

DOCTORAL THESIS

China's Foreign Aid to Africa and Sino-African Relations: The Case of Ghana

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Date of Award:
2022

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Abstract

Foreign aid is considered essential for the development of the developing countries. As an integral part of the developed countries' foreign policy, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) over the years has actively engaged in dispensing aid, informing the term official development assistance (ODA) as the technical definition for foreign aid. In the last twenty years or so, other countries, which are not part of the OECD, as China or India, have started providing aid substantially to developing countries.

China's relation with Africa is not a new one, having some shared history and engagement since the 1950s, but the contributions of China's aid within the overall engagement appears to be partly misconstrued due to some idiosyncrasies with the Chinese aid policies and practice. The Chinese aid tends to be less transparent, does not employ the delivery mechanisms that enhance the institutional capacity of the recipient country and is mixed with commercial loans and profitable projects. Its execution especially to Africa cannot be entirely viewed and considered aid as defined by the OECD countries. On the other hand, China has provided a substantial assistance to developing countries and started to refer to it as 'aid' as opposed cooperation. China's foreign aid could be perceived to meet some pressing demands especially in infrastructure for the African countries. As the Sino-African relations advance and at unprecedented levels for the 21st century, it requires the scholarship to understand the motives and interests of China vis-à-vis the African needs within that web of interdependence.

Is China's foreign aid thereby featured significantly in the Chinese engagements with Africa? That being so, how could the nature of China's foreign aid to Africa be contributing towards China's relations with the African countries and the type of interdependence it fosters? The research seeks to explain how China's foreign aid to Africa might be facilitating China's closer relations with the African countries, deepening China's influence and how it affects the interdependence with possible benefits for both regions. The study through a qualitative methodology and data collection, examined the general Sino-African relations, empirically analyzed the case study of Ghana and theoretically applied the complex interdependence theory of IR.

The findings of the thesis demonstrate that China's aid to Africa and developing countries has basically remained 'tied aid', making it both similar to developed countries' past practice and different from their dominant current practice. The aid enhances China's relations with the African countries while it greases the wheels for other political, economic and soft power gains and influence for China. That in turn advances China's role and image as a rising power in international affairs and diplomacy. At the same time, Africa gains in certain ways from that interdependent relationship but China is yet to become a fully responsible aid provider through aid effectiveness for Africa's development. Until then, Africa might not be deservedly benefiting from that interdependence with the Chinese aid.

Keywords: Foreign aid, Sino-African relations, China, Ghana, development, complex interdependence