The rise of the Eastern Dragon in Africa: The beginning of a new Pax Sinica?
Abstract

During the recent years, the rapid progression of China has become increasingly manifest on the international arena. Accordingly, it has been questioned whether the world is currently witnessing the re-emergence of a new ‘Pax Sinica’, implying a period of Asian dominance as evident during the 10th century. In general, China has tended to be portrayed as a threat to the US hegemony and the current ‘Pax Americana’. In light of China’s quest for new markets and energy supplies as to sustain its growing economy, its search for global alliances and enhanced presence in the resource-rich continent of Africa is of significant importance. As such, this study has argued that the Sino-African relationship could be seen as an illustration of China’s endeavor towards global recognition. In this context, the conceptual framework of geopolitics has been used so as to enhance the understanding of the Sino-African relationship, the potential of a ‘Pax Sinica’ and the various perspectives surrounding it. Potential constraints and possibilities from both an African, Western and Chinese perspective have accordingly been examined. In particular, the concept of critical geopolitics has been employed in order to better identify different notions of power, common discourses and their possible motivations. The concept of hermeneutics has likewise been applied so as to move beyond the general impression of China and its interaction with Africa. In doing so, some of the core components of the multifaceted Sino-African relationship have been investigated, i.e. aid, trade, and oil. Likewise, the implications of Chinese migration to Africa and the country’s role in ‘less significant’ countries such as Ethiopia have been considered. The main conclusions of this study are that there are strong indicators of China becoming a leading hegemony, and particularly in the ‘Global South’. From a geopolitical standpoint, two distinct perspectives in regards to China and their interaction with Africa have been highlighted. The first one is the typical Western standpoint, which has commonly adopted a more conventional geopolitical perspective in their portrayal of ‘the greedy Chinese’ as a global threat. This has been put in contrast to the more critical geopolitical perspective of China, who has pointed to its asserted ‘peaceful rise’, unconventional strategies and use of ‘soft power’. In acknowledging China as the leading
hegemony of the ‘Global South’, it is hence likely to believe that the world will sooner or later enter an era of ‘Pax Sinica’.

Key words: World order structure, Hegemony, Africa, ‘Pax Sinica’, China
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List of abbreviations

ADLI- Agriculture Development-Led Industrialization
BRICS - Acronym referring to the member countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CNOOC - China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPC- Chinese National Petroleum Corporation
CPA- Comprehensive Peace Agreement
FOCAC - Forum on Africa-China Cooperation
IMF - International Monetary Fund
IOC- International Oil Company
LDC- Least Developed Country
MFN- Most-favored nation
MNC-Multinational Corporation
NGO- Non-Governmental Organization
NNPC - Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NOC - National Oil Company
OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ONLF - Ogaden National Liberation Front
SOOE- State-Owned Oil Enterprise
SPLA- Sudan’s People’s Liberation Movement
TVET- Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN - United Nations
WHO - World Health Organization
WTO - World Trade Organization
Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express gratitude to all the people that I became acquainted with during my visits to Kenya and Ethiopia who inspired me to write about this topic. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Habtamu Getnet (the Senior Executive Officer at the Department of Graduate Studies and Research) at Addis Ababa University who provided me with valuable input on China’s engagement in Ethiopia during my field study in 2009. His observations greatly encouraged me to find out more about the Sino-African relationship and its further implications.

For the general guidance in writing this thesis, I also like to show my appreciation to my tutor Anders Nilsson for giving me practical assistance in the collection of valuable material and possible points of departure. I further like to thank Vivek Kollamkulankara Vasudeva for assisting me with the formatting of this thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank the librarians at Linnaeus University who provided me with useful books and articles in the process of this research.
1. Introduction

1.1 The emergence of a new ‘Pax Sinica’?
At this time, the conspicuous footprints and regained strength of China is becoming increasingly apparent on the international arena. As such, the rise of China as a potential challenger to the US hegemony has led to various reactions across the globe. While the remarkable emergence of China has left some nations quite astounded by the country’s rapid economic growth and enhanced global influence, others are noticeably terrified of what is going to happen next.

In order to understand the global configuration of today, it is nonetheless essential to view the world order structures from a historical context. The rise and fall of world order systems throughout history may in this sense help to better understand the current global transformations, and especially China’s altering position in the world system.

When discussing the international position of China throughout history, it is firstly important to note the initial periods of peace and Chinese global hegemony, referred to as the era of ‘Pax Sinica’ dating back to the 10th century. This epoch could be said to represent a period of relative peace and Asian dominance, in which China adopted a more outward-looking approach towards the rest of the world. Prior to the 15th century, the interactions and connections between the world’s societies were however mostly evident through the extensive trade systems centering the Indian Ocean. At this time, the world

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1 The notion of ‘world order structures’ could be here defined as a system of regulations and customs regulating political and economical cooperation, viewed as a framework in which states, people and other actors operate. The foundation of this system is the long-term hegemonic values and short-term security concerns of the dominating power, which could be said to reflect the prevailing power relations, the political structures as well as dominant social relations of production. In this context, the historical bipolarity between the East and the West could be seen as a structure replicating the norms, rules and power relations that have been implemented through various institutions (Abrahamsson, 2003:13f).

2 The use of ‘Pax’ (latin for ‘roman peace’) originates from the term ‘Pax Romana’, which was a period of peace and geopolitical stability sustained by the Roman empire from approximately 27 BCE to 180 CE. At present, the term has come to be used more extensively by referring to a prevalent, international state of peace that is maintained under any authority. Given the international standing of this concept, the term has also come to describe various systems of relative peace which are argued to have existed in history, including ‘Pax Britannica’, ‘Pax Americana’ and ‘Pax Sinica’ (Oxford Reference Online, 2011).
system existed of three core regions; namely China, India and the Islamic world. Out of these regions, China was seen as one of the most prosperous and powerful civilizations, and had a massive amount of ships reaching as far as the east coast of Africa (Marks, 2007: 46ff). The Europeans were on the other hand restrained by the fact that they had little to trade with the remaining world (Ibid: 64).

During this time, the trade in the Indian Ocean went on peacefully, with no power trying to dominate over the other and without the use of arms. This situation however abruptly changed subsequent to the 15th century, as the Europeans introduced armed trading. Yet, China remained the supreme economic power internationally. The main factors for China’s continued dominance were their vast population exceeding 100 million, a substantial trading network, a productive agricultural sector as well as a their world-leading handicraft industry (Marks, 2007:50f). These features thus enabled China to maintain its dominance on the international arena until the 18th century, despite the enhanced European involvement in trade. Accordingly, the majority of the world’s population, trade and economic productivity remained Asian from the 15th century until the 18th century. This was for instance evident by the fact that the Chinese manufactured goods were much cheaper and better than the European, making it impossible for the Europeans to compete with the Asian giant (Ibid: 80f).

By the late 18th century, two world systems however came to confront each other on the top of the global system; i.e. the British-centered Euro-American world system versus the China-centered East Asian world system (Marks, 2007:67f). With the Industrial revolution (1750-1850), the global balance of power nonetheless tipped in favor of Britain and what would later evolve into the era of ‘Pax Britannica’ (Ibid:92). By the middle of the 18th century, the massive growth of the Chinese market economy had caused biological constraints and limited economic growth, leading to a situation where China started to move towards a labor-intensive agriculture rather than an industrial revolution. This eventually led to a great reversal of the world order structure, in which the ‘Eastern dragons’ of India and China became overrun by the industrial giants of Europe and the United States (Ibid:107f).
With the following ‘scramble’ for Africa and China in the 19th century, China’s status consequently changed from being a dominant global power to a rural nation of the ‘Third World’. As the imperialist powers claimed their access to the markets in China, the country thus became equally exploited by the dominant global actors, including Japan and the United States (Marks, 2007:144f). With the events of the World War II and the subsequent decolonization period, the Chinese Communists were however able to counter the foreign powers and establish the People’s Republic of China in 1949, leading to a more inward-looking approach as manifest in its economic policies (Ibid:167ff). Subsequent to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the Cold War, the world remained with one sole superpower (the United States) to control the world economy. In this economic globalization, the spread of market capitalism became increasingly manifest with the establishment of Bretton Woods institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In China, market reforms also led to the development of free market capitalism and enhanced global integration in the 1990’s (Ibid:185). As such, the twentieth century thus entered an era of ‘Pax Americana’, which developed from the established peace subsequent to the World War II.

Today, it is clear that China has managed to reverse its subordinate position in the world system as evident by its rapid economic expansion, its decisive influence as a permanent member of the Security Council, and its huge accumulation of US dollars. Once again, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the rest of the world to compete with the ‘Eastern dragon’ and its massive economic growth and capital accumulation. Given this situation, the rise of Chinese military, economic and political power could be said to represent a mounting challenge to the US hegemony, leaving some to speculate about the potential of a new ‘Asian century’ (Ibid: 193) with a possible re-emergence of a ‘Pax Sinica’. This historical power shift will naturally have a tremendous impact on global governance as such, with the OECD countries and the United States becoming increasingly challenged by China as an emerging player in the Western dominated global governance structure,
implying a potential shift from a unipolar to a multipolar power constellation\(^3\) or possibly a new bipolarity between the United States and China (Gu et al, 2005:274f). With the current decline of the US hegemony, it has further become increasingly important to consider the emergence of upcoming nations such as the BRICS countries and their potential in shaping the new world order structure.

In light of this situation, the role of China is especially interesting considering their enhanced global influence and search for alliances across the globe. In this sense, it could be questioned whether the Chinese attraction to the African continent could be viewed as an illustration of a Chinese shift in the world order structure, attempting to put Asia on the centre of the map once again. With the regained vitality of the ‘Eastern dragon’ leaving considerable footsteps on the African red soil, one could thus wonder whether the Sino-African relationship could be seen as a longstanding matrimony between the East and South, or just an occasional fling between a somewhat peculiar love couple.

**1.2 Background – China’s emergence into Africa**

In the beginning of 2000, Beijing created a slogan which could be said to outline their relationship with developing countries. It goes as follows:

“*Great powers are the key, neighborhood is the priority, developing countries are the foundation, and multilateral cooperation is an important mechanism*” (Tu, 2008:336).

Today, it is clear that China still considers its relationship with developing countries, and especially Africa, as the key component in its diplomatic policy (Tu, 2008:335). In Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, the presence of the ‘Eastern dragon’ have expanded radically during the last decade and will most likely continue to do so in the years to come. This will obviously have a profound impact on the continent’s future development,

\(^3\) Regarding the nature of the world order, Hettne (2003:17) further points to three potential structures, i.e. a multipolar, unipolar or a bipolar configuration. Subsequent to the Cold War and the breakdown of the Soviet Union, it is claimed that the world has altered into a multipolar world order although the United States, recognized as the world’s sole superpower, has at the same time come to adopt a more unipolar order. For a stabile world order, Hettne however maintains that the structure should be based on multilateralism in which all potential global actors are represented (Ibid: 163).
as China has now become one of the most important economic partners to Africa. With the growing footprints of the ‘Eastern dragon’, Africa’s international relations could thus be said to be dramatically changing. This is indicated by the fact that the historical North-South relations are at this time being surpassed by the emerging South-East relations, implying that the West no longer enjoys fully monopoly over Africa’s economic growth (Cheru and Obi, 2010:1).

Thus far, China has managed to create a network of aid, trade and venture links with nearly 50 African nations, and more and more concessions to the continent’s natural resources are being made. Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, Chinese companies can be found constructing vital infrastructure (including, ports, roads and dams), helping to renovate government offices and other buildings, as well as investing in human skills (Zweig and Jianhai 2005, cited in Zafar, 2007). With the Eastern companies strategically investing in the Western neglected infrastructure sector, it has likewise been possible for many African nations to raise the productivity and simultaneously reduce the poverty level. The fact that these investments are usually carried out faster, cheaper and less bureaucratically in comparison to the Western companies has also been appreciated by many of their African partners, and has helped to fuel positive growth rates (Cheru and Obi, 2010:3). At the same time, the expansion of Chinese language schools and cultural exchange programs has clearly strengthened China’s efforts in building alliances in the region (Tu, 2008:334). All in all, it is thus evident that China’s engagements in Africa are clearly comprehensive and involves a range of different areas of cooperation. As such, it is important to systematically look into the emergence of China and its multifaceted implications.

1.3 Purpose and Research Contribution
Looking at the current research literature carried out on China in Africa during the past 5-10 years, there are some general patterns that could be detected. First of all, it is clear that the mainstream literature has commonly adopted a Western perspective, in which China’s economical advancement and engagement in Africa has been looked upon with fear and suspicion. In general, the focus has typically been on specific sectors of China’s engagement in Africa, and especially China’s ventures in oil and aid. At the same time,
other crucial aspects such as migration flows and cultural exchanges have often been neglected. China has also frequently been portrayed as a new emerging actor in Africa, in which the historical interaction and cooperation between China and Africa have tended to be overlooked. In particular, China has often been pointed to as the ‘new colonizer’, pursuing a new scramble for Africa’s natural resources. Given this standpoint, it has typically been questioned whether China’s growing presence in Africa could truly be seen as a development opportunity for African countries.

While Western perceptions and attitudes concerning China’s involvement in Africa have prevailed in international media, relatively little has likewise been said about the opinions of Africans themselves. Although keeping in mind the huge diversity within and between Africa’s nations, it could be said that there have been modest attempts to highlight the general opinions of ordinary citizens and the potential clashes between Africa and China. Although several authors have recently tried to present African perspectives on China in Africa (see Alden, Askouri), it is still evident that little research has been carried out about how the different perspectives (i.e. the African, Western and Chinese standpoints) stand in relation to each other. The tendency of acknowledging only one perspective has thus led to that any analysis and comparison of the African, Chinese, and Western viewpoint has frequently been overlooked. As a result, it could be said that that previous research has failed to address the different perspectives in order to assess which perspective could be said to mostly concur with reality. Given this situation, this study will hence attempt to enhance the understanding of the multifaceted Sino-African relationship by further elaborating on how these perspectives stand in relation to what is actually happening on the African continent today. As such, the objective is to better understand the nature of the Sino-African relationship including its potential constraints and possibilities.

Considering the geopolitical considerations of this paper, the objective is moreover to investigate whether China’s emergence in Africa could be viewed as an illustration of China’s new extrovert approach towards the world. In doing so, the aim is to test whether the Chinese engagement could be taken as a case in point of China’s new stance on the
global arena. In light of the collected material, it will hence be investigated whether China is in fact striving towards a hegemonic position in the world order structure through their ventures in Africa.

1.4 Question Formulation

1. What are the potential constraints and possibilities for China’s emergence in Africa, viewed from an African, Western and Chinese perspective?

2. Considering China’s engagement in Africa, is it possible to view China’s expansion as an emergence of a concerted strategy towards a new world order; i.e. ‘Pax Sinica’?

1.5 Structure of thesis

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, a description of the world order structure and China’s global role throughout history will firstly be presented. The subsequent paragraphs will provide a general background of China’s current engagement in Africa, followed by the methodological considerations which have been taken in this study.

In chapter 2, the conceptual framework which has guided this research will be introduced. The geopolitical theories put forward in this chapter will likewise be considered in the process of analyzing the findings, and especially the concept of ‘critical geopolitics’.

In chapter 3, the findings of China’s engagement in Africa will be presented. This will be done by firstly giving a short historical background of Sino-African relations, followed by China’s involvement in three predominant sectors, i.e. aid, trade and oil. The implications of Chinese migration will then be introduced, and will subsequently lead to a section on China engagement in Ethiopia, which serves to demonstrate China’s involvement in ‘less significant’ countries of Africa. This will be concluded by providing
a short insight of the various images surrounding Africa, China and the West from a critical geopolitical perspective.

In chapter 4, the findings will be further examined and analyzed as to reciprocate the initial question formulation stated in the introductory chapter. The chapter will further relate back to the conceptual framework of ‘critical geopolitics’, and particularly in the process of analyzing the potential of a coming ‘Pax Sinica’.

In chapter 5, the main conclusions will be presented as well as potential areas of further research.

1.6 Limitations and Delimitations
Since China’s emergence into Africa is such a multifaceted phenomenon, it naturally has different meanings and interpretations within different parts of the world. In this study, this subject will however be limited to the impact of Chinese investment in a few specific sectors, such as in the industries of oil, trade and development cooperation. Given that an assessment of further socio-cultural impacts at the local level requires more in-depth studies at the field, these areas will only be mentioned to a limited extent. Likewise, the growing environmental impacts of Chinese investments will not be touched upon in this study. Moreover, it should be noted that the Chinese engagement is limited to the area of Sub-Saharan Africa, since this is where the Sino-African relationship could be said to be increasingly manifest. The emergence of other ‘Asian tigers’ (i.e. India) in the African market will not be considered, as it is beyond the scope and purpose of this study.
2. Methodological Framework

In order to reciprocate these questions, I intend to mostly employ secondary data, such as books, journals and newspaper articles. I have chosen to interpret and analyze the collected material by trying to pose different perspectives and perceptions of the same phenomenon. In order to represent the various standpoints as fairly as possible, it will thus be important to include literature written from both a Chinese, Western and African point of view. I will subsequently try to highlight specific impacts that the Chinese engagement has had in various sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa and its general implications.

In analyzing and reflecting upon the collected material, the concept of hermeneutics will further be applied. Hermeneutics is here acknowledged as a practice of interpretation, pointing to the fact that the meaning of a particular phenomenon can only be understood when put in relation to its entire context. Given that the entirety is made up of individual components, each individual part must hence be put in reference to the whole. In the same way, the entire context can only be understood by recognizing the individual components involved. This process could thus be said to constitute what Alvesson (2008:193) calls a ‘hermeneutic circle’, in which potential contradictions are clarified by putting in its entire context, leading to a deepened understanding of the phenomenon in question.

In this context, the definition of ‘understanding’ is further explained as a fundamental way for every human being to orient her/himself in the daily life. In this context, it is this basic pre-understanding that starts to be investigated, consequently leading to a second understanding. As such, the process of understanding is deemed as more important than the actual result (Alvesson, 2008:199ff). During the time of the process, these partial interpretations must likewise be transformed and put in relation to the overall interpretation model. New facts will consequently be created through these interpretations, implying that the interpretation of the entire context will successively change during the process of interpretation. In addition, the initial questions posed will be
developed and reshaped during the time of the process, leading to the development of a full ‘hermeneutic circle’ (Ibid: 207ff).

*Figure 1. Hermeneutic circle (in Swedish)*

(Alvesson, 2008:212)
3. Conceptual Framework

3.1 Critical theory

In this study, the notion of critical theory will be employed in relation to the use of ‘critical geopolitics’. In order to better understand the conception of ‘critical’ in ‘critical geopolitics’, it is hence important to acknowledge the idea of ‘critical theory’, and especially in relation to the field of social science.

In general, critical theory is used as an ‘umbrella term’ to describe any theory which is based on critique, including the concept of ‘critical geopolitics’ as elaborated upon later. As such, critical theory is closely related to hermeneutics and phenomenology, and is mainly founded on the ideas of Kant, Hegel and Marx (Helenius, 1990:133). The Frankfurt Institute of Social Research has also greatly contributed to the foundation of critical theory (Thompson, 1981:71), which is closely related to the work of Habermas and Nietzsche. Based on German idealism, the Frankfurt School could be said to encourage debates concerning the theory and methods of social science, and also highlights the importance of dialogue between citizens and ruling organs in societies (Helenius, 1990:134).

In critical theory, one goes beyond merely interpreting traditions of hermeneutics and criticising practice by also aiming to change the reality. The objective is thus to investigate the implications of a particular phenomenon and which logical patterns that may follow. From the 1970’s and onwards, critical theory has also become increasingly concerned with the critique of power and dominance through language and communication. A case in point is the newspaper journalism which is said to indoctrinate the people with a ‘false consciousness’ or a ‘distorted communication’⁴. Given the comprehensiveness of critical theory as such, the ideas could thus be applied in various

⁴ The concept of ‘distorted communication’ here includes the use of rules which differs from the recognized system of linguistic principles, and is evident in the obligatory and rigid repetition of behaviour patterns (Thompson, 1981: 94).
fields; such as in the examination of political structures, the exercise of power and religion (Helenius, 1990:149ff).

In relation to the context of this study, critical theory will be used as to better understand the different power relations between China and Africa, and to some extent the underlying motives for the Western critique of China’s ventures in Africa. As such, the concept of critical theory could be said to serve as a tool when going beyond the surface of the mainstream literature concerning China’s ‘invasion’ of Africa. In gaining an increased understanding of how to interpret the multifaceted Sino-African relationship, social critical theory will also be used when explaining the social scientific areas of this cooperation, including geographical, economical and historical matters.

3.2 The concept of geopolitics

In order to better interpret and understand the rise of China in Africa and its growing influence on the international arena, the conceptual framework of geopolitics is particularly important. In this vein, the expansion of China’s economy and its potential threat to US hegemony could be interpreted through the lens of geopolitics as to describe the global landscape and its various implications.

Geopolitics as such refers broadly to the practice of employing and analyzing political power over a given territory. Academically, the concept of geopolitics entails the study of geography, history and social science (Doods, 2007:3f). It moreover refers to the importance of the geographical conditions for political action, whereby the aim is to explain politics with the help of geography, including the various relations between groups of people (Alvstam and Falkemark, 1991:1f). When employing the concept of ‘political action’, the actor referred to is a state or another administrative unit subordinated to the state, i.e. a region or a municipality. The actor could also be an ethnic group or a supranational organization such as the United Nations (Ibid: 14).

In geopolitical studies, the analytical level is of primary importance. Its link to issues of resources, territories and borders, flows and identities may thus serve a way for a critical analysis and understanding of global events. For states today, Doods (2007:84) further
argues that national identities and images are still vital. Even for large and influential powers such as China and the United States, issues of image building, representation and identity management are viewed as crucial both on the domestic and international arena. As countries such as the United States are typically concerned with providing a national identity, they are nevertheless eager to present other nations such as China as a potential ‘threat’. In this context, institutions such as national media have for example been able to generate particular representations of certain communities or countries (Ibid:95), including the perception of China as an ‘aggressive and oil-thirsty’ nation. In this vein, geopolitics could thus be viewed as a guideline for describing the global landscape, employing metaphors or geographical descriptions such as the notion of the ‘Third World’, ‘rogue states’ and the ‘axis of evil’. Such labels could in return generate specific perceptions of places, societies and associated identities, helping to produce a simple model of the world that may be used to inform and instruct foreign and security policy making (Dodds, 2007:3ff).

3.2.1 The discrepancy between hegemony and dominance
From a geopolitical perspective, the emphasis on hegemonies is important to underline. When discussing the notion of ‘world order structures’ as mentioned in the previous chapter (see 1.1.), a hegemonic power is recognized as vital for successful economic cooperation on the global arena. For a stable world order, it could thus be argued that a dominant power is required in order to implement established norms and rules in the world society. As noted by Robert Cox (cited in Abrahamsson, 2007:15), it is however important to distinguish between the two implications of ‘hegemony’. From a realist perspective, recognized as the common approach in literature of international relations, the notion of ‘hegemony’ refers to the dominance of one state over the others, including the coercive capacity of the dominant state to determine the conditions and outcomes of interstate relations. Subsequent to the Second World War, the realist perspective was evident in the idea of alliances between states and the struggle for ‘real’ power in the international arena, including the power struggle of who is to gain the leading position in Europe as to counterbalance the emergence of the Chinese hegemony in Eastern Asia (Alvstam and Falkemark, 1991:15). From a more dependency school perspective, the
meaning of ‘hegemony’ is closely related to the issue of legitimacy and the moral ‘right to rule’. In this sense, the structure of domination and leadership has been validated as ‘morally right’ as manifest in the post-World War II era and ‘Pax Americana’ (Abrahamsson, 2003:15f). Accordingly, it could be said that a hegemonic power is based on legitimacy, whereas dominance is built upon a direct threat of violence. Hegemony could thus be explained as a more subtle form of power, in which acceptance from the dominating powers are an important element in the exercise of power (Hettne, 2003:163). The concept of dominance is on the other hand directly connected to coercion, in which a structure is imposed upon other states. This accordingly stands in stark contrast to the concept of legitimacy, in which the need of a dominant power is agreed upon and supported by the international community. Accordingly, this structure could be said to lead to win-lose situation as the dominant state has not been internationally accepted as an indispensable power (Ibid: 21).

3.2.2. Critical geopolitics

The concept of ‘critical geopolitics’ focuses on the constructed images of nation states and cultures that are framed within discourses of territory and power. As such, critical geopolitics could be said to examine the construction and social effects of geopolitical images and identities, including for instance the imaginary position of states, people and regions (Müller, 2008:323). This theory could be said to stand in contrast to the realist approach of traditional geopolitics, in which power is perceived from a zero-sum, materialist and state centric perspective. Instead, critical geopolitics points to the role of discourse in establishing and upholding hegemonic governments. Recognized as one of the core elements in critical geopolitics, discourses could thus be said to create particular images of mainly territories or boundaries (Mawdsley, 2008:510f). In this context, discourses are further centered around ‘the people’ and their communicative processes. This could further be linked to Foucault’s notion of power, in which his idea of discourse is connected to social practices and the notion of power (Müller, 2008:324ff):

“By examining the various narratives, concepts, and practices that reside within geopolitical discourses, it would be possible to understand something of the power of
those discourses to shape international politics” (Dodds & Sidaway, 1994:516, cited in Müller, 2008:327).

The importance of discourse in international politics could further be related to Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’, in which the author defines nationalism as an illogical ‘false consciousness’. In relation to the importance of discourse in critical geopolitics, the use of language is thus recognized as vital for establishing a sense of community (Anderson, 1991:6f).

In comparison to classical geopolitics, critical geopolitics could thus be said to offer a new way of looking at the interaction of economic, military and political power in the world (Mawdsley, 2008:510ff). The relationship between geopolitics and identity is likewise an important perspective of critical geopolitics, including the creation of geopolitical identities. This could further be linked to the discussion on hegemonies as mentioned above, which is recognized as a central concept in critical geopolitics. While realist geopolitics mainly focuses on the struggle for dominance, critical geopolitics could thus be said to be chiefly concerned with the struggle for hegemony (Müller, 2008:331ff).

In the subsequent chapters, this geopolitical framework will further be put in relation to the Chinese involvement in some of the predominant sectors in Africa; i.e. aid, trade and oil. The information put forward will accordingly be linked to the conceptual framework of geopolitics in order to better assess its general implications and the potential of a new world order structure.
4. Findings

In this chapter, a short historical background will initially be presented as to give the reader a better understanding of how the Sino-African relationship has evolved. This will be followed by an examination of some of the predominant sectors in the Sino-African relationship; namely aid, trade and oil. In examining these sectors, a critical geopolitical perspective will be applied when analyzing various positions and general tendencies. The implications of Chinese migration to Africa will moreover be highlighted, as well as China’s interactions with ‘less significant countries’ such as Ethiopia. Lastly, the chapter will conclude by examining the typical perceptions of China, Africa and the West from a geopolitical perspective.

4.1 Historical review of Sino-African relations

Looking at the historical relations between China and various African countries, it is clear that this interaction has become increasingly multifaceted and complex over the years. Although this liaison obviously depends on which actor and which African country that is involved, it is nevertheless possible to identify three periods of interaction from 1949 and onwards (Mawdsley, 2008:513).

The first epoch is linked to the Maoist era in 1949-1976, in which Sino-African relations were structured by the notion of ‘Third World Solidarity’ and the Chinese resentment towards Western imperialism. During the 1950’s, China accordingly proclaimed itself as an ally of the Soviet Union. Subsequent to the Sino-Soviet split, China however started to take up the role as the leader of the Third World against both the superpowers, which led to substantial implications with few benefits for China on the global arena. After the change in US policy in the Nixon administration, China nonetheless started to act as the

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5 This is also related to Asche’s and Schüller’s (2007:11) presumption of China’s engagement in Africa as based on four pillars, namely the intensification of trade, investment, development cooperation and immigration.
third party in the balance of power game between the United States and the Soviet Union (Mawdsley, 2008:514f)

During this initial period, the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Egypt in 1956 can be said to have marked the official beginning of Chinese-African relations. As a result of China’s ideological conflict with the West and the American-led imperialism, the country considered Africa’s large number of countries as a strategically important political arena to gain diplomatic support. The bilateral assistance was likewise facilitated by their mutual belief in Third World Cooperation and their dissatisfaction with the West’s human rights criticism. China’s overarching principle of non-interference in the domestic issues of other governments was found attractive to those African governments who were used to be marginalized by the West, including Zimbabwe and Sudan (Tu, 2005:331ff). During this time, China supported a range of newly independent states and liberation movements through infrastructure projects, diplomatic and cultural exchanges, technical expertise as well as educational scholarships. Trade relations were rather unpretentious, but still tended to be more influenced by politics than commerce. All in all, it could be said that Maoist China’s interest in Africa was at this time defined by diplomacy, commerce and mutually shared principles of anti-colonialism (Mawdsley, 2008:513).

The second period (1978-2000) was framed by the transition towards a more pragmatic market socialism developed by Deng Xiaping. During this period, the interaction between China and African countries was marked by the new realist principles which were a result of China’s focus on economic growth (Mawdsley, 2008:513). With the end of the Cold War, China once again felt obliged to redefine its role on the international arena, which was evident in its two objectives that were put forward. The first one was to become the defender of Chinese culture and the second was to resume its historical position as the hegemonic power in Asia (Huntington, 1996:168). Subsequent to the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, there was a renewed proximity between China and many African countries. This was probably due to the fact that China felt a need of strengthening ties with their global allies given the Western condemnation of the protests. China likewise
aimed to enhance their political ties as to improve its strategic position, including the
global balance of power within for example the United Nations and the World Trade
Organization (Mawdsley, 2008:513f).

From 2000 and onwards, it is clear that the Sino-African relationship has been given an
increasingly formal status. This is for instance evident from the establishment of the
Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), in which discussions on economic
cooperation and debt relief have intensified. This for instance manifest by the fact that
China agreed to cancel sizeable amounts of debts, while at the same time opening up
major lines of credit. As such, it is accordingly clear that the latest years have been
marked by enhanced cooperation, trade links and diplomatic solidarity between China
and Africa (Mawdsley, 2008:514).

4.2 The aid sector
In order to better understand the multifaceted Sino-African relationship, it is important to
consider China’s development cooperation with Africa both from an historical and
economic perspective.

4.2.1 The historical development of Chinese development aid
Going back to the era of the Cold War, it could be said that China’s development
cooperation with the developing world represented a ‘third alternative’ to the aid and
political cooperation offered by the Soviet Union and the Western powers. As such, the
Chinese objective was to support the oppressed people in the South by providing
technical and diplomatic support in order to combat ‘common evils’, such as imperialism.
This period was thus characterized by China’s identity as a defender of the Third World
and its aim to overcome poverty and underdevelopment (Haifang, 2010:53). In line with
the policies of Mao Zedong, China therefore aimed to manifest its position as the Third
World leader by offering ideological and military support to anti-colonial struggles and
revolutionary governments in the developing world (Alden, 2007:10).

Just as now, Alden (2007:20f) further notes that China’s foreign policy towards Africa
was inspired by its need to gain international recognition as the rightful government of
Taiwan. During the 1960’s, this was particularly important since Taiwan had secured support from more African countries than China. In order to secure African support at the United Nations, China accordingly started to attract more African countries away from Taiwan by offering aid and political support as to defy the expansion of the Soviet Union and the United States on the continent. During the 1970’s, China further put an extra effort in establishing diplomatic relations with African countries and accordingly managed to attract more nations away from Taiwan. As a result, Chinese aid to Africa enhanced from US$428 million in 1966 to US$1.9 billion in 1977 (Haifang, 2010:53ff). Today, the battle for diplomatic recognition between China and Taiwan is still very much alive, and remain one of the cornerstones for China’s foreign policy. Currently, it is nonetheless clear that the great majority of African nations are in favour of Beijing over Taipei (Alden, 2007:20f).

Recognizing Africa as the largest single regional group of states and its trend of ‘bloc voting’ in multilateral settings, it is evident that African support to China has greatly benefited the country by enhancing its position on the global arena (Alden, 2007:22). With the support of 26 African countries, China for instance gained a seat at the United Nations in 1971 (Haifang, 2010:56). Whenever China’s performance have been criticised, African governments have thus been quick to support China (Alden, 2007:22).

As Chinese aid increased significantly during the 1970’s, the country continued to employ a language of solidarity and friendship towards African regimes. In this strategy, the use of the term ‘aid’ in its cooperation with African nations was accordingly avoided. With China embracing the dogma of globalization and economic reforms from the 1980’s and onwards, China’s foreign policy towards Africa however became more and more directed by economic factors rather than ideological ones. With the economic liberalization doctrines introduced by the IMF and the World Bank, China’s policy on foreign aid towards Africa thus altered significantly. The Chinese development aid accordingly started to aim towards enhancing private sector development and to increase the involvement of Chinese enterprises in African markets. In order to promote Chinese investment and trade in Africa, an important reform introduced was the grant of interest-
free loans and subsidized export credits to African nations. With the boost of China’s economy, China has further been able to extend its support to African countries as manifest in the launch of preferential trade agreements, debt relief and market access for African products into China. Yet, expressions of non-interference, win-win partnership and solidarity have continued to be predominant principles in China’s development cooperation with Africa (Haifang, 2010:54ff).

4.2.2. The guiding principles and objectives of Chinese aid cooperation
Looking at China’s development assistance to Africa, it is clear that Chinese development cooperation do have a long history despite the tendency to portray China as an ‘emerging actor’ on the continent. In fact, China’s aid to Africa could be said to have started as early as 1955. With the launch of the Bandung Conference, five guiding principles of Chinese aid were set out named ‘China’s Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’. These were namely:

- Mutual non-aggression
- Equality and mutual benefits
- Peaceful coexistence
- Non-interference in each other’s internal affairs
- Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity

In the present era, these principles could still be said to underpin the contemporary foreign and aid policy of China towards Africa. Despite China’s move towards a market-based economy, the principle of non-interference has for instance remained a dominant strategy and is manifest in many important official document and international legal documents. In developing long-term relations with Africa, China hence believes in upholding its principle of non-interference while at the same time offering unconditional aid⁶. By not meddling in the internal affairs of African nations, China hopes to give full

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⁶ As noted later in this paper, China’s declaration of their aid as ‘unconditional’ could however be questioned considering the country’s upheld principles such as the ‘One China’ policy.
respect to their right of managing their affairs independently. For China, this principle is shaped by its own history which was marked by continual intrusion of the West in the domestic affairs of China (Obi and Cheru, 2010:160f).

In 1964, these original principles were nonetheless replaced by China’s ‘Eight Principles of Economic and Technical Aid’, in which the additional standards underlined that: Chinese experts operating in Africa should have the same living standards as the local experts, the Chinese technical support should promote local capacity, economic cooperation should encourage self-reliance (and not dependency), and respect for the recipient’s sovereignty should imply that no political or economic conditions should be imposed on the recipient government (Haifang, 2010:55). In regards to the issue of aid efficiency, China has moreover signed up to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, implying that the country is committed to principles of ownership, harmonization and alignment in its external aid assistance (Davies, 2007:13).

In order to better understand the complicated and multi-dimensional role of China in Africa ‘for better and worse’, it is further important to put this relationship within a wider set of geopolitical objectives and asserted Chinese foreign policies. As stated by Mawdsley (2008:515), the main element is firstly the notion of the present world order as unfair and inequitable, in which globalization is viewed as presenting more challenges and risks to developing nations than opportunities. The second element is the right to national self-determination, which rejects the right of other countries to interfere in internal affairs. The third is the Chinese foreign policy’ urge for greater South-South cooperation; encouraging mutual benefits from economical collaboration in for example investments, joint ventures, banking and technology transfers. The final element is China’s commitment to peaceful multilateralism, including peaceful negotiations of internal conflicts, nuclear non-proliferation, as well as the control of the illegal lights arms trade (Ibid).

4.2.3 The Forum on Africa-China Cooperation (FOCAC) and China’s ‘grand strategy’
The major result of China’s regional diplomacy in Africa is the establishment of FOCAC (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation), which aims to serve as a platform to demonstrate the advantages of this regional cooperation and partnership between Africa and China. The first FOCAC summit took place in Beijing in 2000, and was followed by an additional meeting in Addis Ababa three years later (Alden, 2007:30). Through the creation of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC) in 2000, Sino-African relations could thus be said to have been given more formal status. In the first meeting in Beijing with over 40 African countries attending, discussions were held concerning issues such as debt relief, economic relations and cooperation. In 2003, China further produced a ‘White Paper’ on Africa, confirming the principles of non-interference, mutual cooperation, diplomatic solidarity, trade and investments (Mawdsley, 2008:514). In order to demonstrate the benefits of this cooperation, China for instance announced its decision to cancel its outstanding debt of US$1.27 billion to 31 African countries. During the first two FOCAC’s summits, China moreover declared their relations with Africa to be free of political conditionality, while simultaneously warning for the rise of Western hegemony in international affairs (Alden, 2007:30f).

Just like many other donors, Abel and Pehnelt (2007:7) however highlight that China’s aid programme is obviously not only driven by purely humanitarian and unselfish motives. Rather, it could be said that its foreign assistance are part of a broader tactic which is often referred to as its ‘grand strategy’. In this ‘grand strategy’, Chinese political objectives are naturally also included. In order to strengthen its economic and political power, one of the main goals for China has thus been to gain political influence both at the bilateral and multilateral level. In promoting the idea of a multipolar world that limits the hegemony of the United States, China has accordingly searched for South-South partnerships and support in international bodies such as the WTO (Ibid).

In relation to the concept of geopolitics, it could thus be argued that China has applied a more hegemonic and non-aggressive approach in its quest for international influence. This is for instance evident by the fact that China generally does not enforce any political conditions on its partners in the ‘Global South’, apart from its guiding principles such as
the One-China policy, in which the country is to be acknowledged as the legitimate representative of all China (and not Taiwan). The notion of power is thus clearly evident in this aspect. Yet, China’s approach could be said to be more ‘soft’ in nature in comparison to traditional Western powers, as manifest from its strategies of ‘non-interference’, diplomatic solidarity, and mutual cooperation.

4.2.4 The nature and structural organization of Chinese foreign assistance
As already highlighted, China’s engagement with Africa has become increasingly characterized by China’s use of foreign assistance. This has been employed as to create stronger ties with African governments in order to gain diplomatic support and attain resources (Abel and Pehnelt, 2007:21). Yet, it should be noted that the bulk of Chinese aid has traditionally been supplied to Asian countries, with 50% of its assistance budget still going to Asia today. Africa has however become increasingly important for China’s foreign aid policy, with the continent now receiving more than a third of Chinese development assistance. Although a small percentage of Chinese aid towards Africa is channelled through international bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), most of the aid provided by China is nonetheless bilateral and tied to the use of Chinese companies and supplies (Ibid: 5).

China’s development assistance is mainly provided in 3 forms, namely:
- In grants (in kind, provided by MOFCOM)
- Interest free loans (usually converted into debt cancellations, provided by MOFCOM)
- Concessional loans (granted by the China Exim Bank) (Davies, 2007:11).

Out of these structures, a prominent feature of China’s foreign assistance is the provision of gifts in kind as well as the construction of specific facilities, such as public buildings, presidential palaces, stadiums, railroads and other prestige projects (Abel and Pehnelt, 2007:21). In fact, the majority of China’s aid to African regimes is concessional loans for infrastructure projects that are usually executed by Chinese corporations (Ibid: 5). Obviously, this type of symbolic diplomacy is very much appreciated by African governments weary of colonial-era public buildings. As few Western donors are nowadays investing in such projects, this could accordingly be said to have given China a
political advantage, and especially since such undertakings seem to be quite popular among African leaders. In executing such projects, this could thus be seen as an illustration of Chinese enhanced influence on the African continent (Alden, 2007:21f).

As to the structure of Chinese foreign assistance and cooperation to Africa, the main institutions involved are the following:

*The State Council* – The highest executive organ and the highest organ of state administration.

*The Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM)* - The main government organization in charge of Chinese aid. It further coordinates aid policies with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as with other government ministries and bodies involved.

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs* – Has an advisory role on aid and economic cooperation. It is also responsible for diplomatic contacts and of coordinating concrete policies in its bilateral activities.

*The Finance Ministry* – Is in charge of the budget and multilateral aid.

*The Chinese Embassies* – Monitor the implementation of projects and inform the Chinese government about the progress.


*Figure 2. China’s structural organization of aid*
In its outreach towards African governments, the China Export-Import Bank could be said to hold an especially important function. This institution is mainly engaged in the expansion of Chinese business internationally by providing loans and finance export credit for constructions and investment abroad. In regards to its cooperation with Africa, the bank is working together with regional and continental banks such as the African Development Bank and the East Development Bank. In comparison to Western lending agencies, the China Exim Bank have also been known for being more flexible but also less risk-adverse and more receptive to the needs of African ruling elites (Alden, 2007:25ff).

Assessing the size and quality of China’s aid programme however remains a difficult task due to a number of factors. First of all, it should be noted that China does not have a single institution governing its development aid. As mentioned earlier, there are instead several ministries involved in this sector and the majority of Chinese aid is dispersed bilaterally and directly to recipient governments. Yet, these individual aid flows are not reported. Unlike other countries, China’s total amount of aid is moreover believed to be heavily underestimated. As argued by Abel and Pehnelt (2007:2), one of the reasons could be that the Chinese authorities actually do not know the exact size of the aid funds.
controlled by the different institutions given the fragmented system for delivering aid. Given the enduring widespread poverty particularly among the rural population in China, it is further possible that China is intentionally underestimating the size of its aid programme in its published statistics as to avoid political repercussions in the rural areas. It should moreover be noted that the Chinese authorities do not offer an official definition of what it appoints as aid, which may further explain why the exact value and amount of China’s foreign aid programme is unknown (Ibid: 2ff).

Against the background of Western aid conditionality and infringement on national sovereignty, Obi and Cheru (2010:186) however argue that Chinese non-conditional aid has come to better satisfy the African leaders’ quest for national growth and integration into the global economy on more equitable terms. Some African leaders have for instance perceived China as a possibility of negotiating or even escaping Western aid conditionality, which have thus led to an increased room of maneuver for those African countries which have historically had a rather weak position in relation to Western institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (Mawdsley, 2008:514).

China’s historical experience as a former colony and their remarkable economic growth have further raised hopes among many African nations that they too can break away from their underdevelopment and aid dependency. Considering the failure of the Western imposed structural adjustment programs of the 1980’s, the alternative development path of the ‘Asian giants’ could thus be said to serve as an attractive model for Africa. The poor record of Western development recommendation, including the unequal trade practices and debt structures, has accordingly led to a call for a more alternative and self-determining African development agenda. In this context, China’s recognition of Africa as a continent full of dynamics and business opportunities has been greatly appreciated by plenty of African nations who are tired of being posed as vulnerable and needy of aid. In contrast to the Western paternalism, China’s treatment of Africa as an equal development partner and its focus on solidarity and mutually beneficial economic cooperation has hence often been greatly welcomed (Obi and Cheru, 2010:3f).7

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7 Yet, it should be noted that the vast diversity in and between African nations highly complicates any attempt to evaluate or generalize the implications of China’s entrance into Africa. Obviously, China poses
For China, the establishment of diplomatic relations with Africa has likewise come to improve their status and level of influence in international organs such as the United Nations. Naturally, this is a strategy that will in the long term come to improve the international status of China and hopefully improve the acceptance of China as a hegemonic power rather than a dominant one (Obi and Cheru, 2010:186f). From a critical geopolitical perspective, this approach could hence be viewed as a manifestation of China’s attempt to establish a certain identity and create a discourse of itself as a peaceful hegemonic power, as evident from its own proclaimed idea of China’s ‘peaceful rise’. This has likewise been noted by Carmody and Owusu (2007:508), who refer to China as a ‘caring hegemony’ through its use of ‘soft power’ in its outward-looking strategies.

4.3 The oil sector

During the last decade, China has progressed from being an oil exporter as to become the second largest oil importer in the world (Obi and Cheru, 2010:181). As a result of China’s rapid economic development, there has accordingly been a growing internal demand for natural resources as to sustain its growing population and booming economy (Askouri, 2007:72f). With China’s heavy dependence on oil for its future progression, China is just as many other global powers eager to attain energy resources in order to uphold its national development and prosperity (Obi and Cheru, 2010:181).

4.3.1. The state-led business model

In stabilizing China’s energy security, the country has adopted a state-centered approach, implying that Chinese investments are carried out through their state-owned oil enterprises (SOOEs) and their subsidiaries operating abroad. This could hence be said to underline the strong link between China’s national security and the securitization of stable oil supplies. As a consequence, China has launched several diplomatic and administrative measures in order to deepen the diplomatic and political relationships with different challenges to various states, which may also depend on the economic capacity of the country in question. In relatively prosperous nations such as South Africa, the relationship with China is for instance more balanced as in comparison to more weak and dysfunctional states such as Zambia and Zimbabwe (Jakobson, 2008).
all energy producing countries in Africa (Obi and Cheru, 2010:182f). In comparison to Western companies, it should further be noted that state-owned Chinese companies generally have a lower risk aversion given that they are politically and financially supported by the government and state-controlled banks. The close cooperation between Chinese businessmen and government officials accordingly facilitate Chinese investment, which could be said to give them a comparative advantage over Western firms (Abel and Pehnelt, 2007:19f).

4.3.2 The Chinese lust for African oil
In its quest for oil supplies, the African continent has been of particular interest for China given its relatively unexplored oil resources and the fact that its oil resources have not been entirely tied up by Western countries (Gu et al., 2007:286). One of the focal reasons for the enhanced demand of Africa’s energy resources is also the demand for oil and gas resources outside the unstable and hot-tempered Middle East. Just as for Western powers, China is thus concerned about securing stable access to oil and gas resources as to stimulate their economies (Obi and Cheru, 2010:181)

In its craving for oil and other energy resources, China has accordingly become increasingly engaged with African countries. For the past 15 years or so, China has pursued a broad and somewhat particular plan for securing oil across the continent as noted by Obi and Cheru (2010:183). First of all, it has carried out exploration and production deals in smaller, low-visibility countries such as Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Second of all, China has targeted the largest oil-producers by offering incorporated packages of aid (Ibid).

As such, Chinese trade and investments strategies could accordingly be said to have moved Africa to the centre in global security and oil politics. As argued by Carmody and Owusu (2007:505ff), the quest for stable sources of supplies could be said to play part of China’s strategy to transform itself into a global power. As a result, the authors thus argue that China’s geo-economic strategies could be viewed as an attempt to counterweight the US hegemony in the international system. The geopolitical elements of
China’s strategies towards Africa are likewise evident in China’s economic advantages against the United States, without leading to direct conflict – ‘it’s peaceful rise’ (Ibid).

In China’s strategy to secure oil resources, the key African countries include Sudan, Angola, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Chad. It is further deemed that China has oil interests in Mauritania and Niger (Askouri, 2007:72f).

4.3.3 Angola

The largest African oil exporter to China is Angola, who accounts for around 13 % of China’s oil imports, and is China’s second largest trading partner on the continent. In 2004, China secured a major stake in future oil production through ‘Sinopec’, which entailed a US$2 billion package of aid and loans including funds for Chinese companies to construct railways, roads, schools, hospitals, offices and bridges. In addition to this, Chinese firms were also to train Angolan telecommunication workers and lay a fiber-optic network. One year later, Sinopec reached a joint-venture agreement with the Angolan state oil corporation named ‘Sonangol’, with the aim of exploring some off-shore oil blocks.

The Angolan government’s rejection of IMF loans later on led to international upheaval, as the Chinese Exim Bank granted a low-interest loan of US$2 billion to Angola which enabled the Angolan government to reject the IMF’s loan proposal. In return, Angola was to guarantee the supply of Angolan oil and grant some contracts to China. By deploying a strategy of ‘no-strings-attached’, the Chinese government was however perceived as ignoring global business practices and boosting corrupt African regimes. From the perspective of the Angolan government, it was nonetheless claimed that the country is entitled to reject the conditional ties of the IMF, although it was clear that the loan was needed for reconstruction after the war (Obi and Cheru, 2010:183).

4.3.4 Nigeria

China’s engagement with Africa’s major oil producer, Nigeria, started quite recently. In 2004, Petro-China signed a contract with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) worth US$800 million. In doing so, the state oil company NNPC was to supply
30,000 barrels of crude oil per day to China. In the same year, Sinopec additionally signed agreements with NNPC and the Nigerian Agip Oil Corporation in order to develop further exploration wells and two oilfields. The Chinese engagement in Nigeria concurred with common visits by the Chinese president to Nigeria, which was followed by the signing of contracts and agreements. In 2005, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) accordingly purchased a large stake (45%) in a Nigerian oil-for-gas field worth US$2.27 billion. Later on, CNOOC bought a 35% share of an oil exploration license in the Niger Delta worth US$60 million. At that time, the acquisition of the oilfield by CNOOC was the largest in the world, enabling China to receive 70% of all profits from the oil plot (Obi and Cheru, 2010:185).

4.3.5 Sudan
The first Chinese oil investment in Africa was launched in Sudan, in which China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) accounted for 40% in the establishment of the Greater Nile Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) in 1996. This occurred subsequent to the withdrawal of Chevron oil in 1992, and was later followed by the departure of Western oil companies given the enhanced domestic pressure and the US sanctions on the Sudanese government for their violations on human rights. In 1999, CNPC started to export oil from the country after initializing operations in Southern Sudan. Apart from holding the largest share of investment in GNPC, China assisted Sudan with their oil infrastructure, including an oil refinery and the building of an oil pipeline to the Red Sea. Currently, Sudan is alleged to be Africa’s third largest oil producer and account for approximately 9% of China’s oil imports (Obi and Cheru, 2010:184).

As noted by Chun and Brown (2009:13), 50% of Sudan’s oil exports currently go to China. This figure however does not imply that this oil is bought by Chinese consumers. In fact, the company which mainly controls the oil transactions between China and Sudan, i.e. CNPC, does not sell the oil imported from Sudan on the Chinese domestic market. Instead, CNPC sells it on the international market for higher profits. In 2006, Japan was the largest single recipient of Sudanese oil.
Just as with their involvement in Angola, China’s ventures in Sudan have however received scores of international critique. Given the Sudanese government’s reputation as corrupt and responsible for human rights violations in Darfur, China has been blamed for supporting Sudan both diplomatically (i.e. in the Security Council) and financially (i.e. through arms and resources) (Obi and Cheru, 2010:184f).

4.3.5.1 The alleged clash between China’s diplomatic policy and the human rights situation in Darfur

In light of the enduring conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan and China’s continued engagement in the country, it is clear that China’s diplomatic policy has caused heated debates worldwide. In view of the close economic and political ties between the two countries, the international community has accordingly expected China to be able to influence the position of the Sudanese government in spite of China’s historical foreign principle of ‘non interference’ (see 3.2.2). This could consequently be said to put China in collision to the new international principle of the ‘responsibility to protect’ and the Western campaign of imposing a ‘sanctions regime’ on the Sudanese government.

From the perspective of the Chinese government, it has nevertheless been asserted that the principle of ‘non-interference’ should not be taken as if China is reluctant to take on the ‘responsibility to protect’. During the recent years, China’s Darfur policy has in fact become increasingly flexible at the same time as the ‘non-interference’ policy is evidently being transformed (Wenping, 2010:155).

From the standpoint of United States and some Western communities, it has further been maintained that the Sudanese government are guilty of ‘genocide’ in Darfur as well as crimes against humanity. As a result, it has been asserted that the Sudanese government should be prosecuted in accordance with the international standards. If it would be internationally accepted as ‘genocide’, this would accordingly enable an intervention by the NATO and Washington into Sudan’s sovereign affairs, after being approved by the UN Security Council (Wenping, 2010:157) In this regard,
the potential role of China as to convince the Sudanese government to comply with international regulations and norms has been highlighted. Although the United states has tended to present China as the ‘stumbling block’ in the UN Security Council in regards to Sudan, China has nonetheless pointed to that the true intentions of the United States in Sudan is in reality quite different from what it claims officially. As pointed out by Engdahl (2007): ‘Oil, not human misery, is behind Washington’s new interest in Darfur’ (Wenping, 2010:158). From a Chinese standpoint, it has moreover been asserted that diplomacy is a more fruitful instrument in resolving the Darfur conflict than isolating the Sudanese government and threatening with sanctions. In light of this situation, Wenping (2010:155) argues that China’s engagement approach is in fact more constructive in creating peace and stability in Sudan than the penalizing ‘sanction initiative’ that has been endorsed by the West. Despite the publicly announced humanitarian concerns from the US government, the Chinese standpoint has been that the US real motives for wanting to intervene in Sudan are to act against the ‘War on Terror’ (given its strategic location in the Horn of Africa) and to gain a secure supply of energy (Ibid: 155ff).

From the perspective of several Western governments and NGOs, it has likewise been claimed that China is only caring for its economic interests in Sudan and thus ignoring the human rights situation in the country. Yet, it could be argued that such criticism has been rather deceitful Sudan and one-sided since other governments who are involved in the Sudanese oil sector, i.e. Malaysia and India, have been spared from the same type of criticism (Wenping, 2010:158).

In trying to understand the Chinese ventures in ‘rogue states’ in Africa, it is however simultaneously important to acknowledge the wider context of China’s international trade relations. First of all, it should be acknowledged that China is a relatively new force in global commodity markets. This accordingly implies that China has to compete with huge Western multinational corporations (MNCs) which have already established themselves in practically every resource-rich region
worldwide and thus possess great economic and political power. As a consequence, these markets are already marked by fairly stable contracts between traditional powers and major exporting nations, which thus constitute one of the main challenges for China. As there are relatively few ‘unoccupied’ oil fields remaining in the world, the issue of energy security has thus become increasingly important for China’s economy. As a result, it has been argued that China can not afford to reject potential providers, even if those states are considered ‘rogue’ by the West8 (Abel and Pehnelt, 2007:15ff).

In overall, it could thus be said that there exist various discourses surrounding this phenomenon which are naturally driven by geopolitical interests. In creating images of Chinese as ‘greedy’ and ‘ignorant’ of human rights issues, it is for instance clear that such perceptions will have repercussions for China’s image on the global arena. In response to the Western criticism of China’s poor human rights record, Chinese officials have nevertheless stated that the discourse of human rights is merely a tool of Western neo-imperialism. In contrast to China’s alleged use of ‘soft power’, Carmody and Owusu (2007:509) further argue that many Western countries have tended to employ a more dominant approach by enforcing economic conditions when engaging in African countries.

4.3.5.2 The developmental implications of Chinese oil ventures in Sudan

One aspect in the political ‘blame-game’ that is rarely highlighted internationally is China’s role in transforming and developing the Sudanese market. Without the progression of the Sudanese economy, which has been significantly supported by the Chinese investment in the oil sector, the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 would for instance have been impossible to achieve. During the past years, it has also been noted that the southern part of Sudan has started to receive a larger share of the oil revenues, implying that it is not only the central government in Khartoum that benefits from the oil industry. This has

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8 This could also be said to be one of the reasons for why China prefers tied aid in its relations with states owning oil or other significant resources (Abel and Pehnelt, 2007:19).
accordingly led to that oil shares have generally improved people’s living standards, both in the north and in the southern part⁹. Apart from the efforts made through mediations and diplomacy, it could thus be said that China’s economical contribution in the oil sector has greatly boosted the advancement of the peace process in South Sudan. It is moreover manifest that China’s cooperation with Sudan has improved the Sudanese oil capacity, including the building of oil pipelines and a crude-oil processing plant. Most significantly, Sudan has been able to develop its own oil industry with the support of China. As a result, the Sudanese oil production has increased from 3,000 barrels per day in 1993 to 500,000 barrels in 2010. In regards to social responsibility, it should also be noted that Chinese oil companies have both provided possibilities for local employment and been engaged in projects directly benefitting local communities. A case in point is the China National Petroleum Corporation’s payments for constructing schools, hospitals and drilling water wells, which accounted for over US$32 million and benefited around 1.5 million of the local population (Wenping, 2010:158ff).

As noted by Askouri (2007:74), the Sudanese support to the Sudanese junta has however led to numerous negative implications for the people in Southern Sudan as well, and particularly in Darfur. One issue that deserves to be highlighted is China’s provision of arms to the Khartoum government, which dates back to 1985. Today, it remains one of the main arms suppliers to the Khartoum government which is also related to the fact that China puts no conditions except for oil concessions and fiscal resources. Another negative effect of Chinese oil investments is the displacement of local inhabitants residing in the Upper Nile area of South Sudan, where most of the oil production takes place. In order to ensure safety of the oil installations, the Sudanese government accordingly adopted a policy of depopulating the area which was to be carried out by the army and splinter groups of Sudan’s People’s Liberation Movement (SPLA). This however led to that numerous villagers were forced to leave their homes or face extermination. All in all, Askouri thus argues that the Chinese engagement in Sudan has been lacking a deeper analysis of the

⁹ In light of the recent independence of Southern Sudan, it should however be noted that it remains unclear to which extent the two parts of the former Sudan will ultimately benefit from China’s oil ventures.
social, environmental and economic feasibility of the Chinese proposed projects in Sudan (Ibid: 77f). Yet, it should be noted that Chinese authorities have increasingly started to respond to this criticism by for example obliging Chinese firms in Africa to abide by internationally recognized norms on labour rights, environmental standards and working conditions (Haifang, 2010:57).

4.3.6 Western commotions towards China’s oil ventures
From a Western point of view, China’s growing engagement in Africa could be said to create anxiety and fear of competition if Western and Chinese interests on the continent are to clash (Jakobson, 2008).

In regards to the international critique that China has received concerning its allegedly ‘exploitative’ oil ventures on the African continent, Chinese policy-makers and scholars have been quick to reject such claims and instead highlight the Sino-African relationship’s basis of ‘mutual benefit and sincerity’. As such, it has been maintained that China has more to offer in regards to developmental benefits and better terms for oil-producing countries in comparison to Western companies recognized as the historical ‘exploiters’ of African resources (Obi and Cheru, 2010:183).

In light of the alleged threat of China to Western oil interests, many experts have declared this intimidation to be exaggerated given that Chinese companies only hold less than 2 % of Africa’s known oil resources. In fact, most of the oil reserves held by Chinese national oil companies (NOCs) are of little interest to international oil companies (IOCs) given their relatively small size and poor quality (Obi and Cheru, 2010: 186). Chinese writers and politicians, weary of the erroneous stamp as a neo-colonizer, have thus pointed to that China should not be perceived as a threat. In fact, Western oil companies are also investing heavily in African oil and the United States still import more than two times more oil from the continent than China. It has therefore been argued that the Western portrayal of China as a threat is in reality due to their fear of the enhanced Sino-African relationship as a challenge to the Western interests on the continent (Gu et al., 2007:287).
Looking at the Chinese engagement in the above mentioned countries, it should further be noted that China mainly took on these oil assets after they had been abandoned by international oil companies. In Angola, the state’s refusal of IMF’s aid conditionality paved the way for the recognition of Chinese aid, leading to a Chinese oil company undertaking a formerly Western-owned oil block. In Sudan, the entry of Chinese, Malaysian and Indian oil companies only came about subsequent to the departure of Western oil companies. Through inexpensive development aid and state-led resource diplomacy, Chinese oil companies have hence come to access the markets in Africa’s oil-producing countries (Obi and Cheru, 2010:186).

All in all, China’s attempt to ensure access to natural resources could be identified as one of its major geo-economic strategies in prospering on the global arena (Carmody and Owusu, 2007:506). It is thus in the light of China’s search for global influence and prosperity that the Chinese oil explorations in Africa could be considered. The Chinese accumulation of raw materials in Africa could accordingly be seen as a geopolitical strategy to counter the US hegemony, knowing that such resources will be more worth than US treasury bills (Cambell, 2007:123). In highlighting the Sino-African relationship’s basis of ‘mutual benefit and sincerity’, it is likewise clear that China aims to portray itself as a ‘compassionate hegemony’ in contrast to the common Western discourses of the ‘Chinese dragon’ as hungry for resources and power.

4.4 The trade sector
In order to better understand the Chinese engagement with Africa and its global implications, it is necessary to look into China’s trade policies towards Africa and its diverse outcomes. As the growing trade linkages between the two regions constitute a key dimension in the Sino-African relationship, this is especially important to consider. In regards to the potential of a ‘Pax Sinica’, this aspect is likewise interesting given its strong dynamics and intensified growth, which is prone to influence the world order structure as such.
4.4.1 China’s foreign trade policy

In regards to the Chinese foreign trade policy, it is clear that the government has particularly focused on opening up for new markets for Chinese export goods. Since China’s accession to the WTO in 2001, the country has further attempted to diversify its foreign trade flows, including the expansion of bilateral foreign trade with Africa. A case in point is China’s decision to allow 41 African countries to become most-favored nations (MFN) in their trade relations with China. In addition, China granted 28 African Least Developed Countries (LCDs) exemption from customs duties for more than 190 products in 2005. During the recent years, China has further eliminated tariffs on 440 products exported by those LCDs that have agreed on entering diplomatic relations with China (Minson, 2008:1). As noted by Carmody and Owusu (2007:510), China has moreover concentrated on primary commodity exports in their trade relations with African countries. The most economically valuable Chinese preferences have accordingly been primary products or transformed manufactures, such as sesame seeds, copper, cocoa beans, cobalt and different types of leathers (Minson, 2008:3).

4.4.2 The structural organization of trade

In regards to the structure of merchandise trade, it is clear that China largely export industrial goods to Africa, while commodities from Africa mainly consist of agricultural products and mineral supplies. Naturally, the predominant export product for Africa countries is crude oil, which accounts for more than 70% of China’s total imports. According to statistics by Chinese authorities in 2006, agricultural products such as timber and cotton however only accounts for 5% when put together (Asche and Schüller, 2007:21).

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10 As argued by Minson (2008:2), it should however be noted that the already existing trade preferences for African LDCs, such as the US African Growth and opportunities Act (AGoA) and the EU Everything but Arms (EBA) Initiative have thus far given rather disappointing results. The modest benefits that the recipient countries have received are most likely due to that the design of such preferences have been impractical or that the African economies do not have what it takes to benefit from transparent price incentives. Given the improper design of such preferences as well as the impacts of non-tariff barriers, it is thus likely that China’s preference scheme will only have a modest economic impact on the African countries that it intends to help (Ibid: 2f).
Figure 3. Structure of supplies from Africa to China (Asche and Schüller, 2007:6)

As to the regional structure of foreign trade between China and African countries, it could be said that China tends to mainly focus on a relatively modest number of countries; including Sudan, Angola, Congo-Brazzaville and Equatorial Guinea. In addition to these countries, China has further concentrated on countries having a relatively high level of economic growth such as Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and South Africa. In overall, Angola has accounted for the largest share of China’s imports from the African continent, reaching up to 38% in 2006. Although China’s engagement with oil-producing countries is clearly manifest, it should nonetheless be noted that China has had a considerable impact on smaller African countries, whose own volume of trade is low by international standards (Asche and Schüller, 2007:20).

4.4.3 The regional and global impacts of Sino-African trade
When looking at the overall Sino-African trade relationship, a clear imbalance can be noted when comparing the importance of economic trade from an African and Chinese perspective. For China, the economic significance of Sino-African trade could be said to be relatively small in regards to its total volume of trade. In 2007, it was for instance noted that the Chinese proportion of foreign trade with Africa only accounted for 2.3% of Chinese total exports (Geda and Meskel, 2010:97). Despite the constantly increasing growth rates of Chinese trade with Africa since the 1990’s, it could thus be said that the
region is still fairly trivial for China in overall. In contrast, China however plays a significant role for African countries in terms of foreign trade. In regards to total imports and exports, China has become Africa’s most important trading partner after the United States, with some arguing that China is likely to exceed the United States in the years to come. Yet, it is clear that the European Union and the Western industrialized countries are still the most important trading partners for Africa (Asche and Schüller, 2007:18). During the past few years, China’s exports to Africa have however grown faster than exports from the Western industrialized countries. Likewise, the growth rates of imports from Africa have been significantly higher than those from the Western industrialized countries, and Europe in particular.

Figure 4. A comparison of trade flows between China and Africa, implying an increase from about $10 billion in 2001 to more than $55 billion in 2006

(Wang and Bio-Tchané, 2008)
In acknowledging China as a major net importer of African commodities, Geda and Meskel (2010:97ff) further argue that it is on the global commodity markets where China’s superiority on the continent will be mostly felt. In assessing China’s impact on African countries’ trade balance, it is moreover evident that there are both ‘losers’ and winners’ from China’s rise in the global trade arena. As expected, the impacts of China’s trade policies obviously differ from country to country and the section in question.

Apart from the presence of Chinese multinational corporations (MNCs), the emergence of Chinese small and medium businesses could for instance be said to have had a considerable impact on African economies (Alden, 2007:42). Many smaller businesses have for example been motivated by China’s comparative advantage\textsuperscript{11} in regards to the production of manufactured goods such as bicycles, textiles, clothing and electrical appliances. Considering such policies, the expansion of small and medium businesses has naturally had numerous negative implications for African enterprises. As smaller business enterprises have been able to provide low-cost consumer products, traditional suppliers have thus been outcompeted which have often led to higher levels of local unemployment. A case in point is the import of textiles and other clothing in countries such as Lesotho, South Africa, Mauritius, Nigeria and Kenya, which have threatened to put many local companies out of business (Alden, 2007:47f). All in all, it is hence clear that Chinese imports have in many cases undermined local industries (Carmody and Owusu, 2007:510).

From a Chinese perspective, it has however been pointed to that the increase of Chinese textiles is a result of a higher demand for Chinese goods in Africa (Carmody and Owusu, 2007:511). At the same time, it is clear that China’s economic expansion has created an enhanced demand for African commodities which is likely to expand. This is also manifest by the fact that Sino-African total trade reached US$72 billion in 2008, which is an increase of 62% from the previous year (Geda and Meskel, 2010:106)\textsuperscript{12}.

\textsuperscript{11} China’s declaration of its comparative economic advantage is here important to consider, with China promoting a low-cost bidding policy concentrated on skilled and semi-skilled labor as well as lower managerial costs as part of its foreign trade policy (Alden, 2007:42).
Moreover, it is clear that China’s foreign trade policy has become an increasingly attractive alternative to the Washington consensus and the enforced liberal forms of governance. As such, Minson (2008:1) argues that China’s economic policies may come to restructure the outcomes of the traditional Western trade liberalization. Considering that exports to China have now become a significant share of many Africa countries’ world exports, the Chinese trade advancements on the African continent could thus be seen as a sign of China’s rise to great power status, as noted by Minson (2008:1). Naturally, the massive investments carried out during the last decade have helped to improve the political power and room of maneuver for China on the international arena. As China continues to expand both in terms of economic development and population growth, Africa’s richness in oil, minerals and agricultural land is thus urgently needed (Alden, 2007:149). Likewise, the development and expansion of Chinese MNCs in Africa has been acknowledged as one of China’s predominant geo-economic strategies (Carmody and Owusu, 2007:506) in becoming a global hegemony and the potential of a ‘Pax Sinica’.

4.5 Chinese migration to Africa
As a result of the multiple Chinese ventures in Africa, the number of Chinese migrants entering the continent has increased significantly during the recent years. In order to better understand China’s engagement in Africa and its wider implications, it is thus important to look at the overall impact of the Chinese migration to Africa. Although it is too early to state what long-term impacts Chinese migrants will have on their African host countries, this study will however aim to give a general picture of the Chinese migration, including its historical background and the diverse images existing in regards to this phenomenon.

4.5.1 Historical background

12 This could further be related to the total trade between Africa and the United States the same year, which reached US$ 106 billion (Tralac, 2009).
Looking back in history, it has been confirmed that the first Chinese migrants came to Southern Africa with the entrance of the Dutch East India Company during the mid-17th century. These migrants were mainly company slaves and convicts, followed by a small number of artisans and contract labourers who arrived to South Africa in the mid-19th century (Park, 2009:2). In contrast to the African populace, the colonialists tended to identify the Chinese with a strong work ethic. Thousands of Chinese workers later on settled in South and Southern Africa, with Chinatowns appearing in Johannesburg among other cities (Alden, 2007:51). The majority of these workers however repatriated to China, although many gradually started to integrate into South Africa’s diverse population (Park, 2009:2).

During modern times, China-Africa migrations were mainly a result of Chinese international policy which was initiated by Mao Zedong in the 1950’s. In order to improve diplomatic relations with African countries, Zedong accordingly sent up to 150,000 Chinese workers and technicians to work in the areas of infrastructure development, agriculture and technology (Park, 2009:2).

Today, the migration trends are connected to China’s economic reforms introduced in the late 1970’s and the following liberalization policies in the 1980’s. Although Chinese ventures are nowadays more profit-oriented than ideological, Chinese aid programmes and packages are for instance still linked to temporary migration of Chinese labourers. During the last decades, China has for instance sent up to 20,000 medical personnel to Africa. A larger number of Chinese have also entered through contracts in order to work on the large construction projects; involving for instance railroads, hospitals, roads, schools and telecommunication systems. Recent policy changes in China have further led to that more and more Chinese have started to set up their own businesses; most commonly within retail, wholesale of Chinese goods, launching Chinese restaurants or Chinese traditional medicine clinics. Most of the Chinese in Africa today are however temporary migrants who are employed at Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and independent Chinese companies (Park, 2009:3). This period has generally been identified as a ‘third wave’ of Chinese migration to Africa, in which the majority of Chinese
migrants are not as skilled in comparison to the second wave (Alden, 2007:52). For many Africans today, the fact that many of these Chinese are rather low-skilled and possess limited financial means could however be said to be a bit confusing. As noted by Alden (2007:54f), partial reasons for this phenomenon could be the massive rural-urban migration in China and the enhanced unemployment, leading to that the government’s restrictions on movement has become more flexible. As a result of local and provincial authorities now encouraging emigration as to attain foreign remittances, more and more Chinese have accordingly left their home regions to seek economic opportunities abroad (Ibid: 58).

### 4.5.2 Recent migration patterns

Although official estimations of the number of Chinese migrants in Africa vary significantly, it is nonetheless clear that the number has expanded greatly during the past 10 years. Given the poor tracking mechanisms, corruption and sloppy immigration policies, total estimates of Chinese on the continent has varied from about 580 000 to 800 000 in 2009 (Park, 2009:3). Other have however argued that the total number of Chinese have already passed the one million mark, making it one of the most migratory movements to Africa since the end of the colonial period (Asche and Schüller, 2007:31).

The largest number of Chinese migrants is found in South Africa, where it was estimated that around 300 000 to 400 000 were residing in 2007 (Alden, 2007:52), followed by Nigeria with a population of about 100 000 in the same year. Other countries which are believed to have more than 10 000 Chinese migrants include Sudan, Algeria and Mauritius (Park, 2009:3). In Angola, the total number of Chinese was estimated to be around 40,000 in 2007, of which the majority was found in the Cabinda province where infrastructure projects and oil industries are mainly found (Alden 2007:53). Yet, it should be noted that the Chinese still constitute a small minority, and constitutes even less than 1 % of the population in South Africa (Park, 2009:3).
In regards to general migration patterns, it has traditionally been the coastal provinces of China that have sent out migrants into the world. In these areas, migration has typically been culturally valued and perceived and as an opportunity to make money and return successfully. Since the 1990’s, more and more Chinese have however also migrated from the urban areas of China. In addition to this, it has been reported that Chinese diasporic communities in Europe increasingly enter African countries, and particularly when there are linguistic connections (Park, 2009:5).

Interestingly, the Chinese migration is increasingly arranged through government employment agencies that find and recruit workers. Some are also entering African countries through direct government-to-government arrangements, such as Chinese medical doctors and agricultural advisors linked to development aid projects (Park, 2009:6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African Countries</th>
<th>Number of Chinese Migrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>3,000 – 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>1,000 – 3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon 300,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>10 – 40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>5,000 – 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>9,000 – 10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Asche and Schüller, 2007:30)
Table 2. Examples of work performed by Chinese companies in Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Work performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
<td>Exploitation of copper and cobalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Coal and oil infrastructures as well as sports stadiums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Road construction, coal, ferrochrome, ‘presence’ in the transportation sector, production and distribution of electricity, mobile telephone networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>Uranium, participation in oil exploration, cement factory project and sports stadiums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Manufacture of pharmaceuticals, oil exploration, construction of highways and a hydroelectric power station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>National assembly, Senate, ‘Cité de l’information’, presidential palace, railroad and highway infrastructures for timber exploitation, iron mining as well as oil exploration and exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Convention center, road construction and cotton mill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Power stations, hydroelectric stations and a construction of a 1300 km oil pipeline to the port of Marsaal-Bashair on the Red Sea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Sanitation, sports stadiums and cultural infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Construction of an east–west highway, expansion of the Algiers airport, oil refinery and social housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Kuang, 2008: 649)

4.5.3 Groups of migrants
In regards to the types of migrants entering Africa, four general categories can be identified. These are namely: small-time entrepreneurs, transit migrants, agricultural
workers as well as temporary labourers linked to large infrastructure projects (Park, 2009:6).

The predominant category is those who come as temporary labour workers and are employed by Chinese businesses (Park, 2009:6). In 2006, it was estimated that around 700-800 Chinese businesses were operating in 49 countries across the continent. In other words, Chinese businesses are active in nearly all the countries of Africa (in total 54) (Kuang, 2008:648). Although the Chinese firms operating in Africa usually hire some local workers, they nevertheless tend to rely heavily on Chinese workers in their public works, infrastructure, oil, and mining businesses. In contemporary Sino-African relations, the employment of Chinese contract workers has however caused both domestic and international upheaval considering the high level of unemployment in many African countries. Yet, Chinese companies have defended this custom by referring to issues related to the cost, cultural empathy as well as productivity.

While the majority of those who are less skilled workers typically return to China when their contracts expire, a great part of those with higher skills (i.e. managers and professions) often remain in their host country as independent migrants, and eventually establish themselves as small entrepreneurs (Park, 2009: 6).

As to the current contractual and temporary labor migration, Kuang (2008:648ff) further notes that this type of migration demonstrates similar features to the historical forms of Chinese migration. Since the migration is commonly organized by Chinese authorities (i.e. the government and state-run companies), it could accordingly be viewed as an extension of the migration in the 1950’s -1970’s, in which the migration flow was part of China’s anti-imperialist policy and strong ties with the Third World. Just as then, the current migration flow could thus be said to both have a clear economic and political character. Obviously, the migrations linked to large public construction projects for instance play part of China’s policy of securing a supply of raw materials (Ibid).

The second group of migrants are often referred to as the ‘new entrepreneurial migration’, consisting of small investors, traders and small-time entrepreneurs. This type of migrants commonly set up their own businesses, which is normally within the field of
retail or wholesale trade. Given that they typically lack fluency in local languages and lack enough capital, this category of migrants usually fails to enter the wage labour market. Normally, Chinese retailers and other firms choose to establish businesses in areas where their Taiwanese predecessors had established businesses, such as in Nigeria, Lesotho, South Africa and Mauritius. Apart from these retail shops and businesses, many larger cities across Africa have become home to Chinese wholesale traders; including for instance Johannesburg, Accra and Yaoundé. Typically, these ‘China shops’ in Africa are characterized by their great variety of low-cost (and often low-quality) textiles fabricated in China (Park, 2009:7).

The third category of in-transit migrants could be said to be the one that is most difficult to identify given their informal status, and especially since they often enter on legal tourist or business visas and subsequently overstay. Usually, this type of migrants uses Africa as a ‘jumping off’ point before continuing to Europe or North America (Park, 2009:8).

As to the fourth category entailing Chinese farmers, it is clear that the number of agricultural workers migrating to Africa has significantly expanded during the recent years. Currently, a large number of Chinese farmers can be found in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana and South Africa (Park, 2009:8).

In addition to these categories, there are moreover an increasing number of Chinese journalists, diplomats and students residing in Africa. Just like the Chinese contract workers, these groups typically return to China after finishing their activities (Park, 2009:9).

As evident from the categories discussed above, it could be stated that the majority of Chinese migrants plan to eventually return to China. Apart from the Chinese migrants in South Africa, most migrants could moreover not be defined as ‘settlers’, but rather as ‘transitional citizens’ or temporary residents. As to the latter category, it is clear that they
in particular aim to make profit and then return to their homes in China. Very often, it is in fact found that wages in Africa are 30-400 % higher than in China (Park, 2009:9).

4.5.4 The relationship between Chinese migrants and their host communities

In most African countries, Chinese migrants are viewed as a rather exotic and diverse feature in the common society. Concerning African perceptions and attitudes towards Chinese migrants, there are however several aspects influencing their overall view of the Chinese migration. First of all, it is evident that the Western media’s portrayal of China as the new ‘neo-colonizers’ naturally influences the local behaviours and feelings towards Chinese people. Likewise, China’s state relations to the country in question may have an impact on how the local population ultimately perceive the Chinese migrants. There have also been enhanced anti-Chinese sentiments in many African countries given the increasing number of Chinese shops, implying stiffer competition with local businesses and saturation of particular markets. This has accordingly led to increased xenophobia, and especially in those countries where a larger number of the domestic population remain unemployed. It has further been reported that local workers employed by Chinese firms have been highly critical towards Chinese low wages and labour practices (Park, 2009:10f).

In overall, it could be said that anti-Chinese sentiments are most severe in Southern Africa, where China has been portrayed as exploiters that are using local economies for their own benefit. Nevertheless, it is obviously difficult to make a wide assessment of the treatment of Chinese people in all African countries. Surveys carried out have moreover shown that many Africans do admire China and what they have accomplished economically. As expected, Africans have mixed views and perceptions of the Chinese in overall (Park, 2009:12). As noted by Alden (2007:50), the settlement of Chinese citizens could thus be said to have led to a new social dynamics to societies in rural and urban areas of Africa, reflecting historical transformations in the two regions both economically and politically.
From a wider perspective, it is further evident that the growth of Chinese migrants corresponds to China’s ‘Africa strategies’ as presented during FOCAC summit in 2006. In the policies presented, it was for instance declared that Chinese investment in Africa was to be encouraged, thus hoping to enhance economic cooperation and strengthen political ties between the two regions (Mohan and Kale, 2007:16). This has likewise been noted by Kuang (2008:654), who argues that China’s African policy in regards to migration clearly aims towards expanding China’s diplomatic influence and the country’s economic development. As stated initially, it is nevertheless too early to speculate about the wider global implications of Chinese migration to Africa and its long term effects. All in all, it is however clear that the Chinese are here to stay, with the Chinese footprint becoming increasingly manifest both economically, politically and socially.

4.6 China’s engagement in ‘less significant’ countries of Africa: The case of Ethiopia

Looking at China’s interactions with Africa, it is clear that the bulk of mainstream literature has tended to focus on the country’s engagement in resource-rich countries or rogue regimes on the continent. Limited attention has however been given to China’s relations with other African states, and particularly ‘less significant’ countries with modest natural resources such as Ethiopia. This could be said to be a bit surprising, as Thakur (2009:4) argues that it is in such countries where China has the potential to have the most impact. Likewise, it is clear that countries such as Ethiopia have a significant importance for China’s global advancement through its provision of diplomatic support.

From the perspective of the Ethiopian government, it has been anticipated that China can assist the country in the areas of infrastructure, trade, investment, health, medical care, agriculture and human resources development (Dilnesa, 2005:246). Of these areas, the sectors of agriculture, human resources development, trade and investment deserve specific attention. These sectors has likewise been highlighted by Chinese Ambassador Ai Ping in 2003, who stated that the Chinese government will mainly promote assistance in the areas of agriculture, trade, capacity building and human resources development
(Kinfe, 2005:240). Given that these areas further reflect China’s own ambitions on the global arena, the subsequent paragraphs will examine Chinese ventures thus far and its overall implications from both a regional and global perspective.

4.6.1 Sino-Ethiopian relations: A brief history
Looking back in history, it is evident that Ethiopia’s early contacts with China and other Asian countries represent an important aspect of its development record (Dilnesa, 2005:242). Although contacts between the two countries date back to ancient times, the first diplomatic commenced in the 1970’s, with Ethiopia supporting China’s entrance into the United Nations and the Emperor Haile Selassie accordingly visiting China. During this time, the Ethiopian government strongly supported the ‘One China Policy’, which could be said to form as a basis of their cooperation including the sharing of common ideologies (Ibid: 245). This relationship was further strengthened by an economic and scientific agreement between the two countries, in which China provided Ethiopia with grants and interest-free loans. During the subsequent Mengistu regime (1974-1985), the Sino-Ethiopian relationship however became strained due to ideological differences and Ethiopia’s close alliance with the Soviet Union. With the establishment of the Joint Ministerial Commission and the installation of the new transitional government in 1991, relations between the countries once again improved. The strengthening of diplomatic ties further became increasingly manifest as Ethiopia hosted the second and fifth of the ministerial meetings of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2002 and 2005. At the Beijing Summit, Ethiopia was moreover the only African country to benefit from all the policy measures introduced by China, including a zero tariff for Ethiopian commodities, joint infrastructure projects and debt cancellation (Thakur, 2009:6f).

4.6.2 Trade relations
In regards to bilateral trade between the two countries, it is clear that the volume has significantly increased during the recent years. As such, the growing volume of trade has been recognized as a positive indicator, producing joint advantages (Dilnesa, 2005:246f). Considering their mutually beneficial trade and economic cooperation, China’s interaction with Africa has thus been acknowledged by China’s ambassador Ai Ping as a successful role model of ‘South-South cooperation’ (Kinfe, 2005:230).
In 2002, it was estimated that the volume of trade was around US$100 million. Five years later, the figures had however rose to US$860 million (Thakur, 2009:7). In 2010, China signed an agreement with Ethiopia to double the existing trade volume within the coming years. Both countries accordingly agreed on expanding their trade volume to US$ 3 billion in 2015, in comparison to the current trade volume which was estimated to be around US$1.5 billion in 2010. This agreement covered more than 95% of China’s export to Ethiopia, and continued to encourage the investment of Chinese firms in Ethiopia (Tekle, 2010). In regards to Ethiopia’s exports to China, the main goods include leather goods, coffee and sesame seeds. Imports from China entail mainly machinery, clothing, electronics, food items and pharmaceuticals. Currently, China is recognized as the main destination for Ethiopian exports, followed by Japan, Germany and the United States. The Ethiopian imports on the other hand derive mainly from Saudi Arabia, followed by China, Italy and India. Given that Chinese exports account for about US$565 million while imports only account for approximately US$95 million, it is however clear that there is a significant trade imbalance between the two countries. Although the volume of Ethiopian exports has increased during the recent years, China still has a favorable trade imbalance, which is often evident in China’s relations with other African countries as well. This could partially be explained by the fact that Chinese consumer products are extremely cheap, as stated by Thakur (2009:8). Yet, it should be noted that the Chinese suspension of tariffs on chiefly agricultural products has been helpful in the promotion of Ethiopian exports. A case in point is the 500 % increase of sesame exports in 2005, which was a direct result of China’s zero-tariff policy (Ibid).

Another implication of Sino-Ethiopian trade relations is the Chinese export of labor-intensive goods, including textiles and footwear products. As noted by Thakur (2009:8), such undertakings are clearly damaging domestic growth and the development of certain sectors. As a result of the stiff Chinese competition, the Ethiopian government has accordingly tried to protect local industries by for example reserving some areas of investment for domestic sponsors only (Ibid).
4.6.3 Economic and technical cooperation: Chinese ventures in infrastructure and agriculture

Looking at the economical and technical cooperation between the two countries since the 1970’s, it is clear that China has greatly contributed to several infrastructure, power and water-supply projects in Ethiopia. Just like in many other African countries, China’s investments in Ethiopia have been greatly diverse and have involved sectors such as road construction, pharmaceuticals and manufacturing. At the moment, the main beneficiary sectors are however transport (chiefly road construction) as well as power and telecommunications (mainly hydroelectric power) (Thakur, 2009:9).

In regards to infrastructure, it is clear that this area is linked to one of China’s main objectives in Ethiopia, namely to better access Ethiopia’s consumer market. As argued by Thakur (2009:ff), this is obviously related to the fact that Ethiopia is one of the largest countries in Africa both in terms of population and size. It is moreover evident that Chinese forms intentionally bid below normal standards as to gain major contracts, and accordingly beat local and international bidders. As asserted by Ethiopian officials, major contracts are often given to Chinese firms given their ability to keep costs down. Some of the main reasons behind this is China’s access to cheaper capital and machinery, the use of Chinese materials and technical experts, as well as the government’s provision of subsidies for investments abroad.

Recently, there has moreover been an increase of joint Sino-Ethiopian companies, and particularly in the sector of construction with the establishment of for instance the Road and Bridge Construction Company (RBC) in 2003. The China’s Exim Bank has also provided loans of more than US$500 million to the construction of roads, bridges and hydroelectric power, among other projects (Ibid).

Given that the agricultural sector is the source of livelihood for nearly 85 % of the Ethiopian population, agricultural growth is recognized as central for Ethiopia’s overall development. In its economic cooperation with China, the field of agriculture is thus clearly recognized as the predominant sector given that Ethiopia’s economy is still agriculturally-based. As Ethiopia has adopted a poverty reduction strategy based on Agriculture Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI), it is therefore believed that
Ethiopia can benefit greatly from cooperating with China and the transfer of proper technology (Dilnesa, 2005:246f). Looking at the agricultural assistance thus far, it is clear that most cooperation has taken the form of multilateral projects, involving the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture, the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture as well as the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization. Within this trilateral cooperation, China for instance provided Ethiopia with technical and vocational education and training (TVET) aimed to improve the country’s agricultural productivity (Thakur, 2009:12).

Another interesting feature of the Sino-Ethiopian relationship is China’s involvement in oil explorations, in which the state-owned company ‘Sinopec’ has been exploring oil in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. Subsequent to the attack on Sinopec by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in 2007, the company however decided to withdraw from the country (Thakur, 2009:11).  

4.6.4 Development cooperation and diplomatic support
In regards to the area of development assistance, the Chinese government has mainly provided support in form of tied aid, implying that each loans and grant requires a purchase of Chinese goods. Since 1995, China has assigned more than US$24 million to the Ethiopian regime in the form of grants. This assistance has mainly been used to enhance the construction of rural schools, low-cost housing, the rehabilitation of bridges and roads, as well as vocational, agricultural and management training. Since 1988, the Chinese government has furthermore provided aid for the construction of bridges, roads and machinery possessions. In addition, China has been assisting in the building of hospitals and a malaria treatment centre. As a result of the Chinese government’s scholarship programme, a growing number of Ethiopian students have moreover gone to pursue their studies in China during the recent years (Thakur, 2009:18).

Considering Ethiopia’s Foreign Affairs and National Security Strategy, it is evident that the government views its independence and sovereignty as principal policies. The two

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13 Currently, it should however be noted that seven other firms are active in the Ogaden region, including Southwest Energy (a Hong Kong-registered company wholly owned by the Ethiopian government, Petronas (Malaysia) as well as Lundi/Sismec (a subcontractor for the latter companies) (Thakur, 2009:12).
countries have accordingly agreed on the same principles of territorial integrity, national sovereignty, peaceful coexistence and ‘non-interference’ in the mutual affairs of others (Dilnesa, 2005:244). Just as in other African countries, China has moreover highlighted that the two countries share the same development experience, with China providing technical support to Ethiopia in order to further economic growth. As argued by Thakur (2009:15), the two countries support each other equally in the diplomatic and political spheres on the global arena. As such, Ethiopia has acknowledged China’s significant role in world affairs, and the fact that the active participation of China is crucial in successfully solving international issues. It is moreover clear that China’s position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council is of great importance for Ethiopia. As a result, China is expected to support African countries at the United Nations and other international forums, as well as encourage proposals and positions of the African Union (Dilnesa, 2005:244ff).

Many Western actors have however argued that Ethiopia’s governance and unsatisfying human rights record might undermine the democratic progress that the country has achieved thus far (Dilnesa, 2005:244). In regards to issues of governance and diplomatic support, the Chinese government has thus been criticized for ignoring the Ethiopian government’s human rights violations and closing up of the political sphere, as evident after the elections in 2005 when several opposition leaders and supporters were jailed in an attempt to crush the political opposition. In this regard, Thakur however points to that China has its own internal problems of human rights, corruption and democratic governance. As a consequence, China does not feel that it has the right to preach good governance in Ethiopia and other African countries with ‘rogue regimes’. Likewise, it is clear that potential criticism of Ethiopia’s internal affairs would go against China’s upholding principle of ‘non-interference’ (Thakur, 2009:19).

4.6.5 The various perspectives of the Sino-Ethiopian relationship and its general repercussions

In light of the above information, it is evident that the results and perceptions of the Sino-Ethiopian relationship are clearly mixed. This accordingly complicates any attempt to
make any general estimations of China’s engagement in Ethiopia, and especially since it is too early to estimate the long-term implications of China’s cooperation with the country.

From an Ethiopian perspective, Dilnesa (2005:242f) however points to that the country has a lot to learn from the Chinese experience, and is perceived as a role model in furthering economic and social progress. At the same time, the Ethiopian government has nevertheless acknowledged China as a newcomer in the sphere of foreign investment, which implies that the results from cooperating with China are yet to be seen. As noted by Thakur (2009:15), China could be said to be a country in transition, still aiming to find its place on the global arena. Although Ethiopia aims to maintain close ties with the country as to promote trade and investment, the Ethiopian expectations of China could thus be said to be fairly modest (Ibid: 7).

From a Chinese perspective, it is clear that Ethiopia is viewed as one of many development partners providing primary goods and markets for Chinese goods and investments, thus enabling the country to reach its economic and political goals. At the same time, it is important to note that China’s approach to Africa is as multifaceted and complex as the continent itself. Given that Ethiopia lacks immense natural resources (apart from the possibility of oil extraction), it could be said that China’s relation with Ethiopia is somewhat unique. Despite lacking significant natural resources, the geostrategic location of Ethiopia is however obviously of significant importance for China. This also becomes increasingly manifest considering Ethiopia’s role as a key political player in the Horn of Africa and being the source of Nile. The fact that Ethiopia represents the seat of the African Union should likewise be acknowledged, and particularly since this organization is internationally recognized as the main political and diplomatic institution representing the continent (Thakur, 2009:9).

As stated by Thakur (2009:19f), it is thus important to note that China’s engagement in Ethiopia, and Africa in general, is part of its emergence as a global power. In contrast to traditional powers, it could likewise be said that China’s rhetoric of solidarity, anti-
imperialism, non-interference and sovereignty represent a more nuanced and subtle strategy in comparison to the Western traditional policies.

All in all, it is nevertheless too early to state whether Ethiopia has definitely progressed economically from Chinese ventures, and especially since it depends on the sector in question. Yet, it could be argued that China’s interaction in Ethiopia represents a good example of how China has managed to adjust its ventures depending on the specific needs of the recipient country, as manifest from the Chinese ventures in the agricultural sector in Ethiopia.

As noted by Carmody and Owusu (2007:507), different countries further have distinct resource geographies, which imply that they play different roles in the division of labour with China. Likewise, US policy makers have confirmed Ethiopia as one of the ‘keys’ to the different countries on the sub-continent (Ibid: 516). In strengthening its economical and political influence on the international arena, the diplomatic support of Ethiopia could thus be seen as a strategic and elegant move by the Chinese government in becoming the minion of Africa.

4.7 A geopolitical perspective of China’s engagement in Africa: Images of ‘Chinese cruelty, African weakness, and Western guardianship’

In light of the above paragraphs, it is further possible to take the conceptual framework of geopolitics a step further when studying the various perspectives and images surrounding the Sino-African relationship. In order to gain an improved understanding of existing images that are reproduced in media and mainstream literature, it is thus essential to critically examine the perceptions surrounding this phenomenon and its wider implications. As to better grasp the concept of discourses and its potential power to influence international politics, typical perceptions of China, Africa and the West will subsequently be examined below. In doing so, the concept of ‘critical geopolitics’ will be especially highlighted.
4.7.1 The homogenization of Chinese actors
In both Western media and in Africa in general, it could be said that there has been a tendency to represent the Chinese as being one homogenous group carrying one identity, thus disregarding the fact that Chinese actors and communities highly differ in terms in terms of origin, roles and interests. As for the latter category, it is also clear that the ambitions of Chinese workers, the managers of Chinese companies and the Chinese Diaspora highly fluctuate. Naturally, the Chinese in Africa consist of both Chinese state firms and agencies operating on a short term as well as more long-term standing diasporic communities (for more information, see 3.5.3.) (Mawdsley, 2008:517). In accordance with the concept of critical geopolitics, it is hence important to acknowledge the complexity of identities instead of perceiving one identity as predetermined or dominant over another.

As noted by Mawdsley (2008:518f), there has likewise been a somewhat biased focus on the problematic issues concerning China’s interests and impacts on various African countries. More positive aspects (i.e. commodity price impacts, debt cancellation and support for a greater international influence) accordingly tend to be downplayed. Much focus has further been given to the impacts of China’s presence in Sudan, Angola and Zimbabwe, whereas China’s effects on countries such as Lesotho or Benin have received far less attention. Countries which are experiencing difficulties in competing with China’s textile production are for example rarely highlighted, as well as the often poor quality of Chinese infrastructure projects (Ibid).

Although the damaging impacts of Chinese ventures obviously deserve attention, it could thus be argued that the previous literature has in general tended to represent a somewhat biased image of Chinese actors in Africa, favoring their own interests. In line with the concept of critical geopolitics, such discourses have accordingly helped to reproduce certain images which could be said to have influenced international politics as such.

4.7.2 The imposed vulnerability of Africa and the denial of Western manipulation
When looking at the general image of Africa, a common observation is the portrayal of Africans either as criminals (i.e. Mugabe, Laurent Gbagbo and Omar-al Bashir) or victims (the citizens of Darfur, ‘the poor’, and the African population in general). The paternalistic idea of the West coming to ‘save’ Africa from Chinese devastations is likewise typically reflected in the Western report of China’s ventures in Africa. Western actors in Africa (i.e. NGOs, businesses and governments) are thus portrayed as harmless and solely well-intentioned in comparison to the greedy Chinese who is said to be only driven by their own material interests. At the same time, the West is often claimed to have learnt its lesson from its colonial past and thus reformed in their relationship towards Africa. The Chinese, on the other hand, are portrayed as the latest colonizers with their new ‘scramble for Africa’. In this sense, it is commonly held that the Western scramble for Africa was modest in comparison to China’s current scramble for African energy and resources. While the Western colonialism is argued to at least have had a developmental dimension and well-intentioned aspects, the postcolonial period has likewise shown that the West has today translated these features into an ethical concern for Africa. Therefore, the Western companies of today are allegedly operating with a higher level of ethic principles including the existence of labor laws, voluntary agreements, as well as increased consumer demands for more ethical production and trading. Such considerations are however said to not apply to the governmental and private Chinese companies operating in Africa (Mawdsley, 2008:519ff).

All in all, the common image displayed is thus the one of a more responsible and caring West who has addressed the mistakes of the past and is now the driver of ‘good governance’ and development. In comparison to the Western aid attached with ethical or economical conditions, China’s policy of distributing aid with ‘no strings attached’ is accordingly perceived as a major worry for the West (Mawdsley, 2008:520). In line with the notion of critical geopolitics, it could hence be seen as if the media has helped to create an imaginary position of one state and people (The Unites States of America and its citizens) towards another (The Republic of China and its citizens).
Nevertheless, Mawdsley (2008:520ff) points to two main issues which need to be highlighted in regards to the image of the ‘caring and passionate Westerners’ being weakened by the ‘coldblooded and brutal Chinese’. First of all, it should be noted that several Western companies, despite advances, are still involved in corrupt and exploitative businesses. Even though there have been initiatives to enhance Western accountability and transparency, a lot hence remains to be done. Secondly, the issue of scope and scale of Western influences in Africa needs to be considered. The West’s impact on Africa should obviously not be reduced to the efforts of NGOs or aid agencies, but also the formal and informal procedures of for example the World Trade Organization (WTO), the influence of the agricultural lobbyists in Washington and Brussels, as well as the responsibility of the IMF and the World Bank (Ibid).

In relation to the conceptual framework of geopolitics, it could further be argued that Western countries, and the United States in particular, has adopted a rather superficial understanding of China. This is evident in the typical zero-sum and event-driven perception of China, instead of adopting a more thorough understanding of the Chinese behavior.

In the following chapters, the various conceptions surrounding China and its interactions with Africa will be further examined in order to reciprocate the initial question formulation and finally come to the general conclusions of this study. The subsequent chapter will accordingly analyze these perspectives and sectors more in depth as to see whether anything else more than the mainstream analysis could be detected from the Chinese strategies concerning Africa. Based on the findings, it will be discussed whether these distinct patterns could be seen as a manifestation of an emerging ‘Pax Sinica’, and how the various discourses actually relates to China’s operations in Africa.
5. Analysis

In the beginning of this paper, it was questioned whether the weakening of the current ‘Pax Americana’ could potentially lead to a re-emergence of a ‘Pax Sinica’. In order to reciprocate this question, the following chapters have tried to investigate whether the expanding Chinese engagement in Africa could be viewed as an illustration and tangible proof of an altering power shift in the world order structure. As such, the aim has been to reflect upon whether the intensified Sino-African relationship could be seen as a manifestation of a global change, possibly leading to a new multipolar constellation or a bipolar order with the United States and China as the principal global hegemonies. In this context, the conceptual framework of geopolitics has been employed in order to better identify common discourses and notions of power in regards to the studied phenomenon. In China’s continued interaction with Africa, potential constraints and possibilities from both an African, Western and Chinese perspective have likewise been examined as to better assess the Sino-African relationship and the actual potential of a coming ‘Pax Sinica’. In doing so, it has likewise been possible to go beyond the current trends in mainstream literature concerning China’s strategies towards Africa.

As such, this study has attempted to move beyond the general impression of the ‘greedy’ and ‘intimidating’ China and their ‘scramble’ for Africa. In relation to the concept of hermeneutics, the common image of China and its engagements in Africa have accordingly been ’broken down’ into individual components. This has been carried out by examining how the Sino-African relationship manifests itself in different sectors, consequently dissecting the general impression of China. In this context, China’s engagement in Ethiopia has also been used as a case study. In overall, the aim has been to see what actually happens when this general impression is broken down into individual components, leading to a better understanding of the studied phenomenon. This process could thus be said to represent what Alvesson (2008:207) calls a ‘hermeneutic circle, in which these partial perceptions ultimately lead to a new interpretation of the entire context.
In scrutinizing these diverse elements and perspectives, this study could hence be said to have shown that the typical Western portrayal of China is not entirely true. By for instance pointing to possible motives for the biased portrayal of China and the great diversity of the Sino-African relationship, this research process could consequently be said to have led to a deepened understanding of China and its affiliation to the African continent.

5.1 Indicators of China’s global advancement

In light of the introduction and the findings, it is first of all clear that that many of the typical patterns of China’s period of glory in the 10th century are now re-emerging on the international arena. Now as then, the enhanced magnitude of Chinese cheap products are taking over markets and stand as a serious threat to many global competitors. This has likewise been highlighted in China’s export of manufactured products and cheap textiles to Africa, which has tended to undermine local markets and business enterprises as evident in the case of the textile industries. As manifest from its economic policies encouraging investments abroad, it could moreover be said that China has once again adopted a more outward-looking approach towards the surrounding world. As such, it could be argued that China has redefined its role on the international arena as evident from its proposed international objectives and foreign policies such as the ‘grand strategy’. China’s enhanced international recognition is likewise clear when considering the diplomatic support that China receives from several African countries in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, which is also strengthened by the establishment of forums such as FOCAC. Likewise, the enhanced Chinese migration to Africa point to that the Sino-African relationship is prone to continue and advance further, and especially considering the long-lasting bonds that is currently established between the two regions.

Another indicator is China’s attainment of natural resources from Africa, as illustrated in China’s oil ventures in Sudan, Angola and Nigeria. Out of the sectors discussed in this paper, it could be argued that the oil sector will be most decisive in deciding the nature of the future world order structure. Whoever will gain most influence and share of Africa’s energy supplies are accordingly more likely to prosper internationally. In this context, it should likewise be highlighted that China’s growing reserve of treasury bonds and US
dollars could be said to significantly boost China’s geopolitical power over the United States. As such, this paper has pointed to that there are several strong indicators which speak in favor of a global shift, with China emerging as a new hegemonic power.

5.2 The multifaceted and strategic approach of China in Africa: Potential constraints and possibilities

As emphasized earlier, China’s overall impact on African countries are naturally very diverse and accordingly play out differently for leaders and common citizens, consumers and workers, citizens of democracies or dictatorships. In discussing possible constraints and possibilities for China’s emergence in Africa, this diversity consequently need to be considered.

As noted in this paper, ‘less significant countries’ such as Gabon naturally have less ability to set conditions in their relationship with China in comparison to more influential and prosperous countries such as South Africa. As evident from the case of Ethiopia, China has however often acknowledged the diverse capacities of African countries, and has accordingly adjusted their support as to better suit the priority areas of the recipient country. Yet, this study has shown that the trade links between Africa and China are clearly imbalanced, thus pointing to that a lot remains to be done in creating a more equitable Sino-African relationship. Although recognizing the often imbalanced and varying impact of Sino-African trade and cooperation, no one can however deny the fact that China’s attainment of African markets and the expansion of Chinese goods has benefited China in its strive towards international influence. As such, it could be asserted that China’s investments and policies are clearly strategic in nature. This is for instance manifest from the country’s ‘grand strategy’ and its ventures in Ethiopian infrastructure which aims to better access local markets.

As evident from the Sino-Ethiopian development cooperation, the Chinese government has likewise provided support in form of tied aid, which accordingly implies that their aid is not entirely without certain conditions. Since each loan and grant normally requires a purchase of Chinese goods, it is thus clear that China is obviously profit-seeking just like
their Western counterparts. This is likewise manifest from China’s continued promotion of its ‘One-China policy’, confirming that China’s support is not totally unconditional.

Yet, it is clear that China’s emphasis of sharing the same ‘development experience’ and the perception of itself as a Third World leader has been greatly successful for China’s advancement on the African continent. In comparison to the Western restrictive approach towards African regimes, the findings have pointed to that China’s non-conditional support and policies of ‘non-interference’, diplomatic recognition and mutual solidarity have in general better suited African regimes in their quest towards national development. As such, it is clear that the common diplomatic support and massive Chinese investments throughout the continent have helped to improve the political power and room of maneuver for both China and Africa, thus confirming that the intensified Sino-African relationship has indeed produced mutually beneficial gains.

5.3 The revival of mercantilism?
In regards to China’s strategies towards the oil sector, the implications of the country’s state-owned approach is especially critical. As noted in the findings, this mercantilist initiative could be said to have given state-led oil companies a comparative advantage over Western private firms. As such, the Chinese government’s provision of subsidies for investments abroad have clearly benefited the country in the global competition of securing access to Africa’s natural resources. This state-led approach is likewise evident in recent migration patterns, whereby an increasing number of Chinese migrants arrive to Africa through governmental arrangements and policies encouraging Chinese migration. In discussing potential constraints for China’s emergence in Africa, it is however likely to believe that the common practice of employing Chinese labor rather than local will be counteractive for China in the long run. From an African perspective, it is likewise unclear to which extent the local population will in reality benefit from Chinese business enterprises. All in all, it could however be argued that this mercantilism approach, which stands in stark contrast to the liberalist approach of the West, could be of vital importance in shaping a new world order structure. If a future ‘Pax Sinica’ is to occur, it is accordingly possible that the world will view a reinforcement of mercantilism on the international arena. Given China’s enhanced influence in the world market economy
today, it is thus likely to believe that the West will eventually have to change their policies as to adjust to the state-led approach of China.

5.4 Geopolitical reflections

In light of the findings and the theoretical framework of geopolitics, it is evident that there exist various discourses and images surrounding China’s engagements in Africa. In regards to the significance of discourses in international politics and Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’, the use of language in establishing a sense of community is likewise evident from Western media’s common portrayal of ‘us’ (the United States portrayed as the ‘advocator of human rights and liberty’) versus ‘them’ (the ‘Chinese giant who is greedy for global recognition and natural resources’). In this sense, it could be argued that Western perspectives have often tended to promote a biased image of China’s global expansion and their involvement with African countries. This is likewise clear from the fact that the rise of China has commonly been portrayed as a potential threat to the West and the US hegemony, with the West developing a new Western ‘sinophobia’.

It is moreover important to note that Western discourses have commonly highlighted China’s limited concern in regards to issues such as human rights and good governance in Africa, as evident from the case of Sudan. Nevertheless, it is likely to believe that such discourses are often executed intentionally, knowing that such images will ultimately damage China’s international standing and have severe consequences for political actions on the international arena. Such issues could hence be said to have been used as an example when promoting China as the ‘bad guy’, while simultaneously ignoring the positive outcomes of China’s involvement.

From a Chinese perspective, it has moreover been maintained that the US real motives for wanting to intervene in Sudan is rather driven by strategic interests of gaining a secure supply of energy than an altruistic drift of upholding human rights and good governance. In relation to the concept of critical geopolitics, it could hence be argued that the Western discourse of upholding human rights has in reality tended to be used as a
strategic tool as to maintain US hegemony. As such, China’s attainment of diplomatic support from ‘Third World countries’ in Africa are naturally acknowledged as a threat for the United States’ continued dominance on the international arena. Although one should obviously not overlook the Western criticism towards China (i.e. its alleged ignorance of human rights, its common practices of corruption, as well as the environmental and social impacts of Chinese ventures in Africa), one thus has to acknowledge possible motives for such discourses.

From a geopolitical standpoint, one could further assume that China is hoping to offer a more ‘correct’ identity of itself, as manifest from many of its geopolitical strategies towards the continent. Accordingly, expressions of ‘non-interference’, win-win partnership and solidarity have continued to be predominant principles in China’s development cooperation with Africa. In comparison to the dominant approach that traditional powers have historically applied, it could thus be said that China wants to be perceived as pursuing a legitimate exercise of power. Such an approach could consequently be looked upon as more subtle in nature, signifying what the Chinese themselves call a ‘peaceful rise’. As noted by the head of the CNOOC (China National Offshore Oil Corporation), Fu Chengyu:

‘China’s goal is not to overturn the world order but instead to participate in this order and to reinforce it and even profit from it’ (Alden, 2007:57).

In contrast to the West’s preaching of aid conditionality, China’s economic support could thus be said to present a more humble and soft approach in comparison to that of traditional dominant powers.

5.4.1 Towards a more pragmatic understanding of China
In light of the above paragraphs, it is important to consider the discussion on the difference between hegemony and dominance. In contrast to the realist notion of dominance and ‘real power’, China’s global advancement could be viewed as an alternative approach marked by its use of a more subtle form of power. In conventional power terms, it could likewise be asserted that China does not pose as a military threat in
a realist sense. In comparison to the dominant power structures as evident during the Cold War, China could rather be said to have emerged as a different type of power on the global arena. This is further manifest from its use of alternative strategies, including the purchase of treasury bonds and US dollars, its cheap labor capacity as well as the undervaluation of the Yuan currency, which has lead to a strong trade advantage for China on the global market.

Considering this situation, some general conclusions could ultimately be drawn. In analyzing the potential of a ‘Pax Sinica’, it could be said that China’s emergence into Africa has tended to be portrayed in two distinct terms. In the West, China’s global rise and interaction with Africa has commonly been seen through a traditional geopolitical standpoint, in which conventional notions of power, dominance and zero-sum perspectives have usually prevailed. Discourses surrounding China have consequently tended to be more aggressive, by for instance pointing to China’s economic ‘expansion’ and policies as a ‘threat’ to the Western hegemony.

This could further be put in contrast to the Chinese standpoint, in which a more critical geopolitical perspective has often been employed. By applying a more ‘soft power’ approach and typically promoting itself as a ‘Third World’ leader, China’s strategies could thus be said to more resemble that of a hegemonic power in contrast to that of a dominant state. As such, China could be said to have a strong potential of becoming a leading hegemony of the ‘Global South’, and especially considering that the country does not carry a ‘colonial luggage’ in contrast to their Western counterparts.

All in all, these two perspectives should accordingly be put against each other as to better assess what is actually on the global arena today. In doing so, it could firstly be argued that the simplified geopolitical analysis has often led to a more aggressive image of China and its relationship with Africa. In order to gain a deeper understanding of what is happening on the global arena today, the framework of critical geopolitics could thus be seen as more appropriate than the traditional geopolitical perspective, which tends to ‘get stuck’ in traditional notions of power and dominance. Considering the nature of the world
economy today, China’s advantageous position and enhanced global recognition must hence be acknowledged in light of its unconventional strategies and policies. As such, it is clear that the United States and its allies have found China’s global advancement and strategies increasingly difficult to compete with. This could moreover be argued to be one possible reason for why Western actors often play the ‘human rights’ card against China, knowing that there is not much more they can possibly do to limit the expansion of China in Africa.

5.5 The prospective of a future ‘Pax Sinica’: Important considerations

From the previous paragraphs, it is clear that there exist various perspectives about China’s emergence in Africa at the time when Sino-African relations have become more and more multifaceted. In light of the findings, it is however possible to predict the beginning of an emerging global power that is combining political, economical, cultural and strategic tools of diplomacy as to pursue their long-term interests in Africa. In the long run, it could nonetheless be argued that the political instability and corruption could eventually come to hurt the financial interests and investments of China throughout the continent. This would hence come to harm China’s preferred public image of itself as a ‘peaceful nation’, and its aim of becoming a global hegemony. Recognizing China as a relatively new and emerging power on the international arena, it is at the same time clear that the long-term implications from ‘China’s Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’ and other strategic policies remain to be seen.

In discussing the potential re-emergence of a new Pax Sinica, it could nevertheless be questioned whether Chinese policies such as the ‘grand strategy’ could be ultimately accepted by the wider international community. Considering Western efforts in promoting ‘good governance’ and democracy in the developing world, it is unlikely to believe that contentious principles such as the policy of ‘non-interference’ will be internationally marketable and practical.
As highlighted in the findings, it could nonetheless be argued that the provision of unconditional aid does not necessarily have to be entirely unconstructive, as often claimed by Western actors. As manifest from China’s own progress and national development, economic prosperity does not have to entail a strong commitment towards good governance, democracy and human rights. As such, China itself serves as a case in point of that African nations are able to enhance their national development using other means than those endorsed by the West. In acknowledging this, it could accordingly be argued that economic advancement should rather be seen as a first step to enhance a country’s overall national development, in which issues of governance and democracy will subsequently follow. As such, economic growth could be perceived as a precondition for national prosperity along with the establishment of good governance and democracy. Since the long-term implications of China’s policies are yet to be seen, it is nevertheless likely to believe that China might have to carry out political reforms in order to further its position on the international arena.

All in all, this study has however shown that there are several signals speaking in favor of a global shift in the world order structure. Recognizing China as the historical ‘Third World leader’ and its strong emphasis on ‘South-South cooperation’, it could thus be concluded that China at least has the potential of becoming the leading hegemon of the ‘Global South’, which will consequently enhance China’s global influence on the whole and increase the potential of an emerging ‘Pax Sinica’. This could likewise be confirmed by the internationally recognized principle of ‘One country – One vote’, in which China’s attainment of diplomatic support from numerous African countries are of significant importance. As such, it is clear that China can gain considerable leverage over the United States and its allies, which will ultimately favor the rise of China and other upcoming nations such as the BRICS countries. By acknowledging the fact that China is in need of continued diplomatic support and economic cooperation as to secure access to global markets and supplies of energy, it is more likely to believe that the world order structure will turn into a multipower constellation in which the BRICS countries will naturally play a significant role as well. In recognizing this interdependency, China is accordingly in need of their resource-rich African colleagues. As such, it could be said that that the
continued diplomatic, political and economic support from African countries is vital if China is to further progress on the ladder towards global power.
6. Concluding reflections
All in all, the implications of these findings point to that China economic development and global expansion will ultimately lead to a new world order structure in which China will potentially enjoy a hegemonic position, and particularly in the ‘Global South’.

With this study, I hope that I have been able to contribute with further insights on China’s multifaceted relationship with Africa. By putting various perspectives and discourses against each other, I have thus intended to provide a more pragmatic perception of the Sino-African relationship and its further implications. In doing so, I hope that I have been able to go beyond the typical perceptions of China as manifest in mainstream literature. By viewing China’s interaction with Africa as a possible manifestation of China striving towards a hegemonic position in the ‘Global South’, I have tried to take the topic a step further by not only considering the potential constraints of the Sino-African relationship as such. The use of concepts like ‘world order structures’ and ‘critical geopolitics’ have accordingly been used as to gain a more thorough understanding of what is happening right now, and the potential of ‘Pax Sinica’. This could thus be said to represent an approach which is commonly lacking in the existing literature, which has tended to promote China as the new ‘colonizer’ of Africa. By putting the traditional and critical geopolitical perspectives against each other, I thus hope to have reached a more sensible understanding of China’s global advancement and the Sino-African relationship.

It should likewise be noted that the purpose of this study was not to only investigate the damaging impacts of the Sino-African relationship, as this is something that previous research had already carried out. Instead, the main aim of this study was to reflect upon whether China’s engagement in Africa could be seen as an illustration of China becoming a world hegemon, or at least a hegemon of the ‘Global South’, which could possibly lead to a future ‘Pax Sinica’. Although possible constraints occurring from China’s engagement have simultaneously been highlighted, it should thus be clarified that the objective of this research was to put different viewpoints against each other in order to better assess which perspective that could be said to mostly concur with the actual reality.
As highlighted in the previous chapters, it is however clear that both Chinese and Western perspectives are to a varying extent driven by geopolitical interests in regards to the Chinese ventures in Africa. From an African point of view, the perception of China’s engagement has likewise varied significantly. On the one hand, positive aspects such as the increased political and economical room of maneuver for African governments have been pointed out. On the other hand, less optimistic aspects such as the outcompeting of local business firms have also been highlighted. In order to obtain a more realistic overall perception of China’s engagement in Africa, it could hence be argued that all perspectives need to be considered before reaching a general conclusion.

At the same time, it is likely to believe that the possible geopolitical motivations behind the different perspectives will accordingly have an impact when answering the initial question formulation. As such, it could be argued that Chinese, African and Chinese perspectives will naturally have different responses when pointing out possible constraints and possibilities for China’s emergence in Africa. This conclusion could likewise be drawn to the concept of hermeneutics, as the different components and perspectives of the Sino-African relationship could be said to have led to new insights about this multifaceted phenomenon.

In overall, the findings have however shown that typical Western perspectives tend to adopt a more conventional geopolitical perception in their portrayal of China’s engagements in Africa. As such, it is likely to believe that the West has consciously promoted a general discourse of China as a global threat and antagonist in the promotion of human rights and democracy, which is partially done to create an image of China as a frightening enemy in upholding the Western hegemony. At the same time, it could however be argued that the Chinese promotion of itself and its ‘peaceful rise’ is a discourse which is also strategically driven, and perhaps also attained as to comfort the terrified West. In doing so, China can display itself as being everyone’s ‘buddy’ – apart from those who give recognition to Taiwan, of course.
All in all, it should be acknowledged that both Asian and Western nations are competing and cooperating simultaneously at various levels on the African arena. At the same time, they all claim to be good friends of Africa and devoted to making it develop. In recognizing this, it could hence be concluded that Africa need to choose their partners carefully in order to produce more mutually beneficial gains. In doing so, it is likely that the coming world order structure will reflect a more balanced relationship between global powers in recognizing the increased global interdependency of today.

As to further research, it would moreover be interesting to view China’s enhanced global recognition from Huntington’s perspective of a ‘clash of civilizations’. With the altering structure of the world system of today, it could thus be investigated whether the emergence of a possible ‘Pax Sinica’ could be said to confirm Huntington’s prophecy of a future clash between the West and the East Asian civilizations. In light of China’s increased distribution of peacemaking troops to Africa, it would likewise be interesting to look into China’s enhanced role in African peacemaking and conflict resolution. Considering China’s upheld principle of ‘non-interference’, one could thus question what this engagement might imply in regards to China’s strive towards global influence.
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