

China's ODA to Africa and David Shambaugh's Conceptual Framework: A Preliminary Application

Nicholas Lemon

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is often accused of ignoring the basic tenets of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Policy debates ensue chiefly over human rights concerns, anti-corruption and the rule of law as it is in the PRC's purview to focus on legitimacy and system stability over these tenets (Lang 2017, 8). On these grounds, the PRC's motives are often held in question. However, this essay is not an indictment of the PRC's official development assistance (ODA) but rather a Sino-pragmatist¹ assessment of development in Africa vis-à-vis the PRC using Shambaugh's (2018) concept of distance or proximity as a rubric for understanding the scope of the PRC's involvement, economic interest, and their effects in Africa (Adem 2013, 245). It should also be noted that the OECD is not designated in this study as an independent entity, in place of a state actor, but rather, as individuated states in concert forwarding their respective agendas. This choice to place the OECD opposite to the PRC, instead of the US as done in Shambaugh's article is mainly to keep consistent with Sino-pragmatism. This seems in accordance with OECD Secretary-General Ángel Gurría's stated goals (OECD Global Relations Secretariat 2018, 2), and diverges from the current Trump administration ("Remarks by President Trump and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg" 2019).

As minor case studies the PRC's ODA track record in Angola, Nigeria, and Kenya are examined below to see how they line up with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ODA policy and Shambaugh's distance rubric. Angola and Nigeria are taken from Bräutigam's article, "Aid 'with Chinese Characteristics'" which was published in the *International Journal of Development* (Bräutigam 2011, 752-764). Kenya was analyzed using the same parameter to offer three cases since Shambaugh required a few pairings with

the PRC to give some comparison. Each African state was selected for their common resource-dependent economies and their consistent historical exposure to the PRC. In light of recent developments this study seeks to gauge whether the PRC's ODA has contributed to an untroubled coexistence. This essay is organized as follows: Shambaugh's methodology will first be explained in brief; next, the ODA policy of the PRC will be outlined before finally concluding where Angola, Nigeria, and Kenya measure up along the proximity rubric.

I. Shambaugh's Rubric

In his article, "U.S.-China Rivalry in Southeast Asia", Shambaugh (2018) formulated a rubric for gauging diplomatic and economic closeness to the PRC. This was placed within the context of the polarity between the US and the PRC as superpowers vying for control and influence over the region. And in this case, Shambaugh took the current Trump administration into account as they have described the PRC as a "strategic competitor" on the global stage (85).

In the context of Southeast Asia, Shambaugh referred to four key factors that push Southeast Asian nations away from the PRC: 1) The US, citing its security footprint and positive public reception in the region; 2) The PRC itself, pointing to their "dictatorial" approach to relations with Southeast Asian nations such as Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand; 3) The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), despite this intergovernmental organization's explicit economic dependence on the PRC, ASEAN is solidly capable of expressing agency in the presence of the PRC; and finally, 4) "Other" regional powers, such as Japan, that have diplomatic, economic and cultural clout in the region. This paper takes equivalent measures into consideration for the case studies below to conform to the above rubric (Shambaugh 2018, 85).

To mirror the above parameters, such factors in Africa would take the following forms: 1) The OECD, as it is the intergovernmental institution to contrast with the PRC's ODA in this paper. The OECD includes the US and Japan among other "Western" influencers ("List of OECD Member Countries" 2018); 2) the policies of the PRC affect how they are perceived in Africa for the very same reasons as in Southeast Asia; 3) the African Union (AU) with its many notable differences from ASEAN; the more obvious difference is that the AU does not merely involve one small region, but the overwhelming majority of

the African continent ("About the African Union" 2019).

The AU emerged as a surviving union from the Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999) and as stated by the AU, "The decision to re-launch Africa's pan-African organisation was the outcome of a consensus by African leaders that in order to realise Africa's potential, there was a need to refocus attention from the fight for decolonisation and ridding the continent of apartheid [...] towards increased cooperation and integration of African states to drive Africa's growth and economic development." (*Ibid.*). With these aims, the AU was officially launched in 2002 (*Ibid.*); 4) the final factor is the internal presence of a complex network of regional organizations within Africa. However, this list is so complex that it is beyond the scope of this research note, but is a factor nonetheless. (Specific organizations are listed in the endnotes below)² (Byiers 2017).

After explaining the key factors and influencers in the Southeast Asian region, Shambaugh gave six categories to nations by their "closeness" to the PRC. "Closeness" refers to the relationship between each individual state and the PRC. The six categories from close to distant are as follows: capitulationists (states that align completely with the PRC); chafers (economically dependent states that wish they weren't); aligned accommodationists (states that are satisfied with their relationship with the PRC that also enjoy ties with other powerful nations); tilters (states that "tilt" towards the PRC but have territorial disputes and do not desire strengthening their ties); balanced hedgers (states that anchor their security agenda with the West but otherwise have economic dealings with the PRC); and outliers (states that prefer to remain independent from the West and the PRC out of distrust and cultural differences) (Shambaugh 2018, 100-103).

Shambaugh mainly focused on the international political economy of the Southeast Asian region, but this piece more specifically concerns ODA policy in contrast with OECD-DAC principles. And as stated above, the real question is rooted in how the PRC's financial policies actually affect African nations. In order to gauge this, it's important to understand how the CCP developed their guidelines for ODA.

II. The PRC'S ODA Policy

The PRC's official guidelines on ODA started with Premier Zhou Enlai's first Five Principles after the Bandung Conference of 1955 (Liu 2010, 54). That list grew in number in January 1964 with Premier Zhou's Eight Principles for Economic Aid and Technical Assistance to Other Countries (Eight Principles hereon). The Eight Principles were intended to be used as a guideline to provide aid in the hopes of forwarding a mutual benefit between the PRC and recipient countries in Africa.

Premier Zhou's Eight Principles, were as follows: 1) The PRC's aid is based on equality and mutual benefit between donor and recipient. 2) The sovereignty of recipient countries shall not be infringed and the PRC will never attach conditions for aid. 3) The PRC shall provide aid at interest-free or low-interest loans and can extend the time limit for repayment. 4) Recipients shall never become reliant on the PRC. 5) The PRC will do its best to help recipient countries complete projects which require less investment but yield quicker results. 6) The PRC will provide equipment of the best quality available at international market prices. 7) Technical assistance will be provided to recipients so that they master the technology given to them.

8) PRC officials are not allowed to demand any special treatment from recipients and must live as native experts do while in their country. Yet, the Eight Principles only live on today as the foundation for opening ties in Africa, and now the PRC's ODA policy has shifted gears (Shinxue, "China's Principles in Foreign Aid," accessed December 11, 2019).

PRC aid to African nations was originally rooted in liberation movements juxtaposed against Western capitalist powers during the Cold War (Mutesa 2010, 170). By 1983, in the sixth National Foreign Aid Working Conference held by the State Council, the new "Four Principles on Sino-African Economic and Technical Cooperation" was launched by Premier Zhao Ziyang. Premier Zhao's policy was aimed at both encouraging African nations to be self-reliant in their physical capabilities (*liangli erxing*) and to show fortitude in their own endeavors (*jinli er wei*) (Liu2010, 56).

From the post-1970s to the post-1990s reforms the PRC promoted a policy shift towards adherence to labor, environmental and human rights norms (*Ibid.*). Privatization and commercialization were embraced by the PRC for these latter

reforms. However, a key point of contention for the PRC has since been their “one-China” policy and its use as a litmus test for opening relations with African nations directly. This policy contradicts the concept of non-interference and unconditional aid in Zhou's second principle. The PRC's second stated goal ultimately steers a voting bloc within the UN's General Assembly and potential temporary members of the Security Council. Finally, the desire to be seen as an emerging superpower among African nations is not without suspicion (Liu 2010, 57).

As of 2015, concessional finance from the PRC totaled \$3.1 billion and their multilateral dealings in that same year amounted to \$233 million. The opacity of donor aid and contributions has provided a clear obstacle to the PRC's purported financial clout. The PRC's Ministry of Commerce's Department of Foreign Assistance is at the center of the Chinese system and manages over ninety percent of its bilateral funding. The ministry conducts its aid distribution through joint ventures, programming zero-interest loans and grants, and coordinating concessional loans with the China Export-Import Bank (Exim or Chexim Bank). Exim Bank of the PRC is actually a state-owned enterprise and functions primarily for the purpose of international issuance (Exim Bank of China, accessed December 3, 2019).

Eighty-nine percent of the PRC's development cooperation through multilateral organizations was primarily channeled through the United Nations and nine percent via regional development banks. But Exim Bank and the regional development banks are not the sole means by which the PRC distributes funds; the PRC is also a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a multilateral development bank with its headquarters in Beijing that launched in 2015 (The UN DESA 2015). Current aid relations in the African region are expected to be a continuation of the above policies, along with those following the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), where the PRC has vowed to provide \$60 billion in economic cooperation in the region. The roundtable summit also convened with a declaration of eight major action plans over the next three years (Beijing declaration adopted at FOCAC 2018).

To contrast the PRC's ODA with OECD-DAC's member states: the CCP favors the practice of non-transparency over the openness of liberal OECD states. This resulted in the failure of recipients' understanding of the framework,

rules, and norms regarding their foreign aid policy (Bräutigam 2011, 757). The PRC's contributions to the development of African countries have undermined the Millennium Development Goals carried out by the DAC despite their claim to support them (*Ibid.*, 762). Critics worry that the PRC is propping up a financial precedent and that their supporters welcome the counterpoint to the DAC's official aid policy (*Ibid.*, 761). Yet, despite being contrasted with OECD-DAC it would be disingenuous to ignore the fact that the PRC is a key partner of the OECD and collaborates with the DAC through the events of the China-DAC Study Group. Furthermore, President Xi vowed to "firmly uphold an open world economy and the multilateral trading system, while opposing protectionism and unilateralism." (Beijing summit declaration at FOCAC 2018). To further address these details, below is a brief outline of the PRC's involvement in Angola, Nigeria, and Kenya that attempts to explain any discrepancies between them using Shambaugh's rubric.

III. Angola

In 2003 Exim Bank distributed finance to Angola based on the policy of the China-Africa Development Fund. This policy primarily dictated the use of equity investment capital from the PRC to Angola. From then, negotiations were made between the Angolan government and Exim Bank to open a renewable line of credit. Between 2003 and 2010 Exim Bank fronted \$10 billion in finance towards post-war reconstruction in Angola. Oil exports were used to back the tranches in a similar fashion to the oil-backed syndicated loans of Western banks in Angola. The tranches were used as financial securities that were distributed in large packages to represent assets owned by the creditor. The PRC suggested using Angolan oil to back their tranches to liquidate them more easily. The PRC did not go through a financial process like the OECD-DAC system, and so repayment terms could be for a longer period of time. The Exim Bank investment in Angola was termed "deeply concessional". In this case, the PRC was considered generous in their financial contribution to Angola. But this declaration of being "deeply concessional" ignores the reality of the situation (Bräutigam 2011, 758).

The result of using the tranches as oil-backed credit resulted in the PRC's effective micromanagement of the funds they afforded. The PRC disadvantaged

Angola by making it so that the proceeds from oil exports were deposited into a special escrow account at the Exim Bank. The funds in the escrow account could only be accessed through withdrawals towards specific expenses. Such expenses were limited to projects or the export of equipment and goods by Angolan subcontractors. Effectively, Angolans were dependent on the bank (Lee and Shalmon 2008, 123). In the end, Angolan subcontractors could only access thirty percent of the credit backed by their own resources (Bräutigam 2011, 758).

From this, we can see that the PRC fixed their aid to contribute almost completely to their own economic benefit. This is made clear by the actual effects of their credit policy. Since there is clear indication that the PRC may have indeed exploited Angola, theorists, such as de Morais (2011, 67) have condemned the PRC as a “new form of imperialism”. For the reasons above, Angola might fit in Shambaugh's “chafers” category. Angolan officials negotiated with the PRC with a near capitulationist disposition. Yet, Angola remains a significant trading partner to rival South Africa with at least some leverage. Despite the imbalance, it seems that the two nations intend to continue their lopsided economic relationship (Ma Chenguang, “Angola eager to welcome more Chinese investors, says ambassador,” *China Daily Global*, July 25, 2019).

IV. Nigeria

The aid the PRC offered to Nigerian railways in 2007 has been called “rogue aid” due to the lack of bidding and lack of conditions towards partnered reform policy (Bräutigam 2011, 758). Moisés Naím (2009) termed this policy “Rogue Aid” in his article bearing the same name. The World Bank initially suggested giving \$5 million so that private companies could clean up corruption and mismanagement of Nigerian railways. The PRC, in exchange, provided \$9 billion in aid, with “no questions asked”. This has been criticized as ignoring development towards anti-corruption and stark humanitarian issues afflicting the region. The PRC's Exim Bank was also involved in the reconstruction of Nigerian railways from Lagos to Kano in 2007. Both cities are key to Nigerian development and commerce (Bräutigam, 758).

The corporate enterprise, China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, offered \$8.3 billion and Exim Bank offered an additional \$2 billion package. Both

offers were through a line of credit to help build infrastructure in exchange for a preferential access to oil blocks. Like in Angola's case, this latter concept was not suggested by the PRC, but rather by Nigeria. Yet, negotiations failed to be realized and the whole plan was discarded. The PRC's Exim Bank's \$2 billion loan would have been considered concessional by many experts, had it went through. Yet, their later offer of \$500 million in exchange for preferential credit for 2 years without any regard to the oil blocks from before was a different story (*Brättingam, 758*).

As of 2008, the preferential export credit was not used. Since nothing offered by the PRC contained the promise of developmental aid, one could not say that their contributions would fall under DAC guidelines of ODA, nor even Zhou's Eight Principles. The intentions of the PRC (via their private civil engineering corporation, and their Exim Bank) were to secure favorable market advantages with their competitors, and were ultimately not concessional in nature (*Ibid.*). In 2010 Nigeria ranked firmly in fourth place of the PRC's biggest African trading partners, and the second largest importer of Chinese goods in all of Africa (Egbula and Zheng 2011, 6). Like Angola, Nigeria is on the Atlantic shore and even further north from Cape Town. This places Nigeria at a further geographical distance from mainland China and it seems that Nigeria also fell prey to the opacity and sharp exploitation of their own assets by the PRC. However, Nigeria withdrew from the PRC's grip, it is thus categorized in Shambaugh's rubric as "tilters", and it handled negotiations in a fashion similar to the Philippines or Brunei, as it was not afraid to say "no". Furthermore, the US remains Nigeria's most prominent trading partner.

V. Kenya

In 1987 a well-regarded joint project, the Moi International Sports Complex, was undertaken by the PRC and Kenya, and overseen by Sheng-Li Engineering Construction Company Ltd. The facility hosted the All-Africa Games and has served as a major civic center since. And more recently, the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) began construction in May 2017. The PRC has been funding part of a \$3.8 billion railway connecting Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and South Sudan to replace a century-old British colonial rail track. Ninety percent of it is funded by the Exim Bank and ten percent is Kenyan

funded. Like the Angolan and Nigerian cases, the establishment of the deal has been cited as an effort to directly undermine OECD-DAC policies. This allegation was also in response to a candid statement by Ugandan President Museveni following the first conferences with the PRC's Premier, Li Keqiang: "They don't give lectures on how to run local governments and other issues I don't want to mention." President Museveni was referring to OECD-DAC's official guidelines (The Nation Reporter, "Kenya, China sign standard gauge railway agreement," Daily Nation. May 11, 2014).

With statements like these, OECD-DAC countries have a reason to question the motives of such officials. Accusations relate to a perceived lack of concern for the public or corruption. What's more, the PRC has given 21,366 tons of rice as aid to Kenya. The net worth of such rice is about \$22.5 million. The supply was expected to last about one month and to feed 1.4 million people (Christine Wangxiaopeng, "China's Donations to Kenya Are Gigantic." IOL Business Report, August 8, 2017). Although this form of aid was aimed to help, rice alone is not an especially nutritious grain. In comparison to wheat, for example; rice offers 130 calories per 100 grams, whereas wheat has 327 calories per 100 grams. Rice has 2.7 grams of protein while wheat has 12.61 per 100 grams. Furthermore, rice is actually produced locally within Kenya where the annual consumption of rice has increased to twelve percent compared to the next highest grain, wheat at four percent of dietary consumption.³

There is a presence of rural farmers of rice in Kenya, and the introduction of a rice surplus actually reduces the market value of the crop yields of average agricultural workers. Less income from a cash crop means less ability to afford more nutritious foods on the market for those agriculturally dependent farmers. Although the contribution may initially be seen as useful aid, it actually plays a role in further wealth disparity and depreciation of diverse food selections (Achterbosch, van Berkum and Meijerink 2014, 47). One key aspect that has been debated by post-colonial scholars is the fact that one sure trait of colonial domination was to create a food dependency on cheap grains. This sort of threat to food sovereignty is critiqued by key figures in African agrarian movements; a prime example came from Nyéléni, Mali (2007, 10).⁴ If this is the stance of African people against Western exploitation, then the same may apply to the PRC.

Kenya is often considered somewhat of an outlier compared to other African

nations by the OECD, and in fact some even describe Kenya's market as a success (OECD 2012, 1-7). But their reception of foreign aid is still considerable and the presence of the PRC's influence cannot go ignored. Although Museveni is Uganda's President, the conference involved Kenyan officials, and there is no news of whether his point was disputed by Kenyan officials. In 2013 President Uhuru Kenyatta went to the PRC to meet with President Xi Jinping. The two hit it off really quickly and wound up signing negotiated trade deals worth around \$5 billion ("Kenya's Kenyatta and China's Xi Sign \$5bn Deals." BBC News. BBC, August 20, 2013). President Kenyatta was known for shifting his gaze towards the PRC and East Asia for potential trade. Despite Kenyatta's shift, the US has yet to recede from what is termed an alliance by both the US and Kenya. This situation places Kenya almost firmly in the center of the US and the PRC, thus placing it in the "balanced hedgers" category.

VI. Conclusion

The above assessment of development in Africa reveals a complex reality. The case studies examined, including Angola, Nigeria, and Kenya, were aimed at following Shambaugh's distance rubric as it may be considered useful for Area Studies scholars. Angola proved an interesting case due to their geographical location and being what was eventually deemed a "chafer" state. In the time of the case study, Angola was considerably dependent on the PRC. As a "tilter" Nigeria seemed to have been leaning towards the PRC as its third largest African trading partner, but they have demonstrated the ability to refuse the PRC's financial policies in light of their relationships with OECD states. Finally, Kenya proved to be the most independent, as they have always been considered successful in their adaptation of their own capitalist model. However, their recent ties with the PRC reveal a greater neoliberal undercurrent between both countries that might otherwise be overlooked by outsiders. Kenya received the term "balanced hedgers" here because they can maintain "simultaneous commercial ties" (Shambaugh 2018, 102) with the PRC and OECD states (see Figure 1). As a final remark, it should be noted that this study was not exhaustive, and that ODA does not fully explain closeness to the PRC in Shambaugh's rubric. It is my hope that this study serves as a starting point for further discussion on matters concerning Sino-African relations.

Figure 1 Angola, Nigeria and Kenya's Closeness to the PRC with Southeast Asian Nations included and adapted from Shambaugh's study, (Shambaugh 2018, 101).

Closer to the PRC	
capitulationist Cambodia	
chafers Laos, Myanmar	Angola
aligned accommodationists Malaysia, Thailand	
tilters Philippines, Brunei	Nigeria
balanced hedgers Vietnam, Singapore	Kenya
outlier Indonesia	
Less close to the PRC	

Endnotes

- 1 Adem (2013) defines on page 245 the Sino-pragmatist as one who “devote[s] extensive attention to the nature and impact of Sino-African relations. [A Sino-pragmatist] however, [is] not necessarily Sino-fanatic or Sino-apologist”. This concept is contrasted with the Sino-phobe and the Sino-pessimist. As the former “loathes China for propping up ‘neo-patrimonial regimes’ in the continent.” The latter are “adversarians” against the PRC. Put simply, this paper takes the PRC’s culture, interests and goodwill as a sovereign nation into consideration.
- 2 Examples for regional organizations in Africa include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).
- 3 Google search “rice” and “wheat”: Daily Values appears on the right-hand side as a sidebar.
- 4 *The Declaration of Nyéléni*:
“What are we fighting against? Imperialism, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism and patriarchy, and all systems that impoverish life, resources and eco-systems, and the agents that promote the above such as international financial institutions [...] and governments that are antagonistic to their peoples; The dumping of food at prices below the cost of production in the global economy; The domination of our food and food producing systems by corporations that place profits before people, health and the environment.”

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Abstract

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Nicholas Lemon

There is a debate between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development chiefly regarding human rights, anti-corruption, and the rule of law. This paper is a Sino-pragmatist assessment of developments in Africa vis-à-vis the PRC using David Shambaugh's very new concept of proximity as a rubric for understanding the scope and the PRC's involvement, intervention and economic interest in Africa. The objective of this paper is meant to briefly gauge whether the PRC's official aid contributes to a peaceful coexistence or a new brand of neocolonialism. Angola, Nigeria, and Kenya serve as case studies to examine the PRC's financial track record to see how they fit into the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) narrative, financial dependence, and thus Shambaugh's proximity rubric. This paper shows that each country was selected for their prolonged trade relationship with the PRC and for the particular aid each received. Further, the data from these cases are used to illustrate the extent of each state's dependency allegedly caused by the PRC's "rogue aid" assistance. Both Angola's use of the China-Africa Development Fund and Nigeria's 2007 Lagos-Ibadan railway debacle show strong signs of dependency, as is corroborated in Deborah Bräutigam's report, "Aid 'with Chinese Characteristics'" which was published in the *International Journal of Development*. Kenya's soft loans and grants deals, by small contrast, maintain their interdependence with the PRC. With all factors considered, this paper demonstrates the applicability of Shambaugh's proximity rubric in regions of the world besides Southeast Asian countries.

