, there is more incentive for China to continue its nuclear weapons program just as many Western powers do, including the US, UK, and France. Compromising China's military could, therefore, put China in a position in which Western states are unmatched militarily.

*Pattern 7: Admission of States Supporting Taiwan* is also relevant in evaluating the Great Power Rivalry assessment of Sino-African relations. Taiwan's close relationship with Western powers, especially its economic and military relationship with the US, has been a point of contention for the PRC. Thus, attempting to block nations that recognize Taiwan from gaining a seat at the UN inherently weakens the position of those states that support the ROC. In other words, by not supporting states that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, China is undermining the position of states that believe the ROC should be an autonomous, self-governing, state. It may be politically difficult for an aspiring state to feel it can recognize Taiwan and, essentially, alienate itself from the PRC.

### *Economic Engagement*

There is a great deal of debate concerning the consequences of Chinese economic interactions in Africa. Essentially, some scholars hold that Chinese economic investments in Africa are neocolonial, exploitative, and heavily imbalanced in favor of China, whereas opponents of this position contend that Chinese economic actions in Africa are mostly mutually beneficial. *Pattern 3: Article 41* can be applied to this ideological group, essentially aiding the mutual benefits argument. By rejecting any notion of *Article 41* in UN resolutions, China is depoliticizing the international economic mechanism meant to punish states and ultimately pressure them into policy reform. One would assume that China would be able to dominate weaker African states, both politically and economically. However, Chinese seems to be 'leveling the playing field' by taking politics out of economics within the UN system. Thus, China is working towards economically engaging African states in a more equal position rather than completely dominating African economic policy prior to entering a country's market.

However, despite the fact that China seems to be depoliticizing some aspects of economic engagements through its rejection of *Article 41*, Chinese voting records in the UN do not illustrate the specific consequences of China's economic policy on particular African states. Nonetheless, actively undermining *Article 41* to more equally engage with African economies may point to a desire by China to have a mutually beneficial relationship with its African counterparts.



## **Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has shown that China's policy of non-interference should be taken seriously and treated as a legitimate foreign policy doctrine rather than meaningless rhetoric or propaganda. Moreover, Beijing's adherence to non-interference has serious implications for the major schools of thought on Sino-African relations. These findings undermine claims that China is a rising imperial state or neocolonial power in Africa while given further legitimacy to the argument that China is invested in a Great Power Rivalry against the West and the notion that China is pursuing mutually beneficial relationships with African states. Although these findings do not definitely indicate that one method of understanding Sino-African affairs is the 'best,' it does provide crucial insight concerning the strength of each argument when contextualized in non-interference policy.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Winners and Losers: African Mining and International Labor Standards**

#### **Introduction and Findings**

The findings of this study are as follows:

- 1) Mining firms from developed countries and mining firms from developing countries behave similarly in their adherence to international labor standards while operating in Africa
- 2) Mining firms from developed states abide by ILO labor standards nearly the same as mining firms from China; both have significantly less labor violations than African and Canadian mining corporations while violating more ILO labor standards than firms from the developing world<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> The categorization of firms from the developing world excludes African and Chinese mining firms

- 3) African mining corporations violate international labor standards far more than Chinese, Canadian, and other mining firms from developing nations
- 4) Chinese mining state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private Chinese mining firms followed international labor standards equally

### *Introduction*

The African extractive industry is the largest natural resource market in the world, with the highest or second highest quantities of bauxite, cobalt, diamonds, phosphate rocks, platinum-group metals, vermiculite, and zirconium in the world, as well as containing an estimated 40% of global gold reserves.<sup>200</sup> As the world recovers from the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis, the importance of and reliance upon rare African natural resources is becoming significantly more essential to global commodity production chains, including technological products, household goods, electrical wiring, luxury goods, and nuclear energy. Most mineral excavation and mine development on the continent now focuses on gold and diamond exploration and, given the rising demand and prices of both resources, many African states are facing an influx of revenue from the often lucrative mining industry.<sup>201</sup> Much of the mining boom in Africa can be contributed to China's need for resources as major Chinese firms, such as Jiangxi Copper Company, redirect global mining operations onto the African continent. However, the mineral extraction boom in Africa has been geographically diverse rather than being limited to only one region.

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<sup>200</sup> Basov, 2015, par. 4

<sup>201</sup> Idem, par. 6-7

South Africa, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Zambia, and the DRC continue to dominate the African mining sector while the extractive industries in Angola, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Botswana, and Gabon are expanding at large rates.<sup>202</sup>

In the context of Sino-African relations, China is now Africa's largest trading partner, surpassing the US in 2009, primarily exporting natural resources from the continent that are then used by Chinese manufacturers to produce goods that are exported around the world or used to build infrastructure in China. Moreover, many African countries, especially Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Sierra Leone, and Zambia, are becoming increasingly reliant upon the mining sector to earn foreign currency, such as the American dollar and Chinese yuan, to buy commodities on the global market.<sup>203</sup> In fact, Sino-Zimbabwean mining relations have become so interconnected that Zimbabwe became the first country in Africa to adopt the Chinese yuan as its main form of domestic currency.<sup>204</sup>

Many researchers have emphasized potential consequences from the impact of Chinese corporate engagements in Africa and whether China should be trusted as a benign developer or exploitative, even neocolonial power. Much of the scrutiny directed at Chinese corporations in Africa stems from a 2011 report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) concerning Chinese labor standards in the Zambian copper mines. The report accused the largest Chinese copper corporation in Zambia, China Non-Ferrous Mining Corporation (CNMC), of deliberately violating the rights of

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<sup>202</sup> Basov, 2015, par. 14

<sup>203</sup> Biesebroeck, 2005, p. 548

<sup>204</sup> Idem, p. 553

Zambian laborers through failing to implement proper health and safety standards, punishing those who sought to practice their collective bargaining rights, and discriminating against Zambian workers to favor Chinese managers. The report titled, "You'll Be Fired if You Refuse," is provocative in its assessment of Chinese, SOEs. However, the scope of the report and the subsequent claims by HRW must be addressed. Nonetheless, the 2011 report has been cited by scholars including Yan Hairong and Barry Sautman as well as appearing in numerous reputable newspapers, such as the *BBC*, *Time Magazine*, and *The New York Times*, as conclusive evidence that China is taking advantage of African miners.<sup>205</sup>

The scope of the report, in which interviews were conducted with 193 miners in Zambia's copper-producing districts between November 2010 and July 2011, placed greater scrutiny on Chinese firms as opposed to other foreign firms. Nearly half (95) of the interviewees were from Chinese-run mines while only 48 were from non-Chinese foreign-run mines, despite the fact that China is neither Zambia's greatest import-export partner nor biggest investor in the copper industry. Moreover, Zambia's state-run mines were not included in the report and only seven mining companies were evaluated in total, indicating that 48 interviewees were distributed amongst the six non-Chinese firms, averaging 8 interviewees per company as opposed to 95 interviewees working in Chinese mines.<sup>206</sup> The remaining sectors of Zambia's mining industry were not included in the report. The report's claim also attempts to make large-scale assumptions from the niche case study upon which it relies. It suggests that Chinese corporations are not only acting

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<sup>205</sup> Hairong and Sautman, 2015, p. 774

<sup>206</sup> "You'll Be Fired If Your Refuse," 2011, par. 16

against international labor regulations in Zambia but also allowing or being complacent to other labor violations and malpractice despite the fact that the report only focuses on seven copper mines in Zambia.<sup>207</sup> It is important to note that although it is preferable for mining companies to abide by international and domestic regulations, in reality violations do occur.

As Chinese extractive corporations further deepen their ties with African states, there is the potential for the debate concerning the nature of Sino-African relations to ensue longer. This chapter seeks to determine the impact of Chinese corporations in Africa and assess how these engagements should be understood in the context of the leading interpretations of Sino-African relations, namely that of Chinese Imperialism, a Great Power Rivalry, and Chinese Economic Engagements with Africa. For instance, if both Western and Chinese mining firms are violating labor standards significantly more than African extractive companies, this finding may suggest that a Great Power Rivalry is at play in which the West and China are deliberately undermining international labor regulations to be more profitable than competitors. Conversely, if Chinese mining firms have significantly less labor violations than African or other multinational mining companies, this finding could indicate that China is not a neocolonial power but should be viewed as a benign developer for African states. My findings show that Chinese mining firms in Africa tend to behave very similarly to other foreign mining firms on the continent and adhere to ILO mining standards better than African mining companies, indicating

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<sup>207</sup> "You'll Be Fired If Your Refuse," 2011, par. 35

that China may not be a neocolonial power in Africa and that China and the West may not be using Africa to wage a Great Power Rivalry.

The following section of this chapter will outline the methodology used in the study, then evaluate the findings and what they mean for the major schools of understanding Sino-African relations, and finally discuss the implications of these findings to China's non-interference policy in Africa.

### *Methodology*

In evaluating corporate mining standards in Africa, it was essential to first determine which labor standards to use in assessing these corporations. The most inclusive labor organization is the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which includes 186 Member States as opposed to the 164 Member States within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), allowing all UN Member States to join the organization. Additionally, the ILO particularly specializes on international labor standards and best practices to enforce these regulations. Moreover, China, as well as every African country, is a member to the ILO. Within the ILO, which was created in 1919 as part of the *Treaty of Versailles*, there are numerous conventions outlining labor standards.<sup>208</sup> However, most states hold reservations to at least one of these conventions, making the choice of which labor standards to use as a baseline for corporate evaluation exceedingly difficult. Also due to the heterogeneous nature of mining laws - there are 54 African states that all have different mining and labor

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<sup>208</sup> "About the ILO," International Labour Organisation

laws – using the ILO was necessary to have some sort of common basis by which to evaluate the diverse mining industry in Africa.

As a result, I found it to appropriate to use the *1998 ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (ILO Declaration from here forth)* as a baseline for this evaluation. The *ILO Declaration* adopts four universal rights to all people, regardless of reservations that states may have to other international labor conventions. The four categories of these universal rights are as follows:

- 1) Freedom of association and recognition of the right to collective bargain
- 2) Elimination of compulsory or forced labor
- 3) Abolition of child labor
- 4) Elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation

These four principles are significant in that they are also the longest standing articles upon which the ILO was established; there are now a total of 19 additional ILO articles since the organization's conception. Thus, each Member State to the ILO joins that organization knowing that these are the fundamental values that the ILO enforces.<sup>209</sup>

To constitute a labor violation, I deemed it necessary to find no less than three different media stories or NGO reports citing the same alleged labor violation by a specific mining firm. Violations ranged from labor strikes instigated by a lack of safety and health standards, in which some firms were illegally mining without permits, to reports that managers at mines were preventing workers from practicing their collective bargaining rights and punishing those who attempted to

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<sup>209</sup> "About the ILO," International Labour Organisation



do so. Conversely, I determined that a firm did not violate the chosen ILO standards if there were no reports of these violations or if there were no less than two reports commending the company for its close adherence to labor standards.

After establishing a basis against which different corporations were evaluated, it was necessary to compile a list that best represented the major extraction companies active in Africa, keeping in mind the geographic diversity of where the companies have operations in Africa, total revenue flows, etc. Due to the scope of this project, I chose to focus this study on the mining industry in Africa as a result of the intense criticism Chinese mining companies have faced on the continent in the past decade and especially within the past five years. Additionally, the importance of mining to Beijing is clear in that by 2011, mining was the second largest sector in terms of total global stock of Chinese outward FDI, totaling US\$66,995,370,000 of aggregate global investment out of a total of US\$424,780,670,000 in outward Chinese investments.<sup>210</sup>

There were a number of barriers in creating such as list. First, a lack of both governmental transparency of SOEs as well as a lack of transparency from private companies made it difficult to determine exactly which companies were active in which parts of the continent as well as determining the revenue stream and political prowess of the company. Moreover, the relative novelty, since the mid 2000s, of Africa's resource boom became increasingly apparent given the lack of legitimate reporting on revenues, profits, and cost of operations. Underreporting or a failure to report statistics on mining operations contributed to this problem. To overcome

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<sup>210</sup> MOFCOM, 2011, p.75

these hurdles, it was necessary to find the mining companies with the highest stock IPO value and then complete extensive research on these companies to determine if they have significant operations in Africa, which allowed for the creation of list of the 50 most significant mining companies extracting resources from the continent.

I used the same method in creating a list of the 15 most significant Chinese and Canadian mining companies, 20 most significant African mining companies, and 25 most significant mining companies from the West (see footnote below).<sup>211</sup> Thus, comparing Canadian and Chinese firms could prove to be useful in testing the legitimacy of public assumptions concerning how closely both countries follow labor standards. These lists could then be used in a comparative method to evaluate if different firms act uniquely in regards to international labor standards in Africa's mining sector. For instance, it would be possible to determine if African mining corporations adhere to ILO standards more than Chinese firms. From these lists I could also determine which companies are SOEs and which companies are privately owned, potentially indicating whether SOEs are more or less strict when following international labor standards (see footnote below).<sup>212</sup>

After establishing a basis for evaluation and an adequate sample group from which to test, it was essential to determine a universal way to assess each company.

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<sup>211</sup> The top 15 Canadian firms were included due to the public contrast that Canadian mining firms face in comparison to that of Chinese mining companies. Canadian mining companies rarely face the same amount of public scrutiny as Chinese firms and are often assumed to follow labor policies strictly. Thus, comparing Canadian and Chinese firms could prove to be useful in testing the legitimacy of public assumptions concerning how closely both countries follow labor standards.

<sup>212</sup> It is important to note that given the relatively small sample size used in this study, accompanied by a general lack of transparency in the mining industry, there is the potential for some selection bias in terms of reports in African and foreign newspapers. However, in aggregate, the companies in this study constitute approximately 80% of the total mining revenue in Africa. This is significant insofar that the firms constitute such a large portion of the mining sector in Africa that they are likely indicative, if not representative, of overall mining operations in Africa.

Most mining firms included international labor standards on their home websites and ways in which they are promoting these standards, however, there was ultimately no information on any malpractice and labor violations from these companies (understandably so). Thus, newspapers, predominately local African newspapers, became the primary source for evaluating whether a company had violated the *ILO Declaration*. Without the ability to conduct fieldwork, widespread interviews with laborers, and a lack of on-the-ground fieldwork from the ILO, there is the ability for countries with a semi-free or closed press to hide some of the violations that may have occurred. However, the list of companies from which I am evaluating consists of the most significant mining firms in Africa, many of which are some of the largest companies in the world; thus, NGOs and CSOs that monitor labor rights also contained a great deal of information and field analysis of potential violations. Therefore, local African newspapers and detailed reports from leading mining and labor organizations, such as the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, were imperative in this evaluation.

## Implications of Findings for Sino-African Engagements

*Finding 1: Mining firms from developed countries and mining firms from developing countries behave similarly in their adherence to international labor standards while operating in Africa*

Firm Origin	Country	Violation (Yes)	Violation (No)	Percent of Firms with Violations	Percent of Firms without Violations
Developed		11	14	44%	56%
Developing		12	13	48%	52%

The fact that mining firms originating from both the developed and developing world did not have significant differences in how they follow international labor standards has a number of implications. When considering the legitimacy behind a Great Power Rivalry from these data, at first glance, one may argue that because there are few differences in labor violations between both categorizations of companies then there certainly is not a Great Power Rivalry at play. This assumption is based on the fact that it does not appear that one group is actively violating more labor standards in an effort to undermine other powers. However, I acknowledge that this finding could, in fact, support evidence that a Great Power Rivalry may be at play. For instance, nearly half, a staggering number, of the mining firms evaluated from both developed and developing states have violated the *ILO Declaration* since 2000. This reality could suggest that perhaps both developed and developing states are actively working to undermine one another, thus explaining why such a high number of firms have violated ILO standards.

However, it is also possible that these firms are seeking to maximize profits and ILO standards decrease efficiency, thus decreasing profits. Therefore, mining firms in Africa may intentionally attempt to circumvent ILO standards to cut expenditures and maximize revenues. Although these data could potentially be used by pro-Great Power Rivalry advocates and those who believe there is no Great Power Rivalry occurring in Africa, illuminating the common struggle of how to interpret data on Sino-African affairs. I believe the second finding, which is discussed on the following page, is more conclusive in leading to the potential argument that a Great Power Rivalry is not at play.

*Finding 2: Mining firms from the West abided by ILO labor nearly the same as mining firms from China; both outperformed African and Canadian mining corporations while being outperformed by firms from the developing world*

*Finding 3: African mining corporations violate international labor standards far more than Chinese, Canadian, and other mining firms from developing nations*

Firm country origin	Labor Violation (Y=yes)	Labor Violation (N=no)	Percent of Firms with Violations
China	8	7	53.3%
Canada	9	6	60%
Africa	14	6	70%
Western (Europe and North America, excluding Canada)	7	8	46.7%
Developing Countries (excluding China and Africa)	3	7	30%
Total (75)	41	34	54.67%

Due to the fact that labor standards from the top 15 mining firms from both the West and China were almost identical, and the reality that Western and Chinese mining firms performed better than any other categorization, except for that of firms from developing states (excluding Africa and China), I am lead to believe that these data have great significance for those who believe that China is neocolonial power in Africa, exploiting African resources and laborers to benefit Beijing.

Exploitation can be a biased and unclear term to define and even more difficult to measure. However, using the percent of labor violations by African-based mining firms as a basis for comparing Chinese labor violations, Africa being where the alleged exploitation is occurring by Beijing, it is clear that Chinese firms are adhering to ILO standards much more than African firms. Additionally, despite that fact that Canadian mining firms face much less public criticism and are rarely accused of intentionally exploiting laborers, Chinese mining firms were still able to perform better than their Canadian counterparts. I hold that China, therefore, is not an exploitative, neocolonial power in Africa based on this finding.

It is also important to keep in mind that given the strategic importance of the mining industry for governments to secure precious resources as well as to generate revenue, and considering the large scale of most mining companies, especially the firms selected for this study, mining companies traditionally maintain close relations with their home country's government. Thus, governments may intervene to protect their investments from foreign exploitation. For instance, research has shown that both Beijing and Washington have been involved in promoting and protecting Chinese and American mining companies respectively.<sup>213</sup> This reality may make it more difficult for a country to systematically exploit the mining sector of another country.

One may argue that Canadian firms are perceived to behave well, in terms of following labor standards, due to the fact that Canada's press is free and both the media and Canadian citizens closely monitor the activities of their country abroad.

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<sup>213</sup> Adem, 2010, p. 10

Thus, media outlets may feel less inclined to investigate potential labor violations based on the assumption that if a violation were to occur, the Canadian free press would immediately bring forth the problem. However, while a domestic audience is important in checking and balancing the activities of firms invested in lucrative industries, such as mining, and while China's closed press may potentially allow Chinese firms to avoid the same amount of scrutiny and oversight that Canadian firms face, it has become popular for media outlets and Western NGOs to uncover Chinese violations, as was the goal in the previously discussed Human Rights Watch 2011 report. Therefore, although a domestic audience with a free press can monitor the actions of mining firms, the international, as well as African, media outlets and Western NGOs have seemingly taken upon itself themselves to investigate and attempt to uncover Chinese labor violations in Africa.

A second indication from these data is that an intentionally planned Great Power Rivalry may be an illegitimate assumption concerning Chinese engagements in Africa. One would assume that Western and Chinese mining firms, if a Great Power Rivalry dictated Chinese policy in Africa, would be violating international labor regulations more regularly than any other categorization. A Great Power Rivalry suggests that global powers are actively working to undermine the objectives of the other powers. However, Western-based and Chinese firms essentially only performed worse than developing countries and also performed better than the average of the firms included, appearing not to be invested in a heated Great Power Rivalry.



*Finding 4: Chinese mining SOEs and private Chinese mining firms followed international labor standards equally*

	SOE (n=10)		Private (n=5)	
Violation (Y=yes N=no)	Y	N	Y	N
Chinese Firms	4	6	2	3
Percent	40%	60%	40%	60%

This finding is perhaps the most applicable in determining the legitimacy behind accusations that China is invested in a Great Power Rivalry as well as assertions that China is a neocolonial power in Africa. As represented in the table above, of the 15 most significant Chinese mining firms in Africa, ten are SOEs, which makes sense given that 12 of China’s biggest companies are run and owned by the state. In terms of a Great Power Rivalry, one would assume that companies owned by the Chinese state, in which the CPC decides who will run the SOE, would reflect the foreign policy objectives of the Chinese abroad. Thus, if China were involved in a Great Power Rivalry, SOEs may be more willing to try and circumvent international labor standards in an effort to increase efficiency against Western mining firms on the continent, believing that they will be protected by the Chinese government. On the other hand, SOEs may be advised by Beijing to follow labor laws as de facto representatives of the Chinese state. Nonetheless, one would expect Chinese SOEs to act differently than privately owned firms if a Great Power Rivalry was occurring.

However, it appears that both Chinese SOEs and privately owned companies are acting similarly in terms of respecting international labor standards. These data also suggests that China should not be solely viewed as a neocolonial power in Africa. Based on the data, it does not appear that the CPC is seeking to undermine international labor regulations any more than the five largest Chinese private mining firms operating throughout the continent. If Beijing were to be intentionally attempting to exploit African countries and labor, one could assume that there would be a major increase in the proportionality of violations by SOEs as opposed to privately operated firms.

Additionally, these data have significant indications for the argument that China may not be a neocolonial power in Africa. One would expect that if Beijing were to be executing a plan to exploit the economies of African states, making them dependent on China's 'know how' for future success, then SOE's adherence to international labor standards would be different than that of privately run Chinese companies. For instance, Chinese SOEs may feel protected by their government and be more likely to ignore international labor standards. Conversely, there is the possibility that Chinese SOEs may also adhere to international labor standards more than privately owned firms in order to responsibly represent Beijing abroad. However, because both Chinese SOEs and private mining firms followed labor standards similarly, this reality suggests that Beijing may not be systematically attempting to exploit African economies.

### *Implications for Non-Interference*

Investigating Chinese labor abuses in the African mining sector can also be reinterpreted through non-interference. Non-interference, based on the *5 Principles* outlined in Chapter 2, which include having mutually beneficial relations with states and peaceful coexistence, could be delegitimized if China was found to be systematically taking advantage of African laborers and methodically violating labor rights. Conversely, this study gives greater legitimacy to non-interference as an actual policy doctrine insofar that China is not violating labor standards any more than Western, developing, or African mining firms. Thus, through this evaluation on the African mining industry, it is clear that China is still largely adhering to its policy of non-interference.

### **Concluding Remarks**

These data have attempted to better interpret the true nature of Sino-African relations, primarily focusing on the complex and often lucrative mining sector. Although there continues to be no conclusive evidence suggesting which method of understanding Sino-African affairs is 'correct,' the findings in this paper do suggest that China may not be invested in a Great Power Rivalry in Africa and that Beijing's actions in Africa should not be quickly dismissed as exploitative and neocolonial. This empirical study and analysis hopes to set the tone for future research, especially in finding ways to measure the impacts of Chinese interactions in Africa. Furthermore, this study contributes to the legitimacy behind China's non-interference policy and this policy, by turn, must be taken seriously. Nonetheless, as

China continues to grow and Africa continues to export resources to world, the resource scramble to claim and extract African resources will continue to persist and, inevitably, Chinese corporations will continue to face public scrutiny.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Conclusions and Further Research**

Sino-African relations will continue to impact global power trends as China continues to actively engage with African states. This thesis has contributed to the debate concerning the nature of Sino-African affairs in a number of distinct ways. First, the three dominant schools of understanding Chinese actions in Africa were outlined and explained in-depth, they include: Chinese Imperialism, Great Power Rivalry, and Economic Engagement. However, the flaws within these categorizations, namely that of researchers treating them as mutually exclusive, have resulted in the misinterpretation of evidence and researchers interpreting the same evidence to argue in support of different schools of Sino-African thought. Making evidence 'fit' within the confines of one school of thought is an overarching issue in analyzing China-Africa area studies.

Perhaps the most provocative ideal this thesis raises is that Sino-African relations can be best interpreted through China's policy of non-interference.

Chapter 3 has been useful in determining that China's foreign policy principle of non-interference must be taken seriously and should not be immediately denied by speculative researchers. Furthermore, the fact that non-interference is a legitimate foreign policy principle, to which China strictly adheres, raises questions concerning the validity of the three main schools of Sino-African thought. For instance, if Chinese non-interference policy is publically made, followed by Beijing, and accepted by African states, it is more difficult to argue that China is an imperial power in Africa.

One goal of this thesis was to also illustrate the importance of using empirical data to evaluate the consequences of China's relations with African states. Rather than relying on predetermined assumptions about the nature of Chinese foreign policy, these empirical studies were meant to show that one cannot simply dismiss or accept the legitimacy of China's publically made foreign policy principles until a systematic study has been conducted to validate or delegitimize Chinese actions.

Future researchers should be cognizant of backing their claims with empirical data and avoid making predetermined assumptions concerning Chinese intentions in Africa. Although Sino-African area studies is a fairly new discipline, it has the potential to be one of the most important areas of scholarship in understanding international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps China's robust engagement with African states will usher in a new era of South-South cooperation, in which Beijing can rival US global supremacy. Or, it may be true that the US and China find common ground in Africa, considering that both powers have similar goals of ensuring stability in the continent to foster economic development. If this

assertion is true, China and the US may work more closely together, alleviating growing tensions between the two powers. However, the consequences of a potential Sino-American alliance in Africa is still unclear for both African governments and African people themselves. Nonetheless, China's engagement with Africa must not be understated and should be closely studied, monitored, and evaluated.

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## Honor Statement

"I affirm that I have carried out my academic endeavors with full academic honesty." [Signed, Josh Tryon]