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Africa's alternative to Europe

Increasing Chinese Investment, European Decline
and the People's Opinion

Bachelor's thesis in Europastudier

Supervisor: Anna Brigevid

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Abstract

In the last two decades, literature and empirical data has noted a growing shift in Africa. Chinese influence over the region has grown larger with a more popular perception than that of the west. China's minimal interference in domestic affairs and major infrastructure project initiative has given them given them favorability among the leaders and people alike. In contrast, the EU's investment and aid conditions aimed at changing the political and economic structure of partnering countries has made them of less popular in the region. This paper looks at the opinions held by the citizens of 32 African countries on the political and economic influence of their former colonial powers in Europe and China to determine which has more favorability on the continent. The quantitative method also highlights what variables correlate to positive perceptions in Africa, specifically among its people. Results from the analysis and literature show how China has become a new dominant foreign actor in the African arena as Europe attempts to maintain their influence on the continent amid competition arising from the Globalization of Foreign Direct investment.

Sammendrag

De siste to tiårene har litteraturen samt empirisk data merket et skifte i Afrika. Kinesisk innflytelse i regionen har vokst til å bli større og mer populær sammenlignet med vesten. Kinas minimalistiske involvering med internpolitikk og massive infrastruktur prosjekter har gitt dem favor hos både ledere og innbyggere. I motsetning til Kina har EU investeringers betingelser om politisk og økonomisk transformering av statsystemer i partnerland gjort dem mindre populære i regionen. Denne teksten bruker meningsmålinger fra innbyggere i 32 Afrikanske land for å se deres meninger om den politiske og økonomiske innflytelsen Kina og de tidligere kolonimaktene i Europa har hatt på hjemlandene deres og hvilken de foretrekker. Ved bruk av kvantitativ metode peker vi også på hvilke variabler som korrelerer til positive holdninger i Afrika, mer spesifikt, blant befolkningen. Resultatet av analysen og litteraturen viser at Kina nå har blitt den nye dominerende aktøren på den Afrikanske arenaen, ettersom Europa forsøker å opprettholde dets innflytelse på kontinentet tross den økte konkurransen globalisering av utenlandsk investering har medført.

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Introduction

The relationship between Europe and Africa is one marked by a dark colonial past and controversial political and economic dynamic. The traditional North-South paradigm put in place after the independence of African states from their former colonial powers has been a source of discussions in international politics but has remained rigid in terms of meaningful change. All of this has changed drastically within the past ten years as the traditional relation is being upended by the introduction of a new actor facilitating an alternative to the North-South dynamic. China's emerging role on the international scene as an influential political and economic actor on the world stage is poised to alter the relationship Europe and Africa have had in modern times, as their differing perspective on international relations has made them increasingly more popular in the developing world and among its citizens. The evolution prompts the question:

How have the attitudes towards Europe (the EU) changed in these African states as a result of growing Chinese influence?

China's increasing investment into the developing world, mainly through their "Belt and Road Initiative" has been a cause for both optimism and concern in international discourse(UNCTAD, 2023, p. 165). The plans to support the industrialization of resource rich, strategically important states have seen China get closer, economically, and diplomatically to countries in the global south(Dollar, 2019, p. 1). Countries in the South China Sea, The Middle East and Africa have all experienced massive increases in foreign direct investment (FDI) from China in recent decades. This culminated in the development of the Chinese "Belt and Road" launched in 2013, signifying new era of Chinese ventures into the developing world as well as preventing future resource scarcity(Jurencyk, 2020, p. 55).

The project has prompted questions surrounding the potential loss of European ground on the African continent as it seems to pivot ever more into the Chinese sphere of influence(Carbone, 2011, p. 211). The Chinese influence's expansion into former European colonies may lead to shifting allegiances, which may in turn force Europe to adjust her tactics in international relation and trade. Are we seeing an influence shift in Africa from Europe to China in light of the belt and road initiative and Chinese FDI homing in on developing economies? In trying to understand the shift, I will analyze African public opinion data and draw on the literature to observe how and if perceptions of Europe have changed in the African populous compared to their opinions of China given their increased investment into their region.

To research this question, I will combine quantitative survey analysis of public opinion data in a large N study to see what African¹ attitudes towards China are in comparison to attitudes towards Europe, represented by some of the European Union's biggest states and former colonial powers such as Germany, France, and Britain.² I will look at survey questions specifically targeted at understanding why the actors are seen as favorable influences. I will also look at questions regarding their opinion in Chinese/colonial influences in the respondents' countries as well as other relevant variables used to see key factors informing their opinions, elaborated on in the methods section. In addition to

¹ By Africans, I am referring to the 32 countries involved in my research.

² Seeing as how most of the data was collected around 2021, only one year after the UK officially left the European Union, I argue it is justifiable to look at the data from respondents in former British colonies together with former French, Dutch, etc. because there has not been enough time to look at the United Kingdom's relationship with Africa, separate from the EU.

survey data, I will also, in the literature review section gauge how scholarly perception has interpreted the Afro-Sino-European relation today as a byproduct of different histories and strategies. Marek Hanusch's work in particular will be a good starting point to help illustrate potential changes in opinions on the continent.

Theoretical perspectives on IR

There are two main perspectives used to analyze the competing donors in this paper, European liberalism and Chinese Neo-Realism emphasis will be put on specific aspects of these theories, mainly globalization as a part of liberalism and sovereignty as a part of Neo-Realism. The European Union and China adopted vastly differing strategies when it came to conduction relations in Africa. The liberalism lens through which you can look at Europe's approach mirrors the principles of modern liberal theory. We see this in the way European conditions have aimed at creating more open, interconnected society built on principles of democracy, globalization and the importance of actors beside the states (Heywood, 2021, pp. 20-23) . The first two concepts are the most relevant in this context. As the EU have tried to integrate Africa into the liberal world order spearheaded by themselves and the United States of America, it has made them encourage policies in the region, often with little regard to the stability and desire of these states to join the global initiative as we will see when discussing Structural Adjustment Programs later. One critique of this strategy is the contradictory policies the EU uses to integrate African states into this world order, whilst maintaining unequal relationships built on years of colonial exploitation(Olsen, 2000, pp. 159-160) . The attempt to harmonize these two ideals results in a literature that speaks of a Europe that wants Africa to be more like them whilst not being their equal.

On the other side spectrum of interference, one finds the pragmatic Chinese approach. Key distinctions between liberalism and realism are the latter's belief that international politics happens mainly between states(Leira & de Carvalho, 2020, p. 61&64). This does not mean the levels above or below them are completely irrelevant but rather that they serve as an extension of the interests of the state. This aligns well with China's strategy of working with the governments in their partner countries and not through market integration. Together with their own state-owned infrastructure companies China establishes clear quid pro quo relations in their bilateral agreements orchestrated by the countries instead of supernational or transnational actors. The Chinese reliance of the realist ideology stems from the foreign policy norms created by Deng Xiaoping which highlight the importance strong sovereignty and independence in diplomatic relations (Zhang, 2014, p. 909). We see how Chinese involvement in Africa is strongly influenced by this more intergovernmental approach thinking in the literature.

Literature review

When looking over the limited literature on the shift taking place in Africa today, sovereignty and choice are reoccurring themes littered throughout. As we will come to see, these ideas have been pertinent for scholars in explaining Chinese gains and European shortcoming in Africa. More concretely, the literature attributes China's increased influence in Africa to a few key factors separating European and Chinese approaches to investment and partnership. In order to contextualize these factors, we must understand a few key policies: the Belt and Road Initiative, what is meant by the

traditional “North-South” paradigm, the different approaches used by the two actors and the effects of the current system on the African population at large. Most of the variance in approaches can be seen in the research done by World Bank economist Marek Hausch who published a pair of research articles looking at African public perception data in relation to China and Europe. The results of his papers give us a good starting point to see if the trend of positive attitudes towards the China in Africa have been altered by the new economic initiatives like the One Belt One Road(BRI) policy of investments into developing countries in the global south. This section is divided up into three main parts, China in Africa, EU failures to remain relevant, and the impact of globalization.

China in Africa

Hanusch finds in his research primarily looks at Chinese investment surges that had started in the 2000s and had ten-doubled 2010s(Hanusch, 2012, p. 492). The paper includes many interesting findings. For one, attitudes towards China were positive and close to the positive level of former colonial powers, France, Portugal and Britain that make up big parts of the European Union. This was based on answers to the question of how much the country had helped the respondents’ countries. The 2012 article was published as China’s investments in Africa were growing exponentially but one year before the launch of the Belt and Road initiative put the west on notice.

The Belt and Road Initiative is China’s attempt to rapidly industrialize the developing world through a combination of large-scale infrastructure projects including ports and roads, along with an uptick in foreign direct investment which the countries will use to pay Chinese contractors administrating said projects(Huang, 2016) (Carrai, 2019). The BRI has been at the center a lot of international discourse. With opinions ranging from cautious optimism to concerned critique, the end result of the highly ambitious Chinese policies is uncertain. One thing the initiative has done is reignite interest in the resource rich developing world as western powers scramble to match the Chinese offers (Parker, 2021). Though the money put into these “alternative” bids is sizeable, much of the literature argues the economic giants, in particular the European Union, are missing the point. What makes the Chinese policy so successful in the developing world goes beyond the money itself and requires a look at how and where it is applied. Hanusch’s statistical analysis reveal some of the primary factors that make China favorable alternative to the traditional partners to the local population in Africa.³

The first of these differences is China’s human rights perspective. China notably concerns itself less with Political and Civil Rights than the EU, in favor of economic social and cultural, which Hanusch points to as one of reason for the positive attitudes towards China. These lights are less cemented around freedom of speech and the press and focus more on “right to work and an adequate standard of living”, which makes sense as a bigger point of concern for impoverished regions (Hanusch, 2012). This theory is not only evident in Hanusch’s research but also in the numbers. From 2014 to 2018, China was one of the biggest job creators in Africa with over 137 000 positions. That was more than Germany, France and the United Kingdom, combined. In this time period they were also responsible for the largest capital inflows to the continent (Parliament et al., 2020)

Che and Bodomo’s (2023) express similar sentiments in their papers on the shift taking place in Africa. Despite the EU’s efforts to partner with African countries, their policy has

not yielded the economic development the continent would have hoped for (Bodomo, 2019). This in turn makes the prospect of a stronger partnership with a country like China all the more alluring. In addition to less domestic interference China also stands as an example of how a developing country can experience an economic boom in short time, lending more legitimacy to their initiatives (Carbone, 2011, p. 207).

Aside from the purely economic aspects of the relation, China also built up diplomatic political relations with African countries during and after the cold war. (Che & Bodomo, 2023, p. 124) point to the Tazara railway and the Forum for Africa-China Cooperation as examples of this. But perhaps most noticeable, as multiple scholars have touched on, is the contrast in dynamic when the cooperating parties do not have a deep and complicated former colonial bond (Carbone, 2011, p. 208). Europe in contrast, by centering much of the money coming into Africa around aid packets, investment in education and stringy slow-moving projects make it seem, "hard for Europe to overcome its neo-colonial, condescending attitude towards Africa." (Che & Bodomo, 2023, pp. 123-124).

European Liberal Rules

Most of the previously stated has been with a focus on what China has been doing "right" in terms of their growing influence in Africa. Everything from the strengthened diplomatic relations, increase in FDI and noninvasive deals helps to highlight what many scholars believe deteriorated Europe's influence on the continent: adaptation. A European Parliament briefing in 2020 saw the DG for External Policy lay forth a *Comprehensive EU Strategy for Africa* (2020). Among the contents was a clear acknowledgement that despite member states accounting for the majority of FDI, and the Union being Africa's largest trade, partner, the gap to other actors, mainly China, was shrinking (Parliament et al., 2020).

Che and Bodomo (2023) credit Europe's decline in Africa to several factors. One of which being the need for domestic changes in the countries they work with. The European Union has long been a promoter of democratic ideals, and human rights across the world. As such, a big part of the EU's identity on the international stage tends to glide over on other areas of EU policy (Olsen, 2000, p. 145). In the case of bilateral African relations, the Union's propensity to spread democratic ideals shapes their economic agreements (Commission). The ideology is more than simply rhetoric. Many of these beliefs are also seen as conditions partnering countries must fulfill in order to work with or receive aid from the EU (Commission). Bodomo (2019) describes the "asymmetric" conditionalities the EU puts on Africa as "arm-twisting" efforts to reform African countries (Bodomo, 2019, p. 116). These conditionalities call for political restructuring of the country's political systems to coincide with socio-economic transformations in the countries (Bodomo, 2019).

The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) aimed at addressing structural issues and corruption in African states presents an obstacle in the EU's work on the continent due to the problems the implementing neo-liberal economic models can have (Petithomme, 2013). EU's dedications to the mentioned qualities like democracy makes it hard for them to work with undemocratic states without hurting their international image. This has not stopped the Union from pursuing and maintaining these relationships seen in the BRI deals made with eastern EU members and China, but it does prevent them from normalizing such policy (Nedopil, 2023). In efforts to minimize the organized hypocrisy

stemming from the rift between ideals and capabilities, something the EU has been known to struggle with (Lavenex, 2018), the Union implements liberal political adjustments in addition to market liberalization. Their need to balance this idealistic image with the more practical need for partnership with the Africa in order to secure resources is the crux of disadvantages in competing with (Carbone, 2011).

The Economic Partnership Program has been the EU's main way of connecting themselves with African markets(Commission). The agreement opens up for full access to the inner market for 40 African states with limited reciprocity(Parliament et al., 2020, pp. 10-13). With these bilateral deals with Africa, the EU has prioritized market liberalization, privatization and free trade areas that give European companies incentive to invest in Africa. The practice has also led to the destabilization of countries' economies according to (Che & Bodomo, 2023, p. 123). Despite giving European corporations an advantageous position, EU's DG of External Policy acknowledge the practice have been controversial in the countries that have adopted it, for governments and civil society. Along with currency devaluation, the main points of concern have been: *(i) tariff reductions and loss of government revenue, (ii) negative impact of European companies competition in local producers, (iii) the threat to African regional integration efforts, and in general, (iv) the argument that EPAs are designed to benefit the EU side rather than pursue African interests.*(Parliament et al., 2020, p. 11)

Despite good intentions, the bailout programs and aid packets Europe has had to fund as a consequence of the destabilizing effects these programs have had on the continent serves as an example of Europe struggling to have its cake and eat it too(Che & Bodomo, 2023, p. 123). The latest example of this pattern was seen in Tunisia in 2023. The country, which has had free trade agreements with the EU since the late 1990s, recently faced, another IMF and EU bailout loan contingent on subsidy cuts and privatizations of state-owned companies, to which the state has rejected the terms fearing it would fuel inequalities by cutting government spending and offer no long term solutions(Amara & McDowall, 2023) (Commission). The North-South relationship has long been characterized as one where the formers development of the latter economically and politically. In the 1990's Europe's democratic missionary work in Africa yielded mixed results, ranging from very positive democratization in South Africa to inconsistencies and failures in Kenya and Algeria (Olsen, 2000).

The sentiment Tunisia expresses has been present on the continent for decades. What has been seen as an imperfect system has led to more and more African countries experimenting with China, in what is referred to in the literature as south-south cooperation between non-western states(Che & Bodomo, 2023) (Jurencyk, 2020). The south-south strategy, as opposed to the north-south strategy is in the literature described as one concerned more with "mutual benefits, principles of equality and non-interference in political affairs", and less with the unequal dynamic of the north imposing, "social and political development, with particular emphasis on human rights and democratic governance", a paradigm that has unsuccessfully lifted the south out of poverty(Carbone, 2011, p. 204).

While it is the case that the West has a tendency to solve humanitarian problems by providing Africa with "aid" packages, China's idea of aid is closer to "development assistance" (...) of dollars channeled to Africa are concessional and repayable long-term loans(Che & Bodomo, 2023, p. 129).

One of the ways in which this south-south cooperation is demonstrated has been through the Angola Model. Generally, the model is seen as China "granting low-interest loans to nations which are more reliant on commodities, such as fossil fuels or mineral resources, as collateral"(Jurencyk, 2020, p. 46). The practice's aim of pragmatic solutions and narrow area of work was credited a leading cause of the country's economic growth and development in a time of struggle, as their high risk status warded off most other investors(Che & Bodomo, 2023, p. 129) (Jurencyk, 2020, p. 47). Rationally speaking, the nature of these acts is nothing but self-interest-driven businesses as every party involved seemingly gets what they want.

China made financing available to Angola through oil-backed loans. As a result, Angola has obtained economic growth and infrastructure development, with China, on the other hand, importing thousands of barrels of petroleum daily from Angola.(Che & Bodomo, 2023, p. 129)

Hanusch also hypothesized a correlation between Foreign Direct Investment and African's attitudes towards a country, but the findings did not support any strong connection(Hanusch, 2012, p. 504). Despite, this however, scholars foresee, and claim we currently, are seeing a strong Chinese influence emerge in Africa, that the EU should be aware of. The shift need not necessarily be a cause of concern but rather a call to action in making sure they adapt strategies and policy in order to maintain their role on the international stage as a part of the "troika"(Che & Bodomo, 2023). Trilateral cooperation with Africa and China has been a contentious issue in the European Union for the better part of a decade as internal discord is divided(Carbone, 2011).

In summary, China, and Europe both see Africa as an important market to invest in, but their approaches to the region could not be more different. The EU's approach still carries the paternal tone of its colonial past represented through their Structural Adjustment Programs indirectly forcing socio-political and socio-economical change onto Africa in order to avoid compromising their ideological world view and advocates for democracy and liberal ideas in society and economy. In strong contrast to this China makes it a priority not to interfere in the domestic policies of their partner countries outside of specific infrastructure project they help build in said countries. Their respect for the sovereignty of partner countries can be interpreted both as a sign of an equal partnership without asymmetric dynamics, but has also been observed with caution, particularly from the west, who see it as reminiscent of predatory lending practices enabling authoritarians. Despite this, the data up until now appears to show a positive correlation between the Chinese method of interaction and positive attitudes among the citizens in many African states.

Globalization of FDI

One of the causes behind current developments is argued to be the increased competition the EU has felt stemming from the globalization of foreign investment in Africa. The literature describes this concept as "a process which involves the transformation of the socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural lives of Africans⁴ as more and more foreign investors and the foreign investments they bring from across all parts of the world move into the African continent"(Bodomo & Che, 2020, p. 63). The evermore interconnected world has given developing regions, typically dependent on

⁴ Africans will only refer to the 32 countries used in the survey.

their traditional donors, the ability to choose where their investments and partnerships come from, forcing benefactors of the traditional international systems to adapt to competition. The literature argues that it is this aspect of globalization that has led to China's emergence and Europe's lack of control.

For, perhaps the first time in their centuries long relationship with Africa, Europe is now in a position where they must shift strategies away from making Africa more similar to Europe, and instead cater to the needs of African countries without using it as a tool of control as well as assistance(Bodomo, 2017, p. 24) (Stahl, 2015, p. 23).

Globalization of foreign investment has also made the EU rethink their approach to Chinese endeavors on the continent. The European Union has historically been critical of Chinese investment in Africa and other developing regions, labeling it, predatory, neo-colonial(Che & Bodomo, 2023, pp. 126-127) (Parker, 2021) (Bodomo, 2019, p. 117) (Hanusch, 2012, p. 493). These accusations tie back to the potentially problematic nature of the Angola model, as it can be seen as exploitation of desperate states which drowns them in debt(Dollar, 2019, p. 2). But as Hanusch's data and contemporary scholars argue, Europe should consider taking part in the trilateral troika currently forming before they are left on the outside looking in. Signs of the rhetorical shift among EU member states begun in the mid-2000s, likely as a result of this revelation or as Carbone (2011, p. 217), argues to become a stronger global actor, (Bodomo, 2019, p. 117). With an overview of how the situation has changed from the traditional status quo, the effects of this change also need to be understood. The literature so far has painted a picture of an Africa reaping the benefits of a more equal partner promoting a fairer partnership which in turn should provide more stable growth as a logical conclusion. Sadly, numbers show there is little in the way of tangible effects on African economies so far.

Aside from job creation, China's involvement on the continent is not as strong as one might expect. Research done by (Ngundu & Ngepah, 2021) suggests that the main beneficiaries of Chinese FDI are resource rich, mainly oil-producing, countries and that results vary from country to country depending on that factor. The authors also argue that "only EU's output growth can directly spill over to sub-Saharan Africa's growth via FDI"(Ngundu & Ngepah, 2021, p. 565). And unlike that of China it is not "conditional on the availability of natural resources" (Ngundu & Ngepah, 2021, p. 565). Elu and Price (2010) take it one step further and conclude at the end of their paper that there was "no relationship between productivity-enhancing foreign direct investment and trade with China" and that "increasing trade openness with China has no effect on the growth rate of total factor productivity" in their sample(Elu & Price, 2010, p. 587). Expected knowledge spillover the influence of FDI only has also been minimal, and does not account for much, which made them conclude that China is not "a long-run source of higher living standards for sub-Saharan Africa"(Elu & Price, 2010, p. 595). With the loss of European requirements for democratization and maintenance of human rights protection, there is also no longer any incentives from less democratic countries to change the conditions of their citizens through improved welfare systems. It is worth noting that the research was limited in scope to five countries and was conducted before the Belt and Road Initiative was announced. Looking at more contemporary perspectives, which include the effects of the BRI we also do not see major economic growth. Yunnan Chen from the Overseas Development Institute said in an interview with the Financial Times that is because of the time it takes to notice results from such projects.

Infrastructure overall is a very high-risk structure. They are very very long-term investments. They take a vary long time to even come to break even or to even make money. But what they do serve is a bit more of a public goods function.(Chen, 2023)

Despite the number showing minimal improvement, China has seen mounting popularity on the continent with every new survey, only behind the USA in most of them (Lekorwe et al., 2016) (Hanusch, 2012). Does this mean that job creation and less asymmetric partnerships are the main factors improving the general public's attitudes? How strong are these variables in determining correlation?

Hypotheses

Based on the trajectory of Chinese, European and African relation I have constructed four main hypotheses to determine the validity of the mostly qualitative literature on the subject. The hypotheses concern themselves with whether or not the observed changes in opinion are still moving in the same direction we come to expect from previous research and what variables have a significant correlation to the shift.

H1 China will be regarded more favorably than Europe.

In the 12 years since Hanusch's public opinion analysis showing African's still having a marginally more favorable view of Europe compared to China, much has happened. The Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure deals together with low domestic interference and the creation of numerous jobs will, I suspect, lead to Africans having a more favorable view of China compared to Europe.

H2a Unemployed people looking for jobs will have better outlooks on China.

Because European investments center around, education, aid and free trade that outcompetes regional companies, I believe China's more job-centered approach will make them more popular with Africans looking for work. China's prioritization of economic rights like job security and the right to work, instead of civil and political rights will fulfill more basic needs that are more prudent to people living in poverty and struggling financially.

H2b Unemployed people looking for jobs will have a worse outlook on Europe (represented by attitudes towards their colonial powers).

Building on the same reasoning as the second hypothesis, Europe liberal democratic concerns in Africa over the years has led to fewer jobs created than China. Assuming the pattern seen in 2014-2018 is any indication, the lack of job creation compared to their Chinese counterpart will cause unemployed people who look for work to have less favorable views on Europe when compared to the employed.

H3 The lack of conditionalities compared to other donors will be a statistically significant variable in the positive attitudes toward China.

Seeing as how the literature highlight the role conditionalities have played in Europe's shortcoming in Africa, I believe there will be strong significant correlation between

attitudes towards Chinese conditions and opinions on how good China is for respondents' country. The literature does not speak much of conditions tied to Chinese investment, but we can think of the resource backing some of the loans contain as a relevant condition.

H4a. Proponents of democracy will prefer Europe.

H4b. Proponents of democracy will have a worse outlook on China.

Throughout the literature we see that China has presented itself as an alternative to the EU and states with its most prominent feature being, depending on the source respect for partners' sovereignty or legitimizing of authoritarian states. It stands to reason China's disregard for democratic structural reform in combination with Europe's track record of reformist programs and democratic stipulations to their investment and aid will lead supporters of democracy to have more positive views of Europe.

Data and Method

Taking reliability, validity, and representative sampling into account the methodology and related dataset is one of the most accurate methods to understand how this geopolitical tug of war between the European Union and China has been perceived in the eyes of the peoples in Africa. The quantitative approach is the best fit for this research as it is easily replicable and very directly answers the questions posed in the thesis.

The method used in this paper is a multivariate quantitative analysis of public opinion data. Using a Large N-comparison I will look at correlation between the relevant variables "influence of former colonial power/China".

The data used in the study was collected from the Afrobarometer round 8 in the years 2019 to 2022(Afrobarometer, 2022). The data in round 8 of the Afrobarometer survey differs from round 4 in some relevant ways that are important to take into account. The countries surveyed, minus the two mentioned who are excluded for reasons mentioned below are:

Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Cote Ivoire, Eswatini, , Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra, Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia Zimbabwe.

The question "In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say" is not present in Round 8 of the questionnaire. In round 4 this question was posed for several different countries/grouping of countries including South Africa, Nigeria, the USA and the former colonial power of the citizen being asked, i.e. UK for Nigerians and France for Benin, etc. In round 8, this question appears to have been substituted with the following:

Q70: Do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following countries on [Respondent's Country] is mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say(x)?⁵

These variables, one where x= colonial powers and one where x=China, will serve as my two dependent variables through which all the other independent variables will be correlated two. Model 1 has China as x, and Model 2 will have the former colonial powers as x. Both dependent variables are ordinal with values 0="very negative", 1="somewhat

⁵ Q70D=colonial powers, Q70E=China and Q70F=USA

negative”, 2=“neutral”, 3= “somewhat positive” and 4=“very positive”. I mention this because the results after testing for hypothesis 1, will be compared to a similar variable used by Hanusch in his round 4 model, to accentuate the changes over the last decade if we assume “help” is directly tied to economic and political influence and can be inferred from. In his graph (Figure 1) he uses a 0-3 scale where 3 is “helps a lot” and 0 is “do nothing when comparing various donors. I use a 0-4 scale with 0 being “very negative”, 4 being “very positive”, with 2 being neutral.

All statistical regression and programming will be done in Stata/MP 17. The variables included will be recoded to exclude the answer choices “refused”, “don’t know”, “not asked in this country” and “missing”. Some of the data contained in the dataset is irrelevant or inaccurate when correlating variables. The two countries in Africa that were never colonized and therefore have no data for colonial power related countries, Liberia and Ethiopia will be excluded from the research. Another reason why Ethiopia in particular is excluded is the strange fact that the dataset shows results of Ethiopian respondents answering question that their codebook does not have such as attitude towards former colonizers. Because of these reasons I saw it fit to not add their data. Though we lose around 3200 observations (approx. 14000-16000 respondents per country) as a result of this it will prevent skewing of data.

In addition to more specific variables, I also include standard control variables used in regression analysis such as age (18-90), measured as a quadratic function, gender dummy coded where 0=woman and 1=man, employment status and education level. For the education level variable, I selected the condensed version containing only four values: “no formal education”, which contains none or informal schooling, “primary”, which covers partly or completed primary school and “secondary” and “post-secondary” which are defined similarly to primary. The employment variable will be dummy coded as 0= people in partial or full employment, and 1= unemployed people who are looking for work. It is important to note that the majority of respondents for this variable were unemployed, but not looking for work, meaning I will only use around 60% of the observations in the analysis. The sacrifice is in my opinion needed, however, to test hypothesis 2a and 2b. The variable URBRUR_COND is a condensed version of the variable URBRUR showing whether the respondent lives in a rural setting, coded as 0 or an urban/semi-urban setting coded as 1.⁶

In addition to these standard control variables and hypothesis relevant ones, I also added some more specific variables I believe could be at risk of being confounding variables. The idea is that adding these to the regression will hopefully ward off spurious correlations that might appear.

Survey question Q64B asks whether or not respondents believe loans and/or developmental assistance given should contain requirements tied to “democracy and human” rights. The variable has been recoded into a dummy given the name “democracy_cnd” and has values 0 for those who believe these requirements should not exist and people should be able to “make its own decisions about democracy and human rights” 1 for those who believe the government should be under such restriction.

Survey question Q63, asking whether or not the respondent’s country should develop their country through external loans or internal tax hikes, is similarly coded as a dummy where 0 means they support self-financing though it would mean raising taxes. And 1

⁶ The variable is renamed “urban”

means they support development through external loans. The recoded variable has the name "financedev1".

Survey question Q21 asks respondents which of the three statements they agree the most with. The statements in question were 1 "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government." 2 "In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable." and 3 "For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.". This variable has been dummy coded to where 0=2 & 3 and 1=1, to show how active proponents of democracy as the ideal organization, differ from those who do not believe so. The variable is named "democracy_support". I do not wish this variable to run continuous as the main distinction I am looking at is between those who subscribe to the idea of democracy contra those who do not. This is also what I believe from the literature where the main separation between those pro- versus those against Europe lies.

Survey questions Q36 asks "In your opinion how much of a democracy is [Respondent's Country] today?". The answer alternatives are "Not a democracy, A democracy, with major problems, A democracy, but with minor problems, A full democracy". The variable is renamed "democracy" in the regression.

Lastly, I added recoded Q65d, asking how many conditions China puts on their loans compared to other donors in respondents' opinion. The new variable "chncnd" goes from 0-4 where zero is "far fewer requirements" and 4 is "many more requirements".

I did not select variables asking about the current economic situations in respondents' countries. Though relevant, these variables are not reliable as the survey was taken between 2019 and 2022 when the covid-19, destabilized the global economy. Answers coming in before and after the outbreak should, in my opinion, not be mixed so carelessly in the same analysis. I acknowledge this will be a big weak point in the research.

The added control variables will provide a higher R^2 , to account for more of the variance. It will also lend more legitimacy to the p-values ($P > t$) of the independent variables we are more concerned about. 5% will be the significance level threshold as is the standard (Ringdal, 2018, p. 286). The original dataset had ca. 42'000 participants, but because of the exclusion of Ethiopia and Liberia along with the amount of data that had to be removed due to participants answering "don't know" "no opinion" and similar alternative has given us in total 9000 observations.

Results

The models for both dependent variables had an adjusted R^2 of about 10% covering a rather moderate portion of the variance. After constructing graphs for Hypothesis 1, the results are very apparent. In the ca. 14 years between the two figures the data shows a significant change in the minds of Africans, preferring the effect China has had on their economy and politics. The attitudes are so positive in fact they are now nearly identical to, and slightly better than attitudes held towards the United States of America which scored the highest average in the 2008 survey and has remained relatively stable from then to now. It is not certain whether this is purely the result of a Chinese surge, a European and American decline, or some combination of both, but as it stands now it is clear that China is becoming a new favorite in Africa. Their mean of 2.8 is somewhere between 2=neutral and 3=positive, whereas the colonial powers mean 2.3 is decisively

closer to the former. In addition to supporting the hypothesis, the results also add up with the literature in depicting an increasingly positive attitude to Chinese presence in Africa.

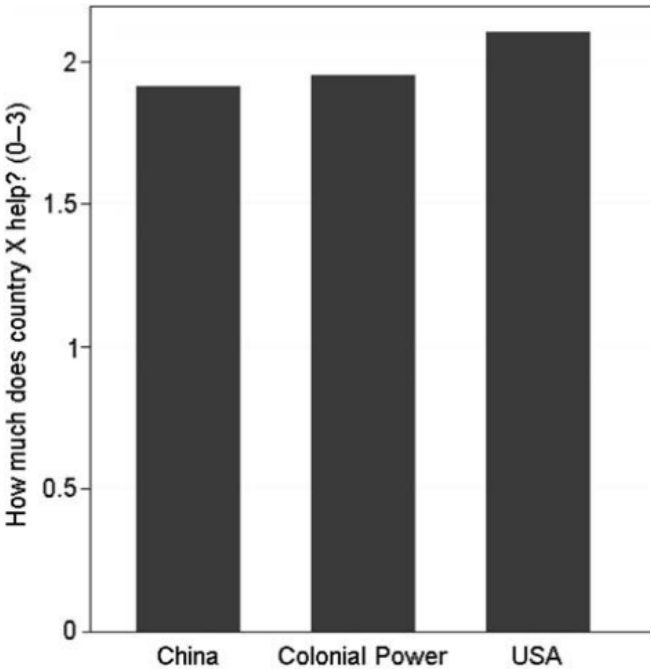


Figure 1
(Hanusch, 2012, p. 502)

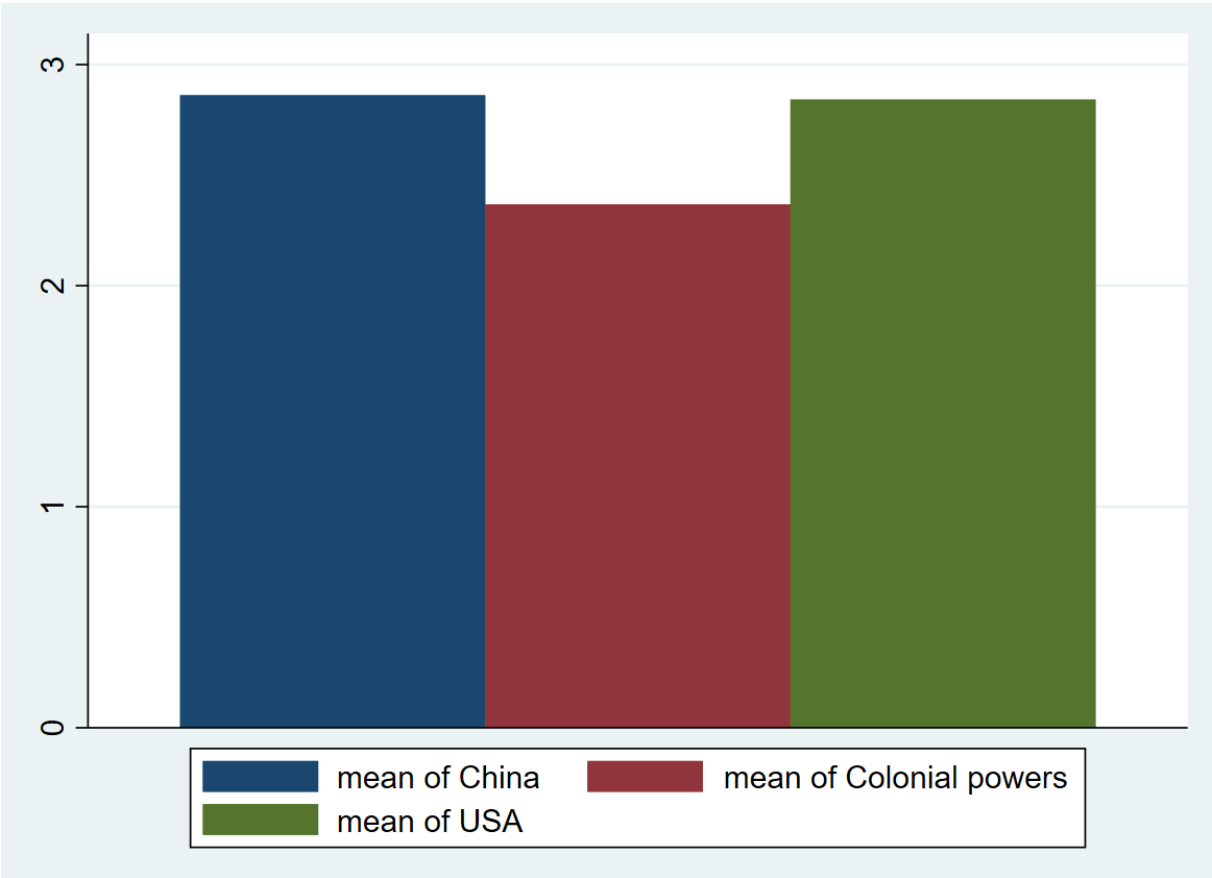


Figure 2
My recreation of Hanusch's bar chart using round 8 Afrobarometer data

Hypothesis 2a "Unemployed people looking for jobs will have a better outlook on China" is less accurate. Looking at regression Model 1 of variables affecting Chinese perception, we find a positive correlation, yet it is not statistically significant, $p\text{-value} > 5\%$, in determining respondents' views on China. The likelihood of the null hypothesis is too great to consider this correlation present in the general population.

Hypothesis 2b seen through the unemployed variable in Model 2 does show a significant correlation in the negative direction, strengthening the hypothesis. The independent variable has a -0.1 coefficient which strengthens our hypothesis that Europe's has not done enough to create jobs in Africa. We can infer that Europe's lackluster efforts in job creation has contributed negatively to their perception.

Hypothesis 3 is supported in the data. Believing China's put more conditions on them than other donor countries, shown in "chncnd" predictably resulted in more negative views and a negative coefficient of -0.12 in model 1. The same variable also showed a positive correlation in attitudes towards the former colonial powers with a coefficient of 0.1 . Both correlations were statistically significant with $p\text{-values}$ less than 0.1% . Looking at another closely related variable, whether respondents prefer democratic and human rights promotion as a prerequisite, we also see a correlation between government freedom to manage funds and positive attitudes towards the Chinese's influence. The correlation is significant with a $p\text{-value}$ of 0.06% , albeit a weak correlation coefficient of 0.06 . Though not significant, we can also not the negative correlation between this variable and attitudes towards Europe. This coincides with the theory in the literature that functional economic and political independence is one of the driving factors behind the shift we see in the African populous reflected in the policy of the state. Also related are the significant correlation "democracy_cnd" had with attitudes. Wanting democratic requirements on foreign investment, correlated negatively with positive impressions of China, and positively with impressions of the former colonial powers. These findings together with the "chncnd" variable strengthens the hypothesis that additional conditionalities as opposed to just transactional relations is one of the aspects that separates Africans opinions on the two actors.

Hypothesis 4, a&b the effect of attitudes toward democracy in shaping opinion of the two donors came out surprisingly different than what was expected. For one, proponents of democracy, as well as those who lived in increasingly democratic states had statistically significant positive correlation to their opinions on China (Model 1) discarding hypothesis 4b. With coefficients of 0.144 for the former and around 0.08 for the latter, though the coefficient was not strong, it was certainly not too likely to be pure coincidence as the null hypothesis ($p\text{-value}$) was at 0.1% . What makes this even more surprising is that support for democracy did not correlate with positive attitudes towards Europe. Not only was the coefficient much weaker for "democracy_support" at 0.001 , but the $p\text{-value}$ of 97% was the highest of any variable used in the regression. Contradictory, the variable "democracy" correlated significantly and positively with positive attitudes to Europe and 0.25 and a $p\text{-value}$ of less than 0.1% . The lack of consistency in the democratic variables makes it difficult to argue its support of *H4a* as well.

One interesting correlation outside of the hypotheses is that Africans do not appear to pick sides when it comes to their former colonial powers and China, shown in the data by

positive attitudes towards one correlated in positive attitudes towards the other. Other notable correlations include the positive correlation between more education and views on colonial powers. Education also correlates negatively to views on China. The correlations may stem from Europe's increased focus on investing education and mentioned in the explanation for hypothesis *H2a*.

Urbanites were observed to be significantly more critical of both actors than their rural counterparts. In Europe's case this might stem from concerns that the free trade agreement outcompete local business situated in more urban areas actually has outcompeted local industry, which was listed as one of the concerns with liberalizing partner countries. Those who prefer development coming from external loans naturally correlate with positive views of both actors. The variable age was not statistically significant in attitudes on China but did correlate with attitudes towards the colonial powers with the most dissenting voices being in their early 40s and becoming more positive among older and younger generation.

Discussion

Many of the results appear to reaffirm the trend observed by scholars over the last two decades that Europe self-imposed restrictions, preventing them from venturing into partnerships with undemocratic countries has left them with few options to salvage a weakening hegemony over African trade. Results of the regression indicate the people who prefer loans and investment without requirements gravitate more towards China's realist take on international relations. The literature has positive and negative interpretations depending on actor perspective and political prioritization.

On the one hand it can be seen as a paternalistic Europe forced to respect its resource rich trade partners due to threat of losing them to China because of the globalizations of FDI. From this more sovereigntist perspective the positive public opinions towards China, where proponents of democracy also seem to favor them, can be chalked up the interferences Europe creates on the African continent. If Europe accepts this as a sign the power dynamic between themselves and Africa need to change in order to adapt, perhaps to the point of forming a trilateral cooperation group it could see Europe shy away from its democratically moral character. If we draw inference from the public opinion and the correlating variables, using globalization of FDI to return geopolitics to a more state-centric model has given China many new friends in the developing world. It appears the traditional approach to sovereignty, which is often replaced in the modern world with free trade areas, liberalization and idealist economic blocs has succeeded in creating an amicable relationship between China and large parts of Africa.

In contrast, from a liberalism perspective China's actions in the developing world can be seen a detrimental to the work the European Union has done historically, and is continuing to do, of democratizing many of these authoritarian states(Olsen, 2000). It could be perceived as giving their leaders and out on reforming and avoid international pressure to join liberal globalization initiatives resulting in the persistence of undemocratic states across Africa. This argument is supported by the data in the "democracy" variable, showing the more democratic countries are, the more favorable their views of Europe become. The argument is also challenged by our finding that the democratic variable, "democracy support", indicates stronger support for China among proponents of democratic institutions. At the same time, however, we see in the variable "democracy_cnd" that people who believe liberal condition i.e. human rights and

democracy should be required to obtain loans have a less favorable view of China, which seems contradictory given their support by democracy proponents.

Though we cannot conclude which variable was the strongest in shifting African public opinion, one can infer that the concern with basic needs like work and limited interference have played a significant role. Globalization, in part, played a role in changing the traditional North-South paradigm as well, as we see how the emergence of competition compromises traditional asymmetry. Considering all these changes it makes sense why Europe is softening its tone on China and is considering a change in rhetoric and towards a troika. We can infer from the data how Africans are not picking sides, meaning trilateral cooperation may be in the cards in the future. The public opinions suggest this troika can only come about if Europe is willing to involve themselves less politically which is one of the biggest question marks pertaining to future endeavors. The one thing Europe should not do is remain static in its involvement in Africa as the literature and data shows that the Union's complacency is at the root of the problems it currently faces.

Some of their more recent prioritizations of education are viable options which we see correlate positively with the population's views on the influence. Still there is much too little discourse on initiatives in Africa that capable of rivaling China's projects, as the EU Global Gateway initiative pitched in 2023 appears to follow in previous European models(Union, 2023). EU's disorganized approach in the 2010s, and current discourse on why and how they should revamp their efforts(Parliament et al., 2020), only underline the difficulties the political entity has had managing different, sometimes irreconcilable goals(Carbone, 2011). The Union's future plans for Africa depends on both internal consensus and the external evolution of Chinese policy with African states. It is important to acknowledge that despite being announced in 2013 the BRI's involvement in most African states used in this survey joined it in 2018, and six years is not enough time to understand all ramifications of the new partnerships unfolding(Nedopil, 2023). It gives a starting point, for this new era of the BRI in Africa as well as a point of comparison for future work done on the relationship. The shortcomings on my research primarily lie in the fact that the countries surveyed were at different stages of a global economic fallout which made it difficult to correlate economic situations with the participants answers, which could have revealed additional variables essential when analyzing the shifting influences. For future research into this topic, I would attempt to separate round 8 into two sections to allow for the use of economic variables in the regression models.

Conclusion

From the regression analysis we can infer that the continuous trend of Africa moving further away from their former colonial powers into new ventures in the East shows no signs of stopping. The change appears to exceedingly welcome among the population in many of the countries in the region as China's focus on limited intervention and sovereignty have made them preferable to Europe as a positive source of political and economic influence. It remains to see whether Europe will change strategy in dealing with the region as some of the literature implies could be happening, or if they have any other methods to maintain their historically dominant influence in Africa. The economic instability brought by the covid-19 pandemic puts a large asterisk next to much of the contemporary research of Afrobarometer survey round 8. As a portion of states in the years before the outbreak whilst other were surveyed two years after, it makes it

challenging to gauge what effects of the pandemic and subsequent European and Chinese responses to it had on the attitudes of African citizens. With Round 9 of the Afrobarometer survey concluded in October of 2023 the merged dataset from that year and a remake of the regression models used in this thesis should be conducted.

Appendix

Regression Model 1 (China)

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	8,796
				F(12, 8783)	=	77.58
Model	1226.88094	12	102.240078	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual	11575.0859	8,783	1.3178966	R-squared	=	0.0958
				Adj R-squared	=	0.0946
Total	12801.9668	8,795	1.455596	Root MSE	=	1.148

chninflu	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P>t	[95% conf. interval]	
chncond	-.1197155	.0092215	-12.98	0.000	-.1377918	-.1016391
woman	-.0287487	.0259459	-1.11	0.268	-.0796088	.0221114
EDUC_COND	-.0542217	.0136697	-3.97	0.000	-.0810175	-.0274259
age	.0030808	.0055068	0.56	0.576	-.0077138	.0138754
c.age#c.age	-.0000488	.0000663	-0.74	0.462	-.0001787	.0000811
financedev1	.1224534	.0273941	4.47	0.000	.0687546	.1761522
unemployed	.0362174	.0263057	1.38	0.169	-.0153481	.0877828
clninflu	.1921886	.0085975	22.35	0.000	.1753355	.2090416
democracy_cnd	-.0732593	.0246594	-2.97	0.003	-.1215974	-.0249212
urban	-.0903638	.0258294	-3.50	0.000	-.1409955	-.0397322
democracy_support	.1525066	.027298	5.59	0.000	.0989962	.206017
democracy	.0781686	.0141122	5.54	0.000	.0505053	.1058319
_cons	2.570246	.1200515	21.41	0.000	2.334917	2.805575

Regression Model 2 (Colonial Power)

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	8,796
		F(12, 8783)	=	88.80		
Model	2046.6641	12	170.555342	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual	16869.7182	8,783	1.92072393	R-squared	=	0.1082
				Adj R-squared	=	0.1070
Total	18916.3823	8,795	2.15081095	Root MSE	=	1.3859

clninflu	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P>t	[95% conf. interval]
chncond	.0988224	.0111893	8.83	0.000	.0768889 .120756
woman	.1253142	.0312965	4.00	0.000	.0639658 .1866626
EDUC_COND	.0534491	.0165074	3.24	0.001	.0210907 .0858075
age	-.0198116	.0066448	-2.98	0.003	-.0328369 -.0067863
c.age#c.age	.0002535	.00008	3.17	0.002	.0000967 .0004102
financedev1	.3195892	.0329326	9.70	0.000	.2550336 .3841447
unemployed	-.1018928	.031742	-3.21	0.001	-.1641146 -.039671
chninflu	.2800987	.0125301	22.35	0.000	.2555368 .3046606
democracy_cnd	.0757638	.0297736	2.54	0.011	.0174005 .1341271
urban	-.1536122	.0311608	-4.93	0.000	-.2146946 -.0925298
democracy_support	.0011174	.0330135	0.03	0.973	-.0635969 .0658317
democracy	.2492659	.016858	14.79	0.000	.2162203 .2823116
_cons	1.17121	.1481378	7.91	0.000	.8808255 1.461595

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