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REEVALUATING DEPENDENCY THEORY IN SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS

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This paper evaluates the role and scope of Dependency Theory in current Sino-African relations. It goes further to assess and establish the fact of favoritism attached to current Sino-African relations by majority of African populace when compared to African relations with other major foreign actors in the continent.

Africa is a continent endowed with profuse natural resources. Natural resources as industrial materials and capacities supplied by nature are meant to be processed and converted into economic resources which aids in continuous improvement of human living standards, social enhancement and economic and political independence.

In the case of Africa, the contrary has for a protracted period of time been experienced. Reoccurring effects of Neo-colonialism demonstrated through unhealthy governance by corrupt ruling elite orchestrated by unending interference in African geo-political affairs by major foreign actors (governments) who are most concerned with achieving their strategic interests has led to widespread underdevelopment, social degradation, economic stagnation and political dependence of majority of African states.

The paper concludes by proposing the implementation of the tenets of African Renaissance Theory by African countries in their relations with foreign actors in the continent. This theory model shares some similarity with Chinese strategies in its relations with African countries which respect the African heritage and allows Africans the choice of self-determination.

Keywords: Africa, China, Dependency Theory, Modernization Theory, African Renaissance Theory, Development, Underdevelopment

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Understanding the dependency theory of development

The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of fundamental transformations in world affairs and ushered in important changes whose global implications would be felt for years to come. The defeat of the Axis powers, the

weakening of the European powers and the logic of a war effort aimed at preserving self-determination, marked the final collapse of the vast colonial empires of the nineteenth century and the establishment of a multiplicity of states with each claiming sovereign and independent status. The aftermath of the war propelled the United States into a position of military and economic dominance.

The “new nations” soon drew the attention of the U.S. policymakers and scholars who were concerned and dedicated to preventing the spread of Marxist and Communist ideologies into the new sovereign states. The desire to prevail ideologically and influence the policies of these new governments served as catalysts for the U.S. policymakers and scholars to produce vast literature on the developing nations. They tried to establish another Marshall plan for the Third World. But other social scientists argued that fundamental differences between the developmental experience of Western Europe and the Third World countries would hinder the success of such strategy. It was not simply a matter of reconstruction but one of development and, as such, a fundamental question needed to be answered before policy recommendations could be advanced: “Why was there such a stark contrast in the developmental experience of Western countries and developing countries (Third World)?”

In an attempt to answer this question, modernization theorists published a large amount of literature explaining the processes and procedures that third world countries need to take to develop and become more like the first world. The theory developed by Walt Whitman Rostow describes the transformative processes of societies from underdevelopment to modern societies. [Rostow 1960]. This was a key theory used in the 1950s and 1960s regarding development. It pays attention to the processes which transform a society from a pre-modern state to a modern state in terms of economy, politics, society, and culture. It emphasizes the importance of education, technology transfers, investment, and closer integration into the world market in order to achieve development.

As a consequence of the limitations of Modernization Theory in solving the puzzles with regards to underdevelopment of the developing countries, the Dependency Theory of Development emerged in the 1950s as a major critique of the modernization theory. Several researchers discovered that the wealth of poor nations tended to decrease while the wealth of rich nations increased. And the dependency theory explains why: it states that the lack of economical development in many developing countries was caused by the treatment they received during colonization and their course of development was determined by the way they were integrated into the world economy.

This theory owes its origin to the writings of Paul Baran, Raul Prebisch and Frank (1971).

Paul Baran, author of “The Political Economy of Growth” in 1957 argued that the cause of poverty in the third world is as a result of first world exploitation and that the westernizing elites whom are seen as the backbone to modernization theory would not lead third world countries out of backwardness, but rather, argues Baran with a more extreme view, that these elites are the ‘fifth columnists’ who conspired to keep their homelands poor [Baran 1957].

Drawing on the notion of inequality between the industrial nations and the non-industrial world Raúl Prebisch in 1971, as former Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, asserted that dependency theory refers to the former as the “core” and the latter as the “periphery.” Contrary to

modernization theory, dependency theory views development from the perspective of the impact of exogenous forces on the periphery [Prebisch 1971].

Andre Gunder Frank also in 1971 posited that in Dependency Theory of Development, capitalism is understood as a world system that contains an inherent core-periphery duality or “metropolis-satellite” concept that determines the developmental potentialities of different countries [Frank, 1971].

Dependency is defined as a “situation in which a certain number of countries have their economies conditioned by the development and expansion of another” (Dos Santos quoted in Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1978:544). Thus, the possibility of development is determined by the relationship of exploitation that exists between the “core and periphery.”

Dependency theory, furthermore, locates the dynamics of exploitation in the transfer of the periphery’s resources to the core through a process of unequal exchange on the international market [Emmanuel, 1972]. The core accumulates its resources for modern development through exploiting periphery countries, consequently under-developing them. Increasingly throughout the twentieth century, terms of trade moved against primary products in favor of technologically more sophisticated goods. This unequal exchange acted as a further drain on the surpluses of the periphery and inhibited the process of capital accumulation.

Reevaluating dependency theory in Sino-African relations

Many years of successful and increased Chinese engagements with African countries have generated varied speculations and questions as regards the real intentions of China in the African continent blessed with excessive natural resources. Numerous scholars, policy makers and government officials have accused China of Neo-colonizing Africa while others try to put it in another form claiming that this is a Chinese scheme and have so labeled it a Chinese Scramble for Africa. There are also researchers who have argued that the Sino-African relations have been mutually beneficial to both sides without the interests of any party taken for granted. Such researchers claim that majority of African states prefer their current relations with China when compared to their relations with other foreign actors (mainly, Western countries).

This part of my presentation seeks to reevaluate the role and scope of Dependency Theory in current Sino-African relations, a task it wants to achieve by assessing if there is some authenticity to the aforementioned speculation of China Neo-colonizing Africa. The questions thus go, “Are we experiencing the Chinese Scramble for Africa; “Does China employ strategies in its relations with African countries which hinder the development of the continent, serves China an egocentric interest of embezzling Africa’s natural resources and leaves African countries with no choice than to be dependent on China”; or “Are both China and Africa experiencing mutual satisfaction and benefits in their current relations, without neither parties feeling exploited.”

The best part of Sino African courtship began slowly during the Cold War, born out of strategic calculation. This relationship slowly declined as China recovered from the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt its economy. In 2000, China began to re-emerge in Africa as its power and influence grew rapidly along with her hunger for diverse allocations of natural resources. China offers Africa a new approach to development that is similar to its own economic model of growth. China’s economic,

developmental and trade goals towards Africa represent a well-defined historical pattern of “mutual benefit” that is based on China’s “Eight Principles for China’s Aid to Foreign Countries.”

This Chinese invented new approach to development in its relations with African countries seems to be well received by these countries due to the fact that both China and Africa share similar experiences at different points in history. Both share similar stories of subjection and colonization from various European nations. Chinese scholars stress that China and African countries also share similar experiences and challenges as developing countries. Chinese scholar Yang Lihua points out that China and Africa, apart from economic cooperation could also share experiences on common challenges such as rural development, labor migration, urbanization and population growth, regional imbalances in development, the development of the domestic market and integration with the international market, to safeguard national interest in the globalization of markets and to promote the interests of developing countries in world affairs [Yang 2004].

On another level, it has been said that China’s development model offers an alternative to African countries to the structural adjustment policies prescribed by the World Bank and the IMF. The importance of this China’s model of development is very glaring as a result of fact that it has shown a commendable level of efficiency in the African setting. It focuses on formulating policies that are context specific, as opposed to a fixed model. It puts into consideration the fact that factors causing poverty vary in different regions of the world and therefore different approaches which would be productive and compatible with different regions are needed. Gradual reform is also seen as key, to introduce pilot projects on a small scale to test different development ideas on a local level.

In its African Policy, China has pledged to uphold the “no political strings attached policy”. It has committed itself to “respecting African countries’ independent choice of the road of development” and providing assistance “with no political strings attached”. This dimension of China’s engagement policy with African states captures their enthusiasm and endears them more to China’s model of development. This is one of the reasons why they seem to be more inclined and prefer to relate more with China than other foreign actors in the continent. This is evident in the ever appreciating trade relations between China and Africa which surpasses that which it has with any other foreign actor. In 2008, China surpassed the United States to become Africa’s most important trading partner. Since the 1990’s, China and Africa have established one of the fastest growing economic partnerships in the world. In 2014, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang China’s while attending a conference in Ethiopia told the African Union trade that the trade with Africa is at \$200 billion, and that the figure will double in 2020. He also noted that “the collaboration must not be limited to energy and infrastructure but expanded to industrialization, urbanization, the modernization of agriculture, with more attention given to low-carbon development and environmental protection.” [Li Keqiang 2014].

The no political strings attached policy is probably what has raised most debate and reactions from external actors, ranging from warm welcoming to concern to fierce criticism. Many African governments have seen it as a positive stance in contrast to the onerous and at times very detailed and intrusive conditions of western donors and international financial institutions including the IMF and World Bank.

Through the establishments of interactive forums and diplomatic organizations, such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) created in the year

2000, China has demonstrated an international commitment with a framework that has allowed the consideration of African concerns. This nature of engagement between African states and the Chinese, through strategic partnerships and negotiated agreements, creates an environment that compels Africa states to become determinants and decision-makers in their own development process. By playing an active role in its own policy and development process, a greater possibility exists for Africa to realize sustainable change and growth.

China is aware of the criticisms against its no political strings attached/non-interference policy in Africa. Many western scholars and politicians have also criticized China's quickly expanding trade with Africa as a "Rogue Donor" that focuses on nothing more than resource extraction [Naim 2007]. Others have attacked China claiming her policies support dictators that loathe human rights and that Chinese infrastructure projects employ little of the local population

First, the non-interference policy is deeply rooted in China's historical experience of western interference. China is from its own experience of being semi-colonized and bullied by foreign powers, so they are careful not to interfere in African countries. China is very conscious of sharing similar historical experiences with Africa in this respect. The non-interference policy dates back to the principles for aid and China's relations with African countries laid out in the 60s when national independence was the overarching objective. Sovereignty is the last frontier of dignity, for which many African countries have fought, which is often forgotten by developed states.

Second, current political issues also explain China's position. The Chinese government is careful not to interfere as it sees its political problems in Taiwan and Tibet as internal affairs.

Third, China's own development experience is another factor said to explain China's policy. In 2007, Li Ruogu, chairman and President of Export-Import Bank of China stated that the critical issue is how to make African countries stay internally in harmony and jointly strive for Africa's development. From an investor perspective the biggest risk lies in the possibility of getting involved in local conflicts or clashes. "Interference into the internal affairs of African countries and the African continent must be avoided. What we should concentrate on is to assist Africa to develop agriculture, infrastructure and vocational education in order to lay a good foundation for development. Everything should be focused on development, which is the overriding need. By doing so, risks such as the local political and security risks can be avoided. As under-development is the major cause of these risks, if sustainable development is made possible, the cause for all these risks or turbulences will disappear." [Li Ruogu].

Conclusion

I will sum up this endeavor by proposing a preferable substitute to modernization and dependency theories of development which African states should uphold in their relations with foreign actors (countries) and in tackling the underdevelopment problems in the African continent. This is the African renaissance theory. The theory is founded on African values and norms which that are the very building blocks of African life. The strength of the theory lives in its ability to be adaptable of change and innovations provided they are initiated within the social and value systems of the average African. The former President of South Africa, Thabo

Mbeki while delivering his maiden address as Chancellor at the University of South Africa, emphasized that “as Africans we have a shared responsibility to strive continuously, whatever the challenges, to achieve the renaissance of Africa.” [Mbeki 2017].

To think of a true African life is to think of unity, communalism and shared purpose. Therefore, development and poverty reduction strategies for Africa must be informed and embroiled in the African values. The model rejects the mainstream growth (modernity) and dependency paradigms because they exacerbate poverty and fail to appeal to the African value system. Like other alternative models, it advocates for a social force that opposes and transcends the growth and dependency paradigms.

The African renaissance theory encourages Africa to act in a world that is dominated by the metropolitan countries by suggesting that micro-level development and poverty reduction should be the primary focus. In Zimbabwe, Africans could use the indigenous knowledge system to read and forecast the weather. They had their own way of dealing with crime, deviance and conflict. It is a fact that Africans could use herbs to treat different ailments. However, the coming of modernity forced Africans to be apathetic about their abilities, knowledge and skills. The use of traditional medical practice was degraded by modernity and modern medical practices were promoted. In the process of modernizing Africa, the people of the continent lost their identity and development path.

The African renaissance approach to development underscores the importance of social movements whose mandate is to engage people to face issues of justice, inequality and sustainability from a collective or communal approach. It is about reclaiming the African identity and African values. Upon achieving this goal, the continent will be able to go back to the drawing board and redesign a new course to prosperity. The African renaissance theory, unlike its predecessors, advocates for local solutions, pluralism, community-based solutions and reliance on local resources. Therefore the critical issue here is ‘transformation’ for the future depends on achieving the transformation of institutions, technology, values and behavior consistent with ecological and social realities in Africa.

If one clearly understands the content of African Renaissance Theory and compares it to Chinese African strategy, the resemblance in principle is undeniable because practically while engaging with African states, China understands the essence of the African history, the impact it had on the African people and the role it plays in shaping the day to day lives of Africans. Thus, they (the Chinese) operate from a perspective devoid of interference in African internal affairs and allow Africans to follow a development pattern conducive and productive in the African setting.

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НОВІ ПІДХОДИ ДО ТЕОРІЇ ЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ В КОНТЕКСТІ ВІДНОСИН КИТАЮ З АФРИКАНСЬКИМИ КРАЇНАМИ

В. Угву

Статтю присвячено аналізу теорії залежності на тлі китайсько-африканської співпраці, що дає змогу встановити та правильно оцінити факт пріоритетності сучасних китайсько-африканських відносин для більшості країн континенту. Принаймні це стає очевидним, якщо порівняти співпрацю держав Африки з КНР і відносини з іншими основними іноземними акторами.

У роботі міститься пропозиція про впровадження в політику африканських країн положень теорії африканського відродження у відносинах з іноземними акторами на континенті. Ця модель має певну подібність до китайських стратегій у відносинах з африканськими державами, які поважають культурну спадщину, традиції та особливості держав континенту і не дозволяють собі втручатися в самовизначення африканських партнерів.

Ключові слова: Африка, Китай, теорія залежностей, теорія модернізації, теорія африканського відродження, розвиток, стадія розвитку

НОВЫЕ ПОДХОДЫ К ТЕОРИИ ЗАВИСИМОСТИ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ОТНОШЕНИЙ КИТАЯ С АФРИКАНСКИМИ СТРАНАМИ

В. Угву

Статья посвящена анализу теории зависимости на фоне китайско-африканского взаимодействия, что дает возможность установить и правильно оценить факт приоритетности современных китайско-африканских отношений для большинства стран континента. Это становится очевидным, по крайней мере, при сравнении сотрудничества африканских государств с КНР и с другими иностранными акторами.

В работе содержится предложение об имплементации положений теории африканского возрождения в политику стран континента. Такая модель сотрудничества имеет определенное сходство с китайскими стратегиями в отношениях с африканскими странами, которые уважают культурное наследие, традиции и особенности государств континента и не позволяют вмешиваться в самоопределение африканских партнеров.

Ключевые слова: Африка, Китай, теория зависимости, теория модернизации, теория африканского возрождения, развитие, стадия развития

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