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China’s "greek Gift" To africa: a Myth Or Reality

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ABSTRACT

CHINA'S "GREEK GIFT" TO AFRICA: A MYTH OR REALITY

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Two differing perceptions have dominated explanations of the relationship between China and Africa. The first is often held in the West and sees China as an exploitative force that has latched onto Africa's quest for development partnerships to exploit the continent economically. The second considers the China-Africa partnership more positively and views China as a trustworthy ally. Advocates argue that China has no history of colonial ambitions in Africa. Instead, China intervened in Africa to fill the financing gap and tackle the development challenges in Africa with no political strings attached. Perception of which view is mainly correct depends on which side of the divide an observer is aligned, i.e., pro-Western or pro-Chinese.

This study analyzes the factors that account for the variation in Chinese aid across Africa between 2006-2018. The findings demonstrate that, the size of a country's GDP remains a common predictor of aid to African countries. Chinese assistance is mainly consistent with expectations of financial need and economic development rather than political exploitation. In addition, factors that predict aid to Africa are the same across Chinese and Western sources. However, while democratic governance is considered an essential determinant of Western aid, Chinese aid is not influenced by democratic rule. This is attributed to the enduring Chinese policy of "non-interference" in the internal political affairs of African countries. Countries would therefore be willing to engage more with China given that the perceived non-interference, makes conditionality for aid less stringent compared to the Western aid alternative.

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between China and Africa has been interpreted in many different ways by scholars and other observers in different parts of the world (Alden & Jiang, 2019; Hoeffler & Sterck, 2022; Naim, 2007). The quest for development in Africa has continued to require the continent to explore new partnerships and strengthen existing ones where necessary, sustaining beneficial relationships while avoiding those often considered exploitative. With billions of dollars flowing from developed countries to less developed ones, Africa continues to receive aid from both Western countries and, increasingly, China. For example, between 2000 and 2021, 62 billion dollars was received by countries in Africa in net aid flows (*World Bank Open Data*, 2023). Similarly, between 2003 and 2021, African countries received over 41 billion dollars in Chinese aid loans (Boston University Global Development Policy Center, 2022; Singh, 2012). The aid monies are meant to ameliorate poverty and drive investment that could lead to self-reliance and economic sustainability.

China's relationship with Africa is a relationship couched in terms of foreign aid categorized as Official Development Assistance. Within the past two decades, China has emerged as the largest competitor to the West in the global aid market (Brautigam, 2011; Moyo, 2009; Singh, 2012). China's way of designing and delivering assistance is challenging the conventional policies and practices, which is the strategy hitherto used by Western powers, considered as long-standing aid donors (Brautigam, 2011; Kilama, 2016; Moyo, 2009). China has expanded its economic influence in Africa mainly because of its changing ideas about development (Brautigam & Gallagher, 2014; Tan-Mullins et al., 2010). The Chinese approach to providing aid to developing countries, including Africa, focuses on infrastructure which China considers as the main contributors to economic growth, poverty reduction, enhancement of equity, and sustenance (Brautigam & Gallagher, 2014). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a multibillion-dollar framework for infrastructural investment by China, benefits emerging nations economically. For example, in Africa, where infrastructure investment is urgently needed, an in-depth examination of BRI projects in Africa exposes the reality of how the initiative functions in contrast to the model hitherto used by the West in pursuit of the same goals (Risberg, 2019)

The West, on the other hand, had a straightforward idea about aid, which in the 1960s was focused on delivering aid as loans with huge debts to be repaid with future earnings from investments (W. Easterly, 2006; Moyo, 2009). In the long term, most African governments' economic strategies proved unsustainable. Poor development, the accumulation of significant debt, and enormous waves of capital flight were its defining characteristics (Egwu, 1998; GebreMichael, 2016; Heidhues & Obare, 2011; Kilama, 2016; Konadu-Agyemang, 2018). By the 1980s, several sub-Saharan African nations had reached an all-time low and sought additional aid from Western donors and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). Unfortunately, the "bailouts" that were expected to come from these International Financial Institutions had to come with certain conditions. In conclusion, recipients' promise of policy changes in exchange for aid was essential to the donor approach (Evrensel, 2004; Jorra, 2012).

Given the perilous circumstances, governments had few motivations to make reforms, and donors had few reasons to enforce their demands, even when the policies requested by the donors appeared logical on paper but impossible in practice (Corsetti et al., 2006; Dreher, 2006;

Jorra, 2012; Lee & Shin, 2008). The IMF partially adapted to this predicament by continuing to make new loans to pay down the existing debts (Corsetti et al., 2006; Dreher, 2006; Jorra, 2012; Lee & Shin, 2008). “Once a country is deep into the IMF, with the country owing the fund due to previous bailout packages, it is hard to get out” (W. Easterly, 2006, p. 228). Similarly, Jorra (2012) argues that an IMF program didn’t improve the economic performance of bailed-out countries. Furthermore, his empirical evidence shows that IMF bailouts significantly increase the probability of subsequent sovereign defaults by approximately 1.5–2%. Given the economic consequences of this vicious cycle of bailouts, it was easy for these struggling countries to embrace the aid strategy of China. The new lease of life brought about by the Chinese aid model as an alternative to the Western aid regime that had led to the collapse of some African economies began to gain momentum from the early 1990s and reached new heights in the following decades (Jacobs, 2011).

Given the increase in Chinese aid flow to Africa since the year 2000, scholars have offered some evidence in attempting to refute claims that Chinese aid goes only to the mineral resource-rich and more stable countries that can guarantee "return on investments" (Halper, 2010; Lum et al., 2009). According to(Li, 2017), the media often portrays China as gunning for Africa's resources, and a complete takeover of the continent, but some empirical evidence is contrary to such portrayal. For example, less than 30% of all Chinese investments are made in the extractive industry (Eguegu, 2021; Pablo, 2006). The other 70 percent of China's investment in Africa is in infrastructure, construction, electricity production, manufacturing, and finance. China's proportion of extractive investments in Africa is lower in comparison to the United States and other developed countries (Jacobs, 2011; Kilama, 2016; Maru, 2019). This study explores whether Chinese aid to Africa is targeted towards rich African countries with the wherewithal to provide China repayments, as has been suggested, or towards countries in dire need of development.

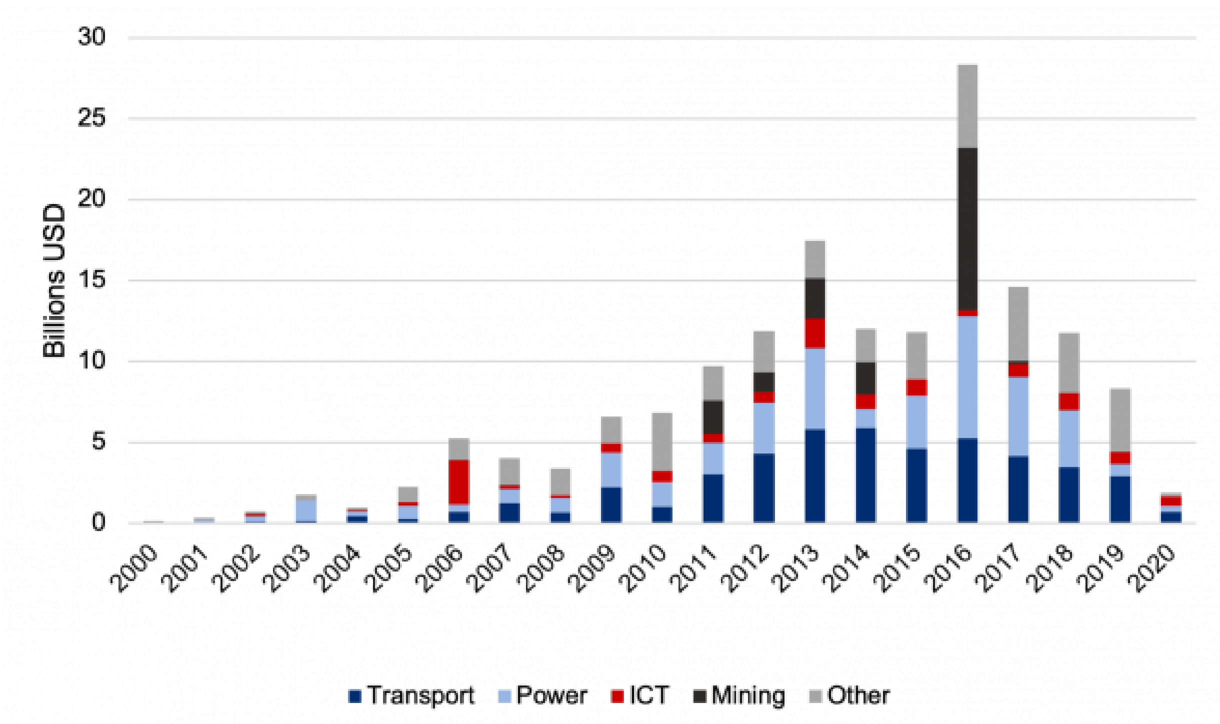

Figure 1**:** Chinese Investments in Key Sectors in Africa 2000-2020
Source: Chinese Loans to Africa (CLA) Database, 2022. Boston University Global Development Policy Center.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Brautigam (2009), defining what constitutes "foreign aid" should be straightforward, but it has proven not to be. Most people define foreign aid as government funding to promote economic and social development in less-advantaged countries. In the 1960s and 70s, there was the need to define what constituted foreign aid clearly and if subsidies that could facilitate joint ventures and boost small and medium-scale enterprises in developing countries could be regarded as aid. The Development Assistance Committee member countries (DAC) of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) agreed on a definition that would help them compare development aid. They, therefore, defined development aid as official development assistance (ODA). The term foreign aid for this study focuses only on Official Development Assistance (ODA), which includes "the flow of official financing received by developing countries for nonmilitary purposes, that is either a grant (an outright gift) or concessional, such as loans with low-interest rates and often repayable over long periods" (Alden, 2009; Brautigam, 2011; GebreMichael, 2016; Moss & Resnick, 2018; Moyo, 2009). ODA is generally directed toward promoting countries' economic development and welfare.

Accordingly, in this study, official aid only focuses on loans with low to no interest rates repayable over long periods. ODA includes bilateral aid that flows directly from donor to recipient governments and multilateral aid channeled through an intermediary lending institution such as the World Bank (Adedokun, 2017; GebreMichael, 2016). In the case of Chinese aid, Chinese banks such as Chinese Exim Bank (CHEXIM), China Development Bank (CDB), Bank of China (BoC), China Construction Bank, and (CCB) constitute the leading Chinese lenders in Africa. Additional sources of funding from the Chinese government include zero-interest loans from the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) and a plethora of Chinese businesses lending money to African governments for the purchase of goods and services (Moses & Hwang, 2022).

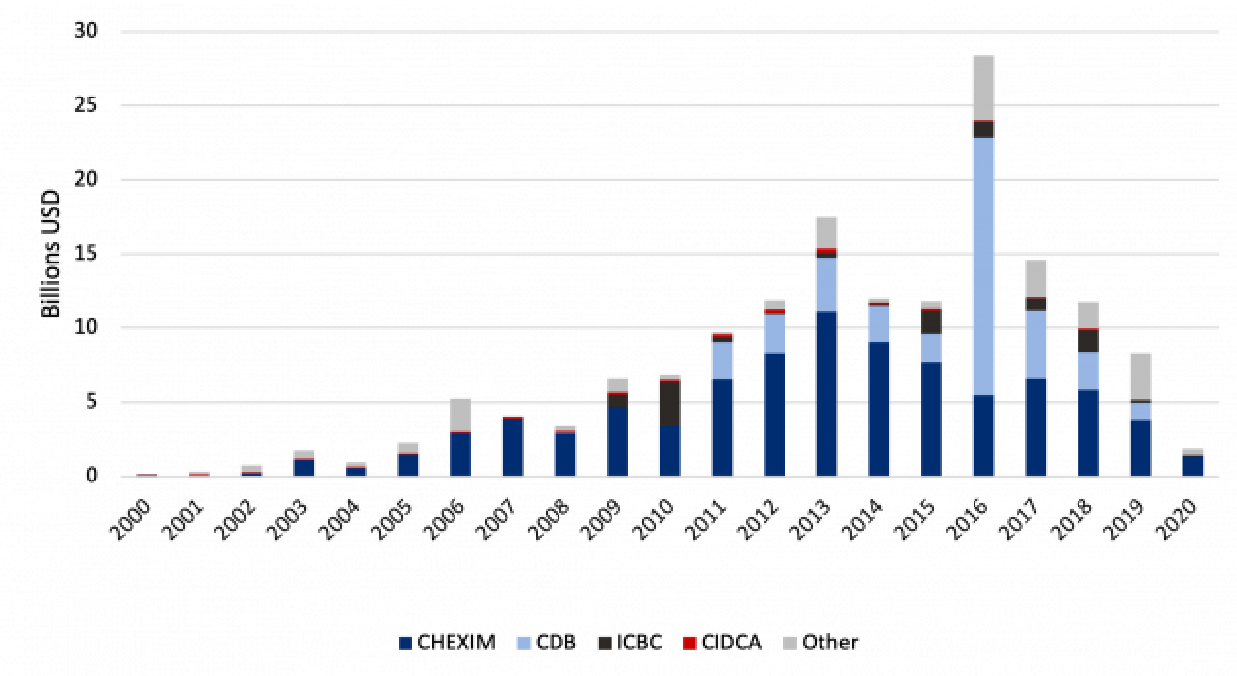

Figure 2**:** Chinese Loans to Africa by Financiers, 2000-2020
Source: Chinese Loans to Africa (CLA) Database, 2022. Boston University Global Development Policy Center

The literature on foreign aid is broadly divided into two: The first deals with the impact of foreign aid on the recipient countries, while the second focuses on the determinants of foreign aid to countries (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Hattori, 2001; Moyo, 2009; Riddell, 2007). Arguments as to why the West continues to take an interest in China's engagement in Africa and its foreign aid activities could be explained by the first category of studies that focuses on the impact of aid.

The West assumes that Africa may have chosen a new partnership in terms of foreign assistance because previous aid efforts from Europe and America have failed to produce the kind of results that the recipients had anticipated (Moyo, 2009; Yiew & Lau, 2018). Even though Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is arguably the most aid-dependent region of the world (Alden & Large, 2018; W. R. Easterly, 2002; Fifield, 2018; Moss & Resnick, 2018; Moyo, 2009), and one might expect aid to drive positive development, there has been a consistent lack of development among SSA aid recipients. That is, there tends to be a negative relationship between aid and the level of human and infrastructural development in SSA compared to other aid-receiving regions like East Asia (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Andrews, 2009; Collier, 2007; Evrensel, 2004; Fifield, 2018; Kilama, 2016; Lum et al., 2009; Moss & Resnick, 2018; Parks, 2015). According to Alesina & Dollar (2000), aid has a "weak association with poverty, democracy, and good policy."

China moved over 400 million of its citizens out of poverty, with poverty rates falling from 88% in 1981 to 6.5% in 2012 (The World Bank Annual Report 2014: Main Report, 2014), though the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen. Sen (2006) and Moyo (2009) have argued that in Africa, the aid model is structured so that it does not provide realistic long-term exit strategies. In East Asia, for instance, between 1950 and the 1980s, the United States is estimated to have given South Korea aid equal to all the combined aid given to fifty-three African countries between 1957 and 1990 (Moyo, 2009). Some have alleged that Africa will need this kind of financial lift. Aid advocates argue that aid works – it is just that richer countries have not given enough of it. They maintain that Africa can escape its persistent poverty trap with a 'big push' – a substantial increase in aid targeted at critical investments. Only under such terms can the condition of Africa improve (Moyo, 2009). China appears to be providing this kind of aid to Africa and has gained the attention of African leaders who have continued to expand China's engagement in Africa (Dreher et al., 2019; Tull, 2006).

The second category of literature on foreign aid focuses on why donors continue to give aid. While there is likely to be a consensus that foreign aid given by donors should be targeted at developing and improving the lives of recipient countries, aid often continues to be given based on political and strategic considerations (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Dreher et al., 2018; Evrensel, 2004; Jensen, 2003). Some other scholars offer a nuanced argument rooted in the fact that donors have other entrenched motives for providing aid, such as 'bragging right' among fellow donors. For example, Andrews (2009) argues that since powerful states can no longer boast about which one is providing more aid than the other, it appears that aid is not intended to ensure that beneficiaries become self-sufficient. Like the United States and other OECD countries, China gives aid for several reasons, from diplomacy and commercial benefit to society's ideologies and values (Alden, 2009; Brautigam, 2009). Aid to developing countries has sometimes been used by some Western donors as an incentive for democratization (Broich, 2017; Dietrich & Wright, 2015), and it could also be given based on the patron-client relationship that exists between some developing countries and the developed countries, and based on a country's repayment capability (Yanguas, 2017; Young, 2020). Evidence suggests that African states that align with China in voting in the UN General Assembly receive more official development assistance (ODA) from Beijing (Dreher et al., 2018; Dreher & Fuchs, 2015; Strüver, 2016). Wenping (2007) argues that China has mobilized African nations to vote in large numbers at the United Nations General Assembly to resist "hegemonism and power politics." The case is the same with countries that receive aid from the United States (Parks, 2015).

However, while the aid given by the West is made open and public, Chinese aid is shrouded in secrecy. This has made extensive research in this area complex since there is a paucity of reliable data (Alden, 2009; Alden & Large, 2018; Brautigam, 2009; Strange et al., 2017). These difficulties stem from China's declining membership in global reporting institutions such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), established by Western powers to facilitate donor coordination and reduce duplication and waste (Parks, 2015). Given such secrecy, the West has maintained that China's human and material assistance also raises the question of their effectiveness since it is geared towards economic exploitation to provide raw materials for Chinese firms, consolidate political alliances, and global hegemony (Li, 2017). Amid the paucity of reliable data, however, case studies have helped unravel some of the data required to analyze the nature of China's aid further. For example, Burke (2007), in the study of Chinese projects in two East African countries, Tanzania and Zambia, found that the standards of the construction projects in the two countries differed. Hence Chinese projects in Zambia were of better quality due to the strictly enforced regulatory codes compared to Tanzania. Brautigam & Zhang (2013) report that estimates of China's involvement in hydropower in Africa, both quantitatively and economically, are frequently exaggerated. They maintain that there are many misconceptions and myths about Chinese financing and construction methods. Similarly, research indicates that Chinese corporations have recently begun to acquire land, and those that have done so have mainly concentrated on producing goods for African consumers (Brautigam & Hwang, 2019).

Chinese Aid to Africa

Significant dollars flow from wealthy Western countries to developing countries, mainly in Africa, yearly. For instance, Africa received 62 billion dollars of the 109 billion dollars in net development assistance and official aid flow to Africa, Latin America, and The Middle East between 2000 and 2021 (*World Bank Open Data*, 2023). This accounts for over 57 percent of ODA and aid flow to the three continents, with The Middle East and Latin America receiving 32 percent and 10.87 percent, respectively. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cold War justifications for foreign aid evaporated, and aid to low-income countries declined swiftly in the mid-1990s. Aid advocates sought a new motivation for an increase in aid inflows, and the outcome was the fight against global poverty for humanitarian and strategic reasons (Moyo, 2009). Africa is among the principal targets of much of the aid dealings, as it is the region with the worst poverty and, so far, seemingly the least responsive to past aid efforts (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Andrews, 2009; Evrensel, 2004; Fifield, 2018; Kilama, 2016; Lum et al., 2009; Nunnenkamp & Öhler, 2011; Parks, 2015).

Brautigam (2011) argues that the waning that characterized aid from the West to Africa in the 1990s led China to push and expand its engagement with Africa. This commitment to the new engagement became easier because China had prior engagements with some African countries like Kenya and Zimbabwe, and several others and was said to have sent modest amounts of covert funding, materials, and advisers to several independence movements during the liberation struggle from colonialism. Given China's strategic role in decolonization, most African countries were quick to forge diplomatic ties with China immediately after independence. China's first official aid in sub-Saharan Africa was a cigarette and match factory near Conakry, the capital of Guinea, in 1960 (Brautigam, 2009, pp. 26–34).

Chinese President Jiang Zemin's 1996 tour to several African countries and the Organization of African Unity (now African Union) is considered a significant milestone in forging strong China Africa relations. However, despite China's importance to these countries and the potentials that it saw, these visits attracted far less attention. Alden & Large (2018) argue that The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation III (FOCAC) Beijing summit in November 2006, a decade later, was a catalyst behind the widespread current interest in China's relations with Africa. China used the summit to showcase the nature of its ambition in Africa's development except for a few countries that had already established strong relationships with Taiwan. China had shown by the engagement in this summit that they were interested in business ties, political and economic relations. Brautigam (2009) outlines the contents of Beijing's first Africa Policy, which among other things included: pledge to double aid within the three years that followed, increase concessional finance for trade and infrastructure, set up a fund for investment in Africa, build a hundred rural schools and thirty hospitals and establish up to five trade and economic cooperation zones across the continent all within the same period. China defined its partnership with Africa as a "win-win cooperation" (Brautigam, 2009).

While the West only began to focus on China-Africa relations after the 2006 Beijing summit, China had already set in motion an aid program across Africa with the Chinese presidents' previous visits to Africa two decades and a decade earlier when it noticed that the aid from the West to African countries had declined (Alden & Jiang, 2019; Alden & Large, 2018; Brautigam, 2015; Wang & Elliot, 2014; Woods, 2008). Reports published by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD indicate that in 1984, China was the eighth-largest bilateral donor in sub-Saharan Africa, and by 1995 China had increased its aid to Africa by 57% and reduced its commitments to countries in Asia (Alden & Large, 2018). These previous visits and engagement with the African Union and several African leaders increased China's steady presence and credibility in Africa.

The optimism shared by African leaders about Africa's partnership with China is rooted in the assumption that China is different as a donor and strategic partner compared to the West. They maintain that its development success (explicitly, its rapid economic transformation and reducing poverty) makes it a partner with practical experience and a great deal of credibility (Alden, 2009; Alden & Large, 2018; Antwi-Boateng, 2017; Brautigam, 2009). China's aid and economic cooperation differ in their content and the norms of aid practice. The content of Chinese assistance is considerably less complicated, and it has hardly changed over time (Antwi-Boateng, 2017). Because of its experience, Chinese aid programs gave preferences to infrastructure, production, and university scholarship, which were areas the traditional donors indicated or but not as much when compared to China. Chinese loans for infrastructure were to reduce the high production costs (although contracts were to Chinese firms, and bidding was anything but transparent). Preferential loans for buyers of Chinese goods and tariff-free access for commodities from low-income Africa emphasized trade over aid (Brautigam, 2009; Brautigam & Gallagher, 2014).

Arguments about China Africa Relations

Two dominant interpretations of China's engagement in Africa have dominated scholarly discourses (Alden, 2009). The first interpretation sees China as an economic competitor with the Western powers over African resources with little or no concern for the continent's development (Alden, 2009; Tan-Mullins et al., 2010). The West views China as an exploitative power that has hooked onto Africa's thirst for development partnerships to exploit the region economically, primarily on its terms. (Alden, 2009; Alden & Large, 2018; Halper, 2010; Lum et al., 2009; Tull, 2006). The perception of the West is succinctly echoed in the words of former US National Security Adviser John Bolton: "China uses bribes, opaque agreements, and the strategic use of debt to hold states in Africa captive to Beijing's wishes and demands…." (Ward et al., 2021). According to Obama, "China has a need for natural resources that colors their investments in a way that's less true for the United States" (*An Interview with the President*, 2014). Former British Prime Minister David Cameron maintains that he is "increasingly alarmed by Beijing's leading role in the new "Scramble for Africa" and warned African states over China's "authoritarian capitalism" (Alden & Large, 2018, pp. 103–104). They further argue that these anxieties manifest in Euro-American discourses on Chinese engagement in Africa (Alden & Jiang, 2019; Alden & Large, 2018).

The second perspective views China as a development partner. This interpretation assumes that China's engagement in Africa primarily meets its own economic needs, shares its development experience with Africa, and builds solid economic commitments, alliances, and partnerships with other developing countries. Under this interpretation, the pursuit of increased China-African trade remains key (Alden, 2009; Tull, 2006; Zoubir, 2022). This perspective sees the partnership between Beijing and Africa as optimistic and favorable. This view is adopted mainly in Africa, where the proponents of this narrative regard China as a "savior" - a trustworthy friend of Africa (Fiori & Rosen, 2019; Maru, 2019; Zoubir, 2022). The espousers of this view argue that China does not have a history of colonial intentions in Africa (Antwi-Boateng, 2017). Instead, it intervened in Africa to tackle the myriad development challenges that beset Africa, howbeit from a business perspective. They argue that Beijing understands and respects Africa's priorities and does not intend to impose itself against them (Brautigam, 2011; Moyo, 2009; Wang & Elliot, 2014). They also insist that China is a partner that could provide much-needed funding to drive the development that Africa desires without any strings attached.

The notion that China's engagement in Africa aims towards a complete takeover has been influenced mainly by the West (Antwi-Boateng, 2017; Li, 2017). Europe and America are trying to understand a change that challenges many of the ideas of development and their place in the world (Jacobs, 2011). Africa's engagement with the West, especially those facilitated by the Bretton Woods institutions, has not contributed much to Africa's development. However, with its home-grown development strategy, China seems to be steadily driving Africa towards maximizing its development potentials (Antwi-Boateng, 2017; Brautigam, 2009, 2015; Brautigam & Gallagher, 2014). Africa has yielded more visible results because the strategy adopted by China in Africa tends to conform to the peculiarities in Africa. The West was rethinking its aid model, moving from a limited focus on production and infrastructure to direct support for rural development, basic needs, and poverty. Chinese aid does not adopt this exact model. Instead, they have adopted a model that reflects their domestic ideas about development such as centrally planned interventions to boost production, health, and infrastructure (Brautigam, 2009; Kilama, 2016).

Like most Western donors, China contributes more aid to impoverished countries in dire need of assistance. This study focuses on factors that impact how much aid China provides to African countries. It hypothesizes that Chinese aid to Africa is determined by the same factors that determine Western aid. Specifically, it tests if the wealth of a country measured in GDP per capita, corruption, and democracy are associated with Chinese aid to African countries. The study also includes other control variables and seeks to determine if commercial objectives, such as trade or access to natural resources, significantly impact Chinese aid allocation in Africa.

Determinants of Chinese Aid to Africa

Given this aid model adopted by China, an assessment of the volume of aid provided to Africa by China would provide an understanding of which countries in Africa receive more aid from China. The study uses data on the monetary value of development projects executed by China in these African countries, as is the case with other DAC who provide aid mostly in direct monetary terms. These projects include economic, social, and humanitarian projects, which vary across countries.

Arguments are widespread about China only providing aid to African countries with mineral resources and large economies to enable China to exploit these resources and markets in return (Halper, 2010; Tan-Mullins et al., 2010). This is hinged on the assumption that countries with large economies have a lot to offer in terms of debt repayment and could muster the guarantees needed to secure the loans. Therefore, using the loans from China to African countries, this study examines the argument the Chinese aid to Africa is determined be same factors that determine Western aid to Africa. Hence the hypothesis that the wealth of a country measured in GDP per capita is associated with Chinese aid to Africa. The level of corruption is associated with Chinese aid to Africa and democracy is associated with Chinese aid to Africa.

Hypothesis

The literature reviewed above suggests four primary hypotheses:

H1: GDP per capita will be negatively correlated with Chinese aid to Africa.

H2 GDP per capita will be negatively correlated with Western Aid to Africa.

H3: Democracy will not be correlated with Chinese aid to Africa.

H4: Democracy will be positively correlated with Western aid to Africa.

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY AND DATA

To assess the determinants of Chinese aid to Africa this study employs time-series regression analysis. This study involves observations from 53 African countries across 13 years, with country year as the unit of analysis. The dependent variable is the loans received from China to execute infrastructure projects in each year between 2006 and 2018. Chinese aid includes all financial aid African countries received from China during the period. The financial aid is measured in US dollars per year and includes any concessional assistance such as non-interest loans and other loans supplied by the Chinese government through its banks at below-market rates. I will be using OLS regression analysis to assess the association between the primary independent variable and other control variables included in this study, as well as demonstrate the extent and importance of an association. Additionally, the OLS regression helps illustrate the level of impact of each variable and test whether the output supports predictions in H1, H2, H3 and H4.

Variables in the Model

Dependent Variable

In this study, Chinese ODA includes all financial aid African countries received from China during the period between 2006 and 2018. The dependent variable is the amount of aid received by each country. To measure the size of aid from China to African countries, the study makes use of data on the financial aid in US dollars and includes any concessional assistance such as non-interest loans and loans supplied by the Chinese government through its banks at below-market rates. Due to the paucity of data, this study relies on The Chinese Loans to Africa (CLA) Database by SAIS-CARI in 2020. "China does not systematically publish project-level data or even aggregated bilateral flow data on its official financing activities abroad" (Dreher et al., 2018, p. 185). The database on Chinese Loans to Africa is created by researchers using publicly available data that they have gathered, cleaned, and analyzed. "Official government documents, contractor websites, fieldwork, interviews, and media sources" are some of the data sources (Boston University Global Development Policy Center, 2022). The database is managed by the Boston University Global Development Policy Center and is the best available source. The projects are often categorized into economic projects, social projects, humanitarian projects, Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects. The "All financial aid projects" comprises the addition of all these other categories and is used to measure Chinese aid.

Primary Independent Variable

The primary independent variable for this study is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita for each country. The (GDP) per capita is measured in dollars. Rather than use GDP, which merely indicates levels of economic activities, GDP per capita provides an aggregate measure of the total output of a country by dividing the gross domestic product (GDP) by the population of the country. Thus, a rise in per capita GDP signals growth in the economy and greater wealth of the citizenry. This measure is best suited for measuring the performance of economies in this study given that population sizes of countries differ and by just using the GDP, a country's economy may seem quite large, whereas in actual terms, dividing the GDP by the population would reveal low productivity. The measure was chosen as a measure to find out whether Chinese aid to Africa is based on the wealth of a country. It is expected that if China is focused on giving aid based on a country's ability to offer any return on investment, then aid would be given to countries that are considered to have higher GDP per capita and considered richer.

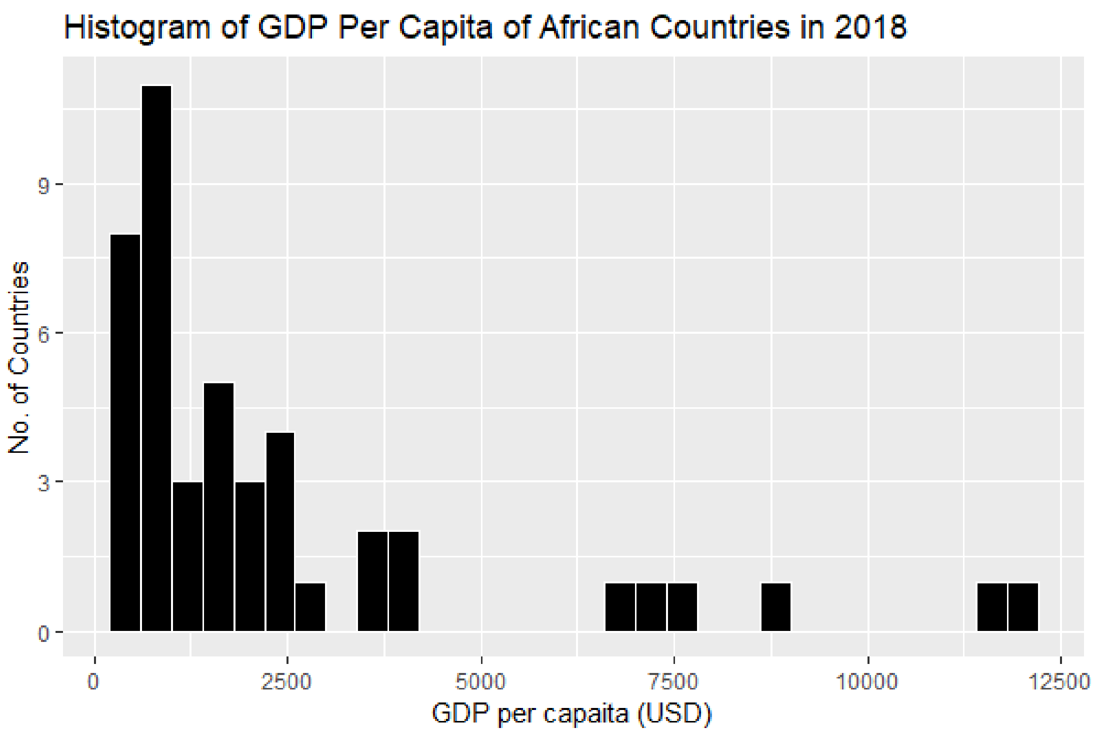

Figure 3: Histogram of GDP per capita 2018
Source: World Bank development indicators. World Bank, 2023

Control Variables

Four control variables will be added to ensure that our results are robust and to avoid omitted variable bias.

First, is a control for democracy using the Polity5 score, which is a revised combined POLITY Score. This is a modified version of the POLITY variable added to facilitate the use of the POLITY regime measure in time-series analyses. It modifies the combined annual POLITY score by applying a simple treatment to convert instances of "standardized authority scores" (i.e.,

-66, -77, and -88) to conventional polity scores (i.e., within the range, -10 to +10) (Marshall & Gurr, 2020). This variable examines whether the regime type has an impact on Chinese development aid and whether it differs significantly depending on whether democratic or authoritarian administrations are supported. If the former is the case, it is expected that less democratic countries would receive more aid from China, while the more democratic a country is, the less aid it receives from China.

Continued aid flow from China without emphasis on democratization as a condition for aid provides an incentive for authoritarianism to thrive. China is regularly accused by critics of supporting dictatorial governments.

Second, is control of other DAC (Development Assistance Committee) commitments. This variable is meant to measure the commitments that a country has with other aid-giving countries from the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). The assumption here is that since aid bureaucrats at the OECD have developed formal criteria for identifying countries in dire need of assistance and can prioritize these countries. They offer a template for categorizing which countries need the most aid in such areas as education, environmental sustainability, child mortality, and alleviating poverty and hunger. We, therefore, assume that China can easily identify countries that need aid by looking for countries that receive aid from the DAC and channel their aid to these countries. It is expected that the more a country is receiving aid from the DAC, the more China should also give aid to such countries because they have been identified as needing aid. But giving aid to other countries that fall short of the criteria set by the DAC and the OECD, would mean that China's definition of aid is not in conformity to global standards and may then be subject to scrutiny. Rather, they undermine the bargaining power of western donors by subtly providing alternatives to aid-receiving nations (Woods, 2008).

Third, the availability of mineral resources such as gold, oil and gas, lithium, titanium, diamond, and copper in commercial quantities in a country is considered. This variable measures the percentage of a country's GDP that are direct proceeds a country receives from the exploitation of natural resource. Given the rising demand for several mineral resources needed in manufacturing, and China's rising profile as an economic power, aid could be used as basis for economic benefits. Sourcing these minerals from low-cost sources in Africa, given that these minerals often command high prices in the international market can be considered a basis for providing aid in exchange for some of these resources. The measure was chosen as a gauge to find out whether Chinese aid to Africa is based on the mineral resources available in a country.

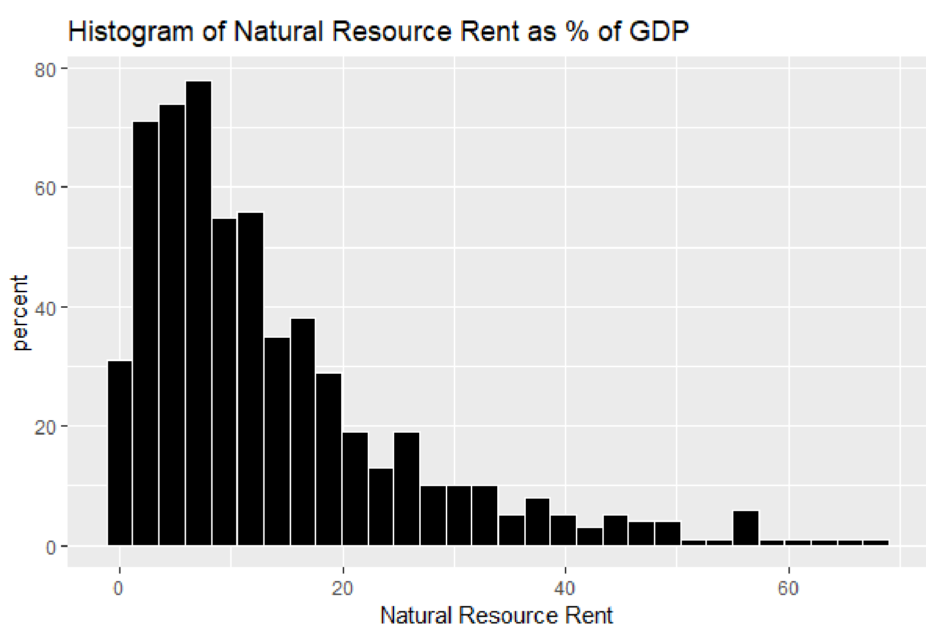

Figure 4**:** Natural Resource Rent Earnings as a percent of GDP in Africa
Source: World bank development indicators (World Bank, 2023).

Four, is a control for the overall size of the economy, which is measured in terms of GDP. The gross domestic product (GDP) consists of the total monetary or market worth of all the finished goods and services produced within a nation's boundaries during a certain period. For this study the GDP calculated yearly in US dollars to provide a thorough assessment of the state of the economy in the countries included in the study.

Lastly, is a control for corruption to see the extent to which China is interested in facilitating aid to countries with weak institutions. Having been accused of fraternizing with corrupt government officials, the variable could test the extent to which China is interested in encouraging corrupt regimes. Due to the dysfunctional public and private institutions in Africa, political leaders have, over time, become stronger than the institutions, "as politicians they do not have the incentive to provide public goods" (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2010). Poorly functioning governments mean that funds meant for infrastructure and human development will not be used effectively. Corruption has been at the heart of development in Africa, acting as a barrier to true and genuine social progress as even the judiciary is often compromised, and bribes act as incentives (Lawal, 2007). The FnWG (Forum for a new World Governance) in 2008 began to measure levels of transparency and accountability in governance and developed the World Governance Index (WGI) of all the countries of the world. The scores range from -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance (Kaufmann et al., 2011). This measure will be used to measure control for corruption in the model. It is expected that the weaker the governance of a country's institution, the more aid it receives from China.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Median	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Range
Natural Resource Rent	13.71906	9.877845	0.001172081	67.88997	67.88879792
Aid from ODAC	585716357	383059995	3910000	10970389990	10966479990
GDP	42391337096.58	12200912828.00	592365688.1	574000000000.00	573407634311.90
Corruption Index	-0.6813053	-0.7092139	-1.848734	1.02253	-0.826204
GDP per capita	2388.587	1114.924	166.2762	19849.72	19683.4438

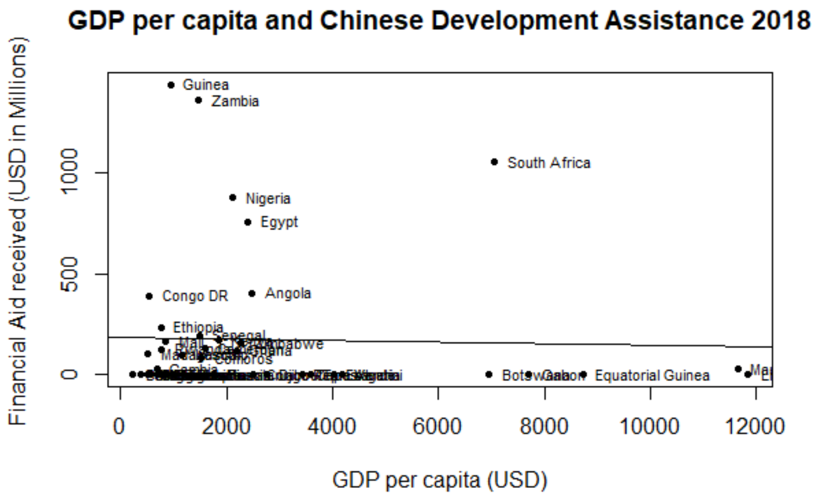

Figure 5: GDP per Capita and Financial Aid 2018
Source: World Bank development indicators. World Bank, 2023

Figure 5 above shows the relationship between Chinese aid to Africa and GDP per capita. The year 2018 shows that some countries with lower GDP per capita received more aid than countries with higher GDP per capita. Guinea, Zambia, Nigeria, and Egypt received the highest amount in aid flows more than 500 million dollars. South Africa appears to be an outlier here, given that its GDP per capital in 2018 was over $6000 compared to the other four countries mentioned above. However, its GDP per capita remains lower than countries like Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, and Mauritius.

Model

First, I use the data for the 53 countries within a 13-year period from 2006 to 2018 to test if there is any relationship between the size of the economic growth of a country measured by GDP per capita, democratic governance and corruption and Chinese ODA to African countries. I include the lagged DV in the time series model to account for the differences in aid over the years given that the aid changes over different year periods.

The estimated regression equation for the model:

$$Y_{ChineseODA} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{GDPperCapita} + \beta_2 X_{Polity} + \beta_3 X_{corruption} + \beta_4 X_{ODAfromODAC} + \beta_5 X_{NRR_p er_G DP} + \ + \beta_6 X_{loggedGDP} + \epsilon$$

There is a total of 3 regression models in the table below, consisting of the main models, time series and clustered standard errors. I used the clustered standard errors to formally account for the possibility that observations within the same cluster may have associated errors. The clustered standard errors show the effect of GDP per capita on China's aid to Africa over a period of 13 years alongside the effects of several control variables, democracy, corruption, natural resources, DAC commitments, and GDP on the dependent variable.

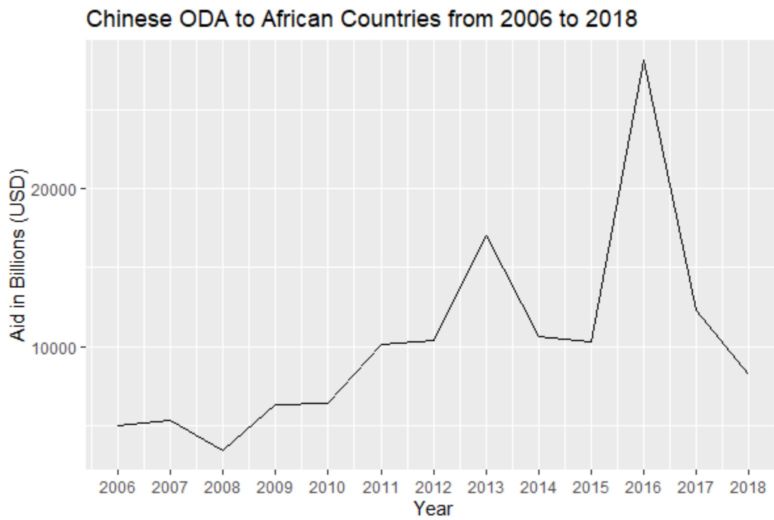

Figure 6: Chinese ODA from 2006-2018
Source; Boston University Global Development Policy Center, 2022

Figure 6 above shows the rise in aid flow from China over the period between 2008 to 2013, after which there appeared to have been a significant decline in 2014 and 2015. Within the period under review in this study, 2016 had the highest flow of aid to Africa, with Angola receiving the highest amount of aid flow in 2016. The line graph attained its highest point in 2016, which could be considered an outlier given the unusual amount of aid flow received by Angola that year. This is evident in the steep decline that follows in the subsequent year. Noting this pattern is important given the impact it may have on the regression model.

In table 2, the OLS regression output indicates that there is a negative relationship between GDP per capita and the volume of Chinese aid to Africa but the relationship is not statistically significant. However, the table also shows a strong statistically significant relationship between GDP and Chinese aid to Africa. The positive relationship here suggests that countries with higher GDP are more likely to receive more aid from China. Model 2 also indicates that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between DAC aid and Chinese aid. This means that African countries that receive aid from other Development

Assistance Committee countries are less likely to receive aid from China. Although democracy index is negatively associated with Chinese aid, the relationship is not statistically significant.

Table 2**:** Determinants of Chinese Aid to Africa from 2006-2018**:**

	Model 1 Base Model	Model 2 Time Series	Model 3 Cl. Errors
Intercept	-1730.04544*	-1639.66652+	-1639.66652**
	(846.63095)	(856.69455)	(627.68342)
GDP per capita	-84.74770	-125.80437	-125.80437
	(74.00514)	(76.62938)	(84.64218)
GDP logged	168.62171***	214.85883***	214.85883*
	(48.80555)	(52.80813)	(86.96405)
Natural Resource Rent	-1.24161	-0.01249	-0.01249
	(3.75604)	(3.84948)	(3.10291)
Democracy Index	-5.73114	-3.45982	-3.45982
	(8.35496)	(8.47557)	(4.46371)
Corruption Index	-124.03623	-93.47105	-93.47105
	(84.69435)	(86.29319)	(74.87225)
logged Aid from ODAC	-76.22260	-120.53694*	-120.53694
	(57.58178)	(60.89550)	(99.04594)
Year Fixed Effects	Y	Y	Y
Num.Obs.	595	581	581
Log.Lik.	-4886.108	-4774.591	-4774.591
RMSE	891.59	896.90	896.90
Std.Errors	Custom	Custom	Custom

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Determinants of DAC Aid Versus Chinese Aid

Using the same independent variables, I compare the ODA flows from China and ODA flows from Development Assistance Committee DAC comprising mainly Western countries. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) serves as a venue for discussion of topics related to aid, development, and the eradication of poverty in developing nations. It is considered as a forum that coordinates the aid flow from the largest donor nations of the world. Table 4 below results show that while GDP per capita is statistically significant in predicting aid from Western sources, it is not statistically significant in predicting Chinese aid to Africa. Countries with lower GDP per capita are likely to receive more aid from Western countries. Chinese aid is not affected by a country's GDP per capita.

When it comes to Western aid, however, democratic governance remains a statistically significant predictor and stands out as highly correlated with Western aid. The results in table 4 show a positive relationship between polity variable which is a measure of democracy in this study and ODA. This suggests that countries that are more democratic are likely to receive more aid from western sources than authoritarian regimes. On the contrary, there is no relationship between democracy and Chinese aid. A position that aligns with researches that suggests that democratic governance does not have a consistent impact on Chinese aid flows (Broich, 2017; Bunte, 2019). Hess and Aidoo (2019), also offer evidence that China is less concern about democracy and therefore offers a counterbalance to western aid that uses democratization as conditionality for aid flow. Population also affects Western aid, the result shows that the higher the population of a country, the more likely the aid it receives from the West. For Chinese aid, population size is not associated with Chinese aid flow to Africa.

Table 3: Determinants of ODAC Aid and Chinese Aid to Africa

	Cl. Errors ODA China	Cl. Errors ODA/DAC
Intercept	-1639.66652+	8.73308***
	(856.69455)	(0.61267)
GDP per capita	-125.80437	-1.00721***
	(76.62938)	(0.03409)
GDP logged	214.85883***	0.73347***
	(52.80813)	(0.02114)
Natural Resource Rent	-0.01249	0.00675
	(3.84948)	(0.00308)
Democracy Index	-3.45982	0.04170***
	(8.47557)	(0.00554)
Corruption Index	-93.47105	0.39031
	(86.29319)	(0.05804)
Aid China		-0.00005**
		(0.00002)
logged Aid from ODAC	-120.53694*	
	(60.89550)	
Year Fixed Effects	Y	Y
Num.Obs.	581	581
Log.Lik.	-4774.591	-543.994
RMSE	896.90	0.62
Std.Errors	Custom	Custom

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4: Robustness Checks- Country fixed effects for Determinants of Chinese Aid to Africa

	Base Model	Time Series
Intercept	-15758.05255*	-10875.75569
	(7155.44570)	(7149.05310)
GDP per capita	-1491.15430**	-1463.87928**
	(540.30002)	(548.24566)
GDP logged	1106.74844*	1063.91858*
	(429.32727)	(436.58867)
Natural Resource Rent	-13.31051*	-12.97473*
	(6.45334)	(6.57423)
Democracy Index	-4.74197	-3.20718
	(19.78018)	(19.90789)
Corruption Index	-27.74561	-10.68059
	(256.22280)	(258.23703)
logged Aid from ODAC	1.20085	-15.47915
	(79.93026)	(81.19439)
Year Fixed Effects	Y	Y
Num.Obs.	595	581
R2	0.308	0.317
R2 Adj.	0.240	0.249
AIC	9709.6	9488.6
BIC	9951.0	9728.6
Log.Lik.	-4799.807	-4689.280
F	4.541	4.622
RMSE	771.21	774.42

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study show evidence that some of the factors that determine Chinese aid and Western aid are common to these groups of donors. Evidence shows that countries with higher GDP are likely to receive aid from China. Findings does not support H1 as there is no significant relationship between GDP per capita and Chinese aid. Interestingly, the study shows that China is less likely to give aid to countries that still receive aid from other sources, mainly ODAC countries. This strategy, as researchers (Dreher et al., 2018; Dreher & Fuchs, 2015; Wenping, 2007) have argued is related to international alignments and geopolitical reasons. Hence development assistance is used as incentive to African countries that vote in favor of China at the UNGA. Parks (2015) notes that the United States also acts the same. If that is the case, then it becomes easier to understand that countries that receive aid are potential political opponents in the international system. As result, China may be wary of giving aid to countries that receive aid from the west as they are likely to show divided loyalty at the UNGA if the need for voting arises.

The findings also indicate that Chinese aid as compared to Western aid is not related to democratic governance. The West on the other hand has continued to use democratization as incentive for ODA. Countries that are considered more democratic tend to receive more ODA from Western donors. Economic aid from Western donors is most times subject to political reform requirements. In addition, these donors also actively support the promotion of democracy by supporting initiatives that bolster civil society and governmental institutions (Dietrich & .

Wright, 2015) From the findings in this study, China neither gives nor withhold ODA on the basis on the type of regime (democratic or authoritarian). This position taken by China could be related to the established Chinese policy of "non-interference" in the domestic affairs of African nations. According to (Aidoo & Hess, 2015, p. 110), China's non-interference policy has been in place for more than 60 years and serves as the foundation of its foreign policy for South-South cooperation, which was developed under the auspices of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

While China may be irrefutably interested in accessing Africa's petroleum, minerals, and other natural resources, there is, however, little evidence that aid is explicitly offered or mainly for that purpose. For the evidence, China's aid does not seem to be particularly "destructive"; the Chinese do not seem to make governance worse, and although it believed that aid comes with "no strings attached," economic engagement usually does come with conditions, some of it even (indirectly) governance related (Brautigam, 2015; Clapham, 2006; Hess & Aidoo, 2010)

Finally, I recommend that future research be focused on sourcing additional reliable data on China’s dealings in Africa, as that has remained a challenge in this area of study due to the opacity of Chinese activities in Africa. Future models could include other control variables such as debt, bilateral trade, peace index, UN votes and other variables that further enhance the model. Data for some countries are not readily available even though there is evidence that these countries also receive aid from China. The non-availability of data for these countries may have also contributed to the output. Inclusion of data for countries such as Algeria, Libya, Malawi, Liberia, Swaziland, The Gambia, and Guinea Bissau would be robust to enable further testing of the hypotheses (H1 and H2).

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APPENDIX:DATA SOURCES

|1. Country | Recipient Countries

|2. Year | Time period in years

|3. ODA loans | All Official financial aid. source of data: China Africa Research Initiative and Boston University Global Development Policy Center. 2021. Chinese Loans to Africa Database, Version 2.0. Retrieved from chinaafricaloandata.bu.edu/.

|4. | GDP per capita (current US$). Source: World Bank Development Indicators https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators

|5. POLITY5 score captures political regime authority spectrum on a 21-point scale ranging from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy). Source: Center for Systemic Peace (CSP)

|6. Control of corruption ranges from -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance (WGI, ipolate) Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports

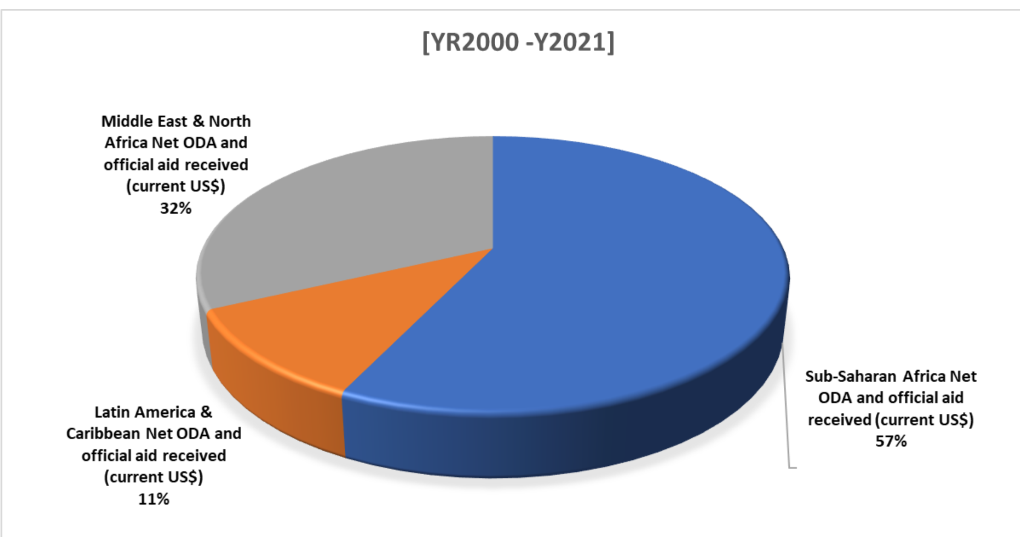
|7. Total Natural Resources Rents (% of GDP). including earnings from mineral resources: Gold, Oil and gas, Titanium, Diamond and copper. Source: World Bank Development Indicators https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators

|8. ODA commitments a country has with other DAC (Development Assistance Committee) countries (in current USD). Source: Source: World Bank Development Indicators https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators

Net Official Aid Received by Developing countries from 2000 to 2021.

Country Name	**Series Name**	**[YR2000 - Y2021]**	**PERCENT**
Sub-Saharan Africa	Net ODA and official aid received (current US$)	62285599987.98	57
Latin America & Caribbean	Net ODA and official aid received (current US$)	11848990024.57	11
Middle East & North Africa	Net ODA and official aid received (current US$)	34886630493.16	32
		109021220505.72	100

Net Official Aid Received by Developing countries from 2000 to 2021.



Source: world bank development indicators. World Bank, 2023