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Research Article

# The Evolution of China Africa Diplomatic Relations: A Historical and Contemporary Analysis

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## Abstract

This paper examines the evolution of China-Africa diplomatic relations, offering a detailed historical and contemporary analysis of their engagements. Beginning with early interactions along ancient trade routes and cultural exchanges, it explores the significant milestones that have shaped these relations, including maritime expeditions of the 15th century, mid-20th-century political alliances during the decolonization era, and the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The study employs Dependency Theory to analyze the dynamics of these relations, focusing on the implications of China's substantial investments in African infrastructure, resource extraction, and manufacturing sectors. The findings reveal a dual narrative: on one hand, China-Africa relations have driven economic growth, facilitated technology transfer, and enhanced infrastructure development across the continent. On the other hand, concerns persist regarding Africa's increasing dependency on Chinese loans, trade imbalances, and the potential erosion of local governance structures. The study highlights the complexities of this partnership, emphasizing the need for a more balanced and sustainable approach to ensure mutual benefits. The study concludes that the evolving China-Africa relationship represents both opportunities and challenges for the continent. It recommends fostering transparency in agreements, promoting African agency in negotiations, diversifying economic engagements to reduce dependency, and strengthening regional cooperation to address shared challenges. These measures will ensure a more equitable partnership that aligns with Africa's long-term developmental goals.

## Keywords

Diplomatic Relations, Evolution, International Relations, Alliance, Contemporary, Historical

## 1. Introduction

The evolution of China-Africa diplomatic relations is a rich and complex narrative that traces its roots back to the mid-19th century, well before the emergence of modern African states shaped by European colonial boundaries Osiki & Prah [14, 15]. Initially centered on trade interactions along the northeastern fringes of the continent, these relations reflected the modest beginnings of an enduring partnership. By the mid-20th century, as Africa embarked on its journey of decolonization, China embraced a more robust diplomatic and economic engagement with the continent, driven by shared anti-colonial sentiments and a vision for South-South cooperation. As Foot & Inbodennote, this era witnessed the emergence of

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China's strategic interest in the African hinterland, signifying a deliberate effort to strengthen ties with newly independent states [6].

The 1990s marked a transformative phase in China-Africa relations, with Beijing amplifying its influence through trade, investment, and diplomatic strategies. During this period, China sought to deepen its political and economic footprint across the continent, leveraging its rapidly growing economy to cement its role as a key development partner. Scholars like-Shichor, highlighted that China has since displaced the United States as Africa's largest trading partner, underscoring its preeminent position in the continent's economic and political landscape [17]. This shift also led to the intensification of scholarly interest in China-Africa relations, with researchers examining the implications of China's growing influence on African development [Mourao;Ado; Xi]. A systematic literature review (SLR) of these studies reveals that China's engagement with Africa is underpinned by a mix of economic, political, and strategic considerations. As detailed by Gåsemyr and Wang & Elliotelucidates that this approach provides a coherent framework for analyzing the historical and contemporary dimensions of China-Africa relations [7, 22]. China's strategies, including resource-for-loans agreements, infrastructure investments by Chinese companies, and policies offering low or interest-free loans, reflect a calculated effort to secure political alliances and economic partnerships across the continent. The emphasis on such economic initiatives aligns with findings by Wang, Gåsemyr, who underscore the importance of synthesizing past research to develop comprehensive insights into complex relationships [7, 24].

This historical and contemporary analysis employs the antecedents, phenomena, and consequences framework as articulated by Mumuni & Murphy Villoria,to provide a structured exploration of China-Africa diplomatic relations [11, 21]. This framework allows us to examine the drivers behind China's engagement (why?), the strategies employed in its approach (how?), and the outcomes of these interactions (what?). As Barber; FOCAC Archivessuggest, such an approach offers an intuitive lens for understanding the evolution of China-Africa relations in a manner that is both comprehensive and accessible [4, 5].

Through this lens, the study aims to provide a detailed historical and contemporary analysis of the evolution of China-Africa diplomatic relations, from early trade interactions to the modern era of strategic partnerships. By critically engaging with the extant literature and key milestones, this analysis will illuminate the dynamics of these relations, offering insights into their implications for Africa's development and global geopolitics.

## 2. Evolution and Milestones of China–Africa Diplomatic Relations

### 2.1. Early Historical Interactions

The early historical interactions between China and Africa were marked by dynamic trade routes and cultural exchanges that spanned centuries, laying the foundation for a complex and enduring relationship. Scholars such as Alden & Large; Osabutey & Jacksonemphasize that these interactions were initially facilitated by ancient trade networks that linked East Africa with the broader Indian Ocean world, serving as conduits for economic and cultural exchanges [3, 13]. Goods such as silk, ceramics, and other Chinese exports were traded for African gold, ivory, and exotic animals, creating an early interdependence between the two regions. These exchanges were not only economic but also cultural, influencing artistic traditions and societal structures on both continents.

The most prominent example of early Sino-African interactions is the series of maritime expeditions led by the Chinese admiral Zheng He during the early 15th century. According to Alden & Alves and Barber said that these expeditions under the Ming Dynasty represented one of the earliest large-scale diplomatic initiatives between China and Africa [3, 4]. Zheng's voyages reached the Swahili Coast of East Africa, including modern-day Kenya and Tanzania, where Chinese envoys established connections with local rulers. This engagement was not merely transactional but involved the exchange of gifts, knowledge, and cultural artifacts, fostering goodwill and mutual respect between China and African politics.

lden & Alves argue that these maritime expeditions were significant in shaping the historical narrative of China-Africa relations [3]. The exchange of giraffes, an exotic African gift to the Chinese emperor, symbolized the diplomatic overtures of the period. Such gestures underscored the mutual recognition of sovereignty and respect that characterized early interactions. The voyages also highlighted China's strategic interest in forging alliances beyond its immediate geographic vicinity, a theme that resonates in contemporary Sino-African relations.

Tshimpaka situates these early interactions within the broader context of global trade and cultural connectivity [19]. She asserts that the maritime routes linking China and Africa were part of a larger network that connected Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. These networks enabled the diffusion of technologies, such as advanced shipbuilding and navigation techniques, which had far-reaching implications for the global economy. Ado & Su opined that the shared history of engagement through these routes laid a historical precedent for China's later re-engagement with Africa in the modern era, as observed in its Belt and Road Initiative [1].

Mbeki highlights that while these early connections were episodic and lacked the intensity of later diplomatic and economic engagements; they established a framework for mutual curiosity and understanding [9]. The exchanges were instrumental in dispelling stereotypes and fostering an early appreciation of each other's cultures and societies. These interactions also contributed to the development of maritime communities along the East African coast, which retained traces of Chinese cultural influence in their art, architecture, and even genetic makeup.

FOCAC Archives documentnotes that the historical narrative of China-Africa relations is critical in understanding their modern dynamics [5]. The enduring legacy of these early connections is reflected in the symbolic importance that both China and African states attach to their historical ties. By invoking the memory of Zheng He's voyages, contemporary Chinese leaders often emphasize a relationship founded on respect, equality, and mutual benefit, in contrast to the exploitative patterns of Western colonialism.

The early historical interactions between China and Africa, rooted in ancient trade routes and Zheng He's maritime expeditions, set the stage for a long-standing relationship characterized by economic and cultural exchanges. These interactions not only shaped the historical trajectory of Sino-African relations but also laid the groundwork for the enduring partnership that continues to evolve in the modern era. Through the lens of history, as articulated by Rui, Zhang & Shipman, Shichor and other scholars, we can appreciate the depth and complexity of this multifaceted relationship [16, 17].

## 2.2.Mid-20th Century Political Alliances

The mid-20th century marked a pivotal phase in China-Africa relations, characterized by political alliances forged amidst the shared context of decolonization and Cold War dynamics. The emergence of these alliances was significantly influenced by China's ideological alignment with African nations seeking liberation from colonial rule.Xiao & Watson note that China's support for African independence movements was not merely rhetorical but involved material and financial assistance, fostering a sense of solidarity grounded in anti-imperialist ideologies [30]. These alliances served as the cornerstone of a relationship that extended beyond political collaboration into areas such as cultural exchange and economic partnerships.

Xi elaborates that China's engagement during this period was deeply rooted in its revolutionary ethos, which resonated with the aspirations of African states struggling for sovereignty [29]. This alignment was strategically articulated through the Bandung Conference of 1955, where China emphasized the principles of mutual respect, non-interference, and peaceful coexistence. The conference provided a platform for African and Asian nations to challenge Western hegemony, with China playing a leading role in advocating for the unity of the Global South.

Moreover, Wang highlight that China's diplomatic initiatives were instrumental in creating a narrative of equality and partnership with African nations, contrasting sharply with the colonial exploitation experienced under European powersWang [24]. The establishment of diplomatic ties with newly independent African states was accompanied by technical and financial support in areas such as infrastructure development, agriculture, and education, as Van de Looy,Viloria observed. These initiatives underscored China's commitment to fostering long-term development in Africa, further strengthening its political alliances on the continent [20, 21].

The ideological undertones of these alliances were complemented by strategic economic interests, as noted by Yin, & Vaschetto [32]. During the 1960s and 1970s, China sought access to Africa's vast natural resources to fuel its own industrialization efforts. Simultaneously, African nations viewed Chinese investments as a viable alternative to Western aid, which often came with stringent conditions. Wang & Zou suggests that this mutually beneficial relationship was critical in shaping the trajectory of Sino-African ties, as both parties sought to capitalize on their shared goals of economic and political self-reliance [23].

The Cold War further solidified these alliances, with China positioning itself as a counterbalance to Western influence and the Soviet Union's dominance in Africa. Xi argue that China's foreign policy during this period was marked by pragmatic engagements, wherein ideological considerations were increasingly intertwined with strategic objectivesTiboris [29]. This dual approach enabled China to build a robust network of allies across the continent, paving the way for its subsequent reengagement in the post-Cold War era.

Xi provides a nuanced perspective by examining the long-term implications of these mid-century alliances [31]. He asserts that the foundations laid during this period have continued to influence China-Africa relations, particularly in areas such as security cooperation and multilateral engagements. The historical narrative of China's unwavering support for African nations has been instrumental in shaping contemporary perceptions of China as a reliable partner in Africa's development journey.

The mid-20th century witnessed the formation of strong political alliances between China and Africa, rooted in shared struggles against imperialism and aspirations for self-determination. As Xiao & Watson emphasize, these alliances were not merely transactional but reflected a deep commitment to fostering solidarity and mutual growth [30]. The enduring legacy of these relationships is evident in the continued collaboration between China and African nations, underscoring the historical significance of this pivotal era in their diplomatic history.

## 2.3. Establishment of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)

The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was established in October 2000 as a multilateral platform to deepen Sino-African relations in areas of mutual interest, including economic development, political dialogue, and cultural exchange [5]. The creation of FOCAC marked a significant shift in China-Africa relations, institutionalizing the collaboration and providing a structured framework for advancing shared goals. This initiative was rooted in China's "Going Global" strategy, whichMourao describe as an evolving policy framework aimed at extending China's global influence while fostering mutually beneficial relationships with developing regions [10].

FOCAC was conceived against a backdrop of increasing Chinese involvement in Africa, particularly in terms of trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), and infrastructural development. Osiki argue that the forum facilitated knowledge transfer between Chinese multinational corporations (MNCs) and African stakeholders, particularly in critical sectors such as construction, energy, and telecommunications [14]. These exchanges were designed to promote African development while enabling China to secure strategic economic partnerships and access to natural resources.

The forum also emphasized the importance of non-economic drivers in Sino-African relations. Mumuni & Murphyhighlight how cultural diplomacy and technical assistance became essential components of FOCAC's agenda, fostering goodwill and enhancing China's soft power across the continent [26]. Educational exchange programs, capacity-building initiatives, and medical assistance were integral to these efforts, underscoring the multidimensional nature of the partnershipWissenbach [27].

Economic engagement under FOCAC was significant, with commitments to infrastructure development forming the core of China’s contributions. Mbeki explains that Chinese FDI in Africa, facilitated through FOCAC, was driven by a combination of economic and political considerations, including access to raw materials, market expansion, and geopolitical strategy [9]. This was evident in high-profile projects such as railways, ports, and energy plants, which not only bolstered Africa's economic infrastructure but also solidified China’s influence in the region.

The collaborative spirit of FOCAC also extended to technology transfer and innovation. Nyadera, Agwanda & Kisakadocument the impact of Chinese MNCs in fostering technological advancement and capacity-building in sub-Saharan Africa, with Ghana serving as a prominent case study [12]. These efforts were instrumental in addressing Africa’s developmental challenges, enhancing local industries, and providing employment opportunities.

In addition to economic and technological dimensions, FOCAC has played a critical role in shaping the political narrative of China-Africa relations. Tiboris notes that the forum established a strategic partnership that emphasized equality and mutual respect, contrasting with the historically exploitative relationships between Africa and Western powers [18]. This partnership was further bolstered by high-level political engagement, as evidenced by the participation of African and Chinese leaders in FOCAC summits, where key policy directions and collaborative agreements were outlined.

Osabutey & Jackson emphasize the historical continuity in China-Africa relations, highlighting FOCAC as a modern embodiment of a long-standing partnership dating back to Africa’s liberation struggles [13]. This historical context is critical to understanding the success of FOCAC, which has capitalized on shared experiences and aspirations to build a robust and enduring relationship.

The establishment of FOCAC represents a transformative moment in China-Africa relations, institutionalizing a partnership that spans economic, political, and cultural dimensions. By providing a structured framework for engagement, FOCAC has enhanced the depth and breadth of Sino-African cooperation, ensuring its relevance in addressing contemporary challenges and fostering sustainable development. As Nyadera, Agwanda & Kisaka and Gåsemyr observe, FOCAC’s success lies in its ability to align the interests of parties, creating opportunities for mutual growth and strengthening the foundation for future collaboration [7, 12].

## 3. Result

Chinese investments in Africa have emerged as a defining driver of the continent's economic landscape over recent decades, manifesting prominently across three primary sectors:

### 3.1. Infrastructure, Extraction, and Manufacturing Investments

Chinese investments in Africa have been a defining feature of the continent's economic landscape over the past few decades, particularly in infrastructure development, resource extraction, and manufacturing. These investments have been driven by China's growing demand for natural resources, market expansion, and strategic geopolitical considerations. Wegenast, Krauser, Strüver & Giesen emphasize that Chinese multinational corporations (MNCs) have played a crucial role in these sectors, transferring technology and expertise while addressing critical developmental needs across the continent [25].

The infrastructural projects funded and executed by Chinese entities have been transformative for Africa. Mourao explains that China's "Going Global" policy has facilitated large-scale investments in transport networks, energy facilities, and urban infrastructure, creating a backbone for regional economic integration [10]. Examples include railway projects in East Africa, hydropower plants in Ethiopia, and road networks across West Africa. These initiatives have not only enhanced connectivity and productivity but have also positioned China as a key development partner in Africa.

In resource extraction, Chinese investments have been equally significant. Mbeki observes that China’s economic engagement in Africa is heavily influenced by its need to secure a steady supply of raw materials, including oil, minerals, and rare earth elements [9]. Countries such as Angola, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have been primary beneficiaries of Chinese investments in this sector. While these projects have contributed to the economic growth of resource-rich nations, they have also raised concerns about environmental degradation and resource dependency.

Manufacturing is another area where China’s presence in Africa has grown substantially. Wegenast, Krauser, Strüver & Giesen highlight the establishment of industrial parks and manufacturing hubs by Chinese firms in countries such as

Ethiopia and Nigeria [25]. These ventures have created employment opportunities, boosted local production capabilities, and reduced Africa's reliance on imported goods. However, challenges such as labor disputes and competition with local businesses have also emerged, underscoring the complexities of Sino-African economic relations.

Mumuni & Murphy argue that China's approach to African investments transcends mere economic interests, incorporating cultural diplomacy and technical cooperation [11]. This holistic engagement has fostered goodwill and strengthened China's strategic position in Africa, allowing for deeper integration of Chinese businesses into local economies.

Critically, substantial Chinese investments have also been characterized by their alignment with Africa's development prioritiesTiboris notes that these investments often address infrastructure deficits and industrialization goals outlined by African governments [2]. This alignment has enhanced the effectiveness of China-Africa partnerships, ensuring that Chinese projects contribute to long-term economic transformation.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. Osiki highlights concerns about debt sustainability, governance, and the environmental impacts of Chinese-led projects [14]. Additionally, Yu, posit that debates about the equitable distribution of benefits from resource extraction and the role of Chinese labor in African economies continue to shape the discourse on Sino-African relations [33].

Substantial Chinese investments in African infrastructure, resource extraction, and manufacturing have significantly reshaped the continent's economic landscape. While these investments have spurred development and created opportunities, they have also raised critical questions about sustainability, equity, and local participation. As Kanza and the works of Ado & Su observe that the evolving nature of these investments reflect the dynamic interplay between Africa's development aspirations and China's strategic interests, offering lessons for future partnerships [1, 8].

## 3.2. Contemporary Challenges and Initiatives

### 3.2.1. Operational and Structural Challenges

Despite material gains, the engagement reveals key structural vulnerabilities across four main domains:

China's engagement with Africa has witnessed significant growth, yet it faces contemporary challenges that require innovative initiatives to ensure mutual benefits and sustainable partnerships . Wang & Elliot research show that challenges revolve around economic sustainability, social impacts, governance, and geopolitical implications, while recent initiatives demonstrate efforts to address these issues [22].

#### (i). Debt Sustainability

One of the primary concerns is debt sustainability. AsRui, Zhang & Shipman observe, many African countries have accumulated significant debt through Chinese loans, primarily used for infrastructure projects [16]. While these loans are often concessional, the repayment burden has raised alarms about potential debt traps, especially in economies with limited fiscal capacity. This concern is particularly pressing in countries such as Zambia and Kenya, where debt obligations have strained public finances.

#### (ii). Environmental and Social Impact

Resource extraction and heavy construction have triggered local ecological degradation, deforestation, and community displacement in regions such as Gabon and the DRC [20]. Wang & Zou highlight that Chinese resource extraction and infrastructure projects, although beneficial for economic development, often lead to environmental degradation and displacement of local communities [23]. Yu elucidates that issues such as deforestation, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity have been documented in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon, where mining activities are extensive [33].

#### (iii). Governance and Transparency Deficits

Certain Chinese-funded projects bypass standard local procurement, public consultations, and competitive bidding, driving concerns over transparency [19]. This also plays a critical role. Xi points to the lack of transparency and accountability in some Chinese-funded projects, which often bypass local procurement rules and involve minimal local participation [29]. This has led to criticism of neo-colonial tendencies, undermining the legitimacy of China's role as a development partner.

#### (iv). Geopolitical Pressures

Geopolitical implications further complicate China-Africa relations. Yin & Vaschetto explain that China's growing influence in Africa has raised concerns among Western powers, particularly regarding strategic sectors such as telecommunications and energy [32]. The competitive dynamic has occasionally placed African nations at the center of global power struggles, complicating their foreign policy strategies.

### 3.2.2. Strategic Adaptation Initiatives

To address these challenges, China has implemented several initiatives aimed at fostering a more equitable and sustainable partnership with Africa.

#### (i). FOCAC

The establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) serves as a platform for dialogue and collaboration. As FOCAC Archives and Mourao explain, FOCAC allows both sides to negotiate terms that align with Africa's development priorities, emphasizing shared benefits and mutual respect [5, 10].

### (ii). Targeted Investment Localization

China has increased efforts to localize its investments. Nyadera, Agwanda & Kisaka note the growing emphasis on technology and knowledge transfer, particularly in the manufacturing and energy sectors [12]. For instance, Ado & Su found that the development of industrial parks in Ethiopia incorporates training programs to enhance local workforce skills and promote self-sufficiency [1]. This means that firms have increasingly integrated technical skills training within local workforces, notably within Ethiopian industrial zones.

### (iii). Green Infrastructure Prioritization

Recent policy shifts have directed capital toward renewable energy, such as Kenyan solar plants and Rwandan eco-infrastructure. China has also sought to address environmental concerns by incorporating sustainability measures into its projects. Foot & Inboden and also the research of Wang & Elliot highlight examples such as renewable energy projects in Kenya and green infrastructure initiatives in Rwanda [6, 22]. These efforts reflect a shift toward environmentally conscious investments, which aim to balance development needs with ecological preservation.

In response to criticisms of governance, initiatives to improve transparency and accountability have been introduced. Barber cite the incorporation of stakeholder consultations and adherence to international best practices in recent projects, which help build trust and foster community engagement [5].

### (iv). Soft Power and Institutional Capacity Building

China has engaged in soft power diplomacy to strengthen cultural and educational ties with Africa. Programs such as scholarships for African students and cultural exchanges, as described by Mumuni & Murphy aim to deepen people-to-people connections, reinforcing the long-term foundations of China-Africa relations [11].

## 4. Theoretical Framework

The Dependency Theory provides a suitable theoretical lens for analyzing the substantial Chinese investments in African infrastructure, resource extraction, and manufacturing. Developed by scholars such as Wu, Cormican & Chen, Dependency Theory explains the dynamics of economic relationships between developed and developing regions, emphasizing how wealthier nations often exploit the resources of less-developed countries to sustain their own economic growth [28].

In the context of China-Africa relations, Dependency Theory posits that while Chinese investments have contributed to infrastructural development and economic growth in Africa, they often reinforce structural inequalities. For example, Mourao and the works of Zhao highlight how African nations depend heavily on Chinese financing for large-scale projects, creating asymmetrical relationships where decision-making power predominantly lies with China [10, 34]. Furthermore, Mbeki argues that resource extraction activities, though economically beneficial in the short term, primarily serve the industrial needs of China rather than fostering long-term development in Africa [9].

This theory also sheds light on governance and debt sustainability issues Osiki explains that the lack of transparency in some Chinese-funded projects aligns with the exploitative dynamics described in Dependency Theory, where economic ties may limit the agency of African nations to negotiate equitable terms [14].

By utilizing Dependency Theory, we can critically examine the implications of these investments, highlighting the need for policies that empower African countries to transition from dependency to self-reliance. Such a perspective underscores the importance of local capacity building, technology transfer, and sustainable governance frameworks as pathways to balance these relationships.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrates that China–Africa diplomatic and economic relations operate within a complex, dualistic paradigm that cannot be captured by either a purely benevolent "win-win" framework or a simplistic narrative of predatory expansion. When evaluated through the theoretical lens of Dependency Theory as developed by Wu, Cormican, and Chen, the contemporary partnership reveals deep structural asymmetries that echo classical core-periphery dynamics [28]. While Beijing's official rhetoric frames engagement as an egalitarian South–South partnership frequently citing historical ties like Zheng He's 15th-century peaceful voyages or mid-20th-century anti-imperialist solidarity looking at the works of Xiao & Watson and Alden & Large,the actual economic transactions reveal a distinct structural reliance [3, 30]. Findings from the works of Mbeki and Wegenast, et al., shows that African nations predominantly export raw materials to supply Chinese industrialization, while importing high-value manufactured goods, machinery, and technology [9, 25]. This classic trade imbalance locks African economies into lower tiers of global value chains, suppressing domestic value-addition and perpetuating adverse terms of trade.

A critical dimension of this dependency is manifested in the financial and infrastructural architecture underpinning Sino-African ties. China's "Going Global" policy and loan-financed infrastructure projects have undoubtedly filled critical developmental gaps across sub-Saharan Africa, constructing vital transport networks, ports, and power plants that Western donors long neglected [10, 14]. However, mechanisms such as resource-for-loans agreements ("the Angola Model") and sovereign debt accumulation in states like Zambia and Kenya demonstrate how development capital can translate into asymmetric leverage [7, 16]. Under Dependency Theory, when debt servicing consumes significant shares of national GDP, peripheral states lose fiscal policy autonomy, leaving their economic trajectories vulnerable to external credit terms and raw commodity price fluctuations.

In addition, the operational dynamics of Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and capital deployment pose distinct challenges to domestic governance and institutional autonomy across Africa. Wang & Zou and the findings of Xi shows that bypassing competitive public tenders, standard environmental impact assessments, and local labor regulations in the interest of rapid project completion often undermines local institutional capacity and fuels ecological degradation [23, 29]. This study of Osiki shows that institutional vulnerability is exacerbated by a pronounced bargaining deficit: individual African states, acting in isolation, negotiate bilaterally against the concentrated geopolitical and economic weight of the Chinese state [14]. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence demonstrates that African states are not passive objects of Chinese influence. Foot & Inboden; Nyadera et al., and the findings of Wang & Elliotelucidate that emerging initiatives such as the localization of technical skills in Ethiopian industrial parks, green infrastructure investments in Rwanda and Kenya, and rising civil society scrutiny over contract terms signal an expanding exercise of African agency [6, 12, 22]. To fundamentally alter this structural asymmetry, African state actors must transition from fragmented bilateral negotiations to strategic, collective bargaining through regional bodies like the African Union (AU) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

## 6. Conclusion

The evolution of China-Africa diplomatic relations reveals a complex and multi-faceted trajectory rooted in historical trade exchanges, political solidarity during the mid-20th century, and a contemporary focus on economic cooperation. While these relationships have brought significant infrastructure development, economic growth, and cultural exchanges, challenges persist, particularly regarding dependency, governance, and sustainability. By examining these dynamics through the lens of Dependency Theory, we understand the need for a balanced approach that ensures mutual benefits for both regions, empowering African nations to leverage their resources and achieve sustainable development.

## 7. Recommendation

African governments should collaborate with Chinese investors to ensure knowledge transfer, workforce development, and technological integration, enabling self-sufficient economic growth.

Both parties should prioritize transparency in financial agreements and project implementation to mitigate issues of governance and debt sustainability.

African nations should seek partnerships beyond resource extraction, focusing on technology, education, and value-added manufacturing to reduce reliance on raw material exports.

African states should work collectively to negotiate terms that favor regional interests, promoting intra-African trade and reducing dependency on external markets.

Infrastructure and resource-based projects should align with environmental and social sustainability principles, ensuring long-term benefits for local communities.

## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| FOCAC | Forum on China Africa-cooperation |
| SLR | Systematic Literature Review |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| MNC | Multinational Cooperation |

## Author Contributions

**Micheal Godwin Okoliko:** Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft

**Emmanuel Jibb Adams:** Data curation, Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing – review & editing

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors report that there is no conflict of interest.

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