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# The Beijing consensus versus the Washington consensus: The dilemma of Chinese engagement in Africa

Jarso Galchu

Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Bule Hora University, Ethiopia.

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This study discusses the reason behind the Chinese hastened engagement in Africa. The study particularly emphasizes debates surrounding such massive involvements from the African, European and Chinese point of view focusing on the main tenets of Washington and Beijing consensuses. The study shows that Beijing consensus has been perceived cynically by traditional western power contending that Chinese involvement in Africa has been built on china's narrow, and parochial interest of grabbing African's resources on one hand, and reversing of democratization and human rights improvements taking shape on the continent. The pro- Chinese narratives, on the other hand, argue that Chinese involvement in Africa has been built on the continent's historical relations with China when fighting colonial imperialism and apartheid system. In addition, it is their shared experiences of humiliation and subjugation at the hand of western imperialist colonial power that coach China and Africa to free their relationship from western style of involvements in one another's domestic affairs. Africans view Chinese engagement in Africa optimistically as a relief from century-old "civilizing mission" of the former colonial powers. This article argues that besides Chinese soft and non-conditional loans and aids and its commitment to neutrality in its relation to African countries' domestic affairs, the historical legacies of western influence on Africa, their post-colonial military presences on the continent and their cultural imperialism through imposition of western values and norms has been increasing Africa's discontent with the western approach. These phenomena have been contributing enormously to Chinese engagement in Africa.

**Key words:** China, Africa, Washington consensus, Sino-phobia, Beijing consensus.

## INTRODUCTION

In the current global political and economic structure, countries have to inter into either multilateral or bilateral relations to achieve their economic, political, cultural and social development. In these multifaceted relationships,

there are growing international threats and opportunities that dictates countries to come together in the form of trade relations, diplomatic relations or environmental protection, fighting terrorism to prolong their presence in

E-mail: galchinet@gmail.com.

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such uneven international arena. The uneven nature of the current global environment; particularly, its ideological differences require countries and multinational companies to create trade and diplomatic ties either cooperatively or competitively to defend their common interests at regional and international levels.

The political and economic relationship between European and African countries in the 18th, 19th and up to the middle of 20th centuries was crafted mainly through colonial projects that aimed at scrambling African resources (humans and materials) for their growing industrial sectors. Upon independence, the dominant colonial powers retained their traditional economic dominance over African countries mainly through financial establishments in Washington DC.

According to Eneji and Onyinye (2012), the historical relationship between Africa and the west has been based on the imperialists' interest of mercantilism and creation of weak or "rogue governments in Africa in order to gain access to some of the continent's most promising deposits of oil, minerals and markets."

The western involvement in Africa's economic and political issues has strongly linked to their colonial motives mainly the extraction of raw materials to boost their economy at the expense of the colonized African countries. Amorte et al. (2009) also investigated the post-colonial relationship between Nigeria and Britain, and described their economic ties after decolonization as follows:

*"During the colonial era, Britain was Nigeria's leading trading partner. In 1955, 70% of Nigeria's exports were to Britain and 47% of its imports were from there. This went on until the 1970s, with the United States replacing Britain as the chief trading partner of Nigeria- in 1988".*

This indicated that major traditional western powers retained their economic dominance over African countries even after the continent was formally decolonized from the long years of colonization.

Unlike the relationship between African and European which involves colonization, China-Africa relation has been based on their shared historical legacies of struggle against colonialism, colonial exploitation and "struggle for national liberation" (Uchehara, 2009).

These historical ties of "anti- imperialistic and anti-colonial struggle" by the peoples of Africa and Asia bring them together to create deep economic and political linkages (ibid). Since "independence", Africans view the European involvement in Africa with great scrutiny and suspicions, whereas they consider Sino-African relations positively as emancipation from the western legacies of colonial exploitation, racism and racial discriminations. This study discusses dilemmas faced by Africans over the choices of the Beijing and the Washington Consensuses.

The study addresses underlying policy principles and beliefs designed by Beijing and Washington to define their

engagements in Africa. In doing so, unpacking the main tenet of the Washington and Beijing Consensus is very important to outline their underlying differences in their approaches towards African countries.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study entirely depends on secondary sources such as academic articles; published policy documents on Sino-African relation and literatures regarding western conceptualization of Chinese involvement in Africa are among the documents utilized by the author. It is qualitative review of most recent documents related to the topic under investigations. In the next section of the study, Washington Consensus with particular emphasizes on its mission to Africa is discussed. The Washington consensus is discussed first because it was the use, and the debates on the Washington consensus that led to the coining of the Beijing consensus.

### The Washington consensus

It was the end of the World War II that brought three International Financial Institutions called the Bretton Wood Institutions (IMF, World Bank and WTO (previously GATT) to the international political environments. These institutions were established by America, and its allies to steer global economic and political phenomena in their own favour under the auspices of the American leadership (Eichengreen, 2000). The prominent scholar of International Political Economy, Robert Gilpin described the Post War global politics and economic condition in his book: *Global Political Economy, Understanding the International Economic Order* as follows:

*"In creating the post-World War II regimes, the most important task for American leadership was to promote international cooperation. The United States undertook the leadership role, and other economic powers (Canada, Japan, and Western Europe) cooperated for economic, political, and ideological reasons. These allies believed that a liberal world economy would meet their economic interests and solidify their alliance against the Soviet threat. In addition, cooperation was greatly facilitated by the fact that these nations shared an ideological commitment to a liberal international economy based on free trade and open markets. All three factors—leadership, cooperation, and ideological consensus—were important to creation of the post-World War II liberal international economy" (Gilpin and Jean, 2001).*

It was this dream of curving international cooperation that centred upon the ideology of liberal world economy as well as solidification of alliances against the Soviet threat that finally resulted in the establishment of the Bretton Woods Institutions. These institutions have been at forefront in term of mushrooming policies and policies success preconditions for their allies in Africa and Latin American countries particularly in the Cold War era.

However, over the years, the dismal performance of developing countries under the guidance of the Bretton Woods Institutions led many Latin American and African countries to question the effectiveness of the ideologies and principles prescribed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (Sanusi, 2012). It was this criticism against the Bretton Woods Institutions that finally brought the concept of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that further aimed at tutoring African and Latin American countries to further realign their monetary and fiscal policies towards the prescription of the Bretton Woods Institutions (Sanusi, 2012). According to the policies of SAPs, to apply for loan and aid, developing country should “undergo stringent economic and structural reforms” (Gilpin and Jean, 2001). The reforms were outlined based on the liberal economic ideology of America and its European allies which has been inherently linked to historical supremacy of their system.

It was these series of restructuring of the economy of developing countries by Bretton Woods Institutions that led John Williamson to coin the term “the Washington Consensus” in his list of principal macroeconomic reforms of 1989 (Williamson, 1993). The core principles of the Washington Consensus as indicated by John Williamson are the following:

Fiscal discipline (Governments should aim to restrict budget deficits to a level that can be financed in a non-inflationary manner); a redirection of public expenditure priorities toward fields offering both high economic returns and the potential to improve income distribution, such as primary health care, primary education, and infrastructures; Tax reform (Governments should aim to raise revenue by a broad tax base combined with moderate marginal tax rates); Interest rate liberalization (Governments should aim for domestic financial liberalization); A competitive exchange rate (The exchange rate should be unified and set at a level that is competitive.); Trade liberalization, Liberalization of FDI inflows; Privatization, Deregulation (in the sense of abolishing barriers to entry and exit) Secure property rights; Inward foreign direct investment should be allowed without restriction; State enterprises should be privatized; Entry and exit to industries should be de-regulated; secure property rights (property right should be extended to the informal sector) (Williamson, 1999).

Williamson (1999) reforms were derived from the liberal economic ideology of the western countries to facilitate their economic, political, social, military and cultural influences on the developing countries through perpetuation of developing countries’ economic dependencies on western economy. When reflecting on these phenomena, Ismi (2004) indicated as follows:

*Under SAPs, Africa’s external debt has increased by more than 500% since 1980 to \$333 billion today. SAPs have*

*transferred \$229 billion in debt payments from Sub-Saharan Africa to the West since 1980. This is four times the region’s 1980 debt. In the past decade alone, African countries have paid their debt three times over yet they are three times as indebted as ten years ago. Of Sub-Saharan Africa’s 44 countries, 33 are designated heavily indebted poor countries by the World Bank. Africa, the world’s poorest region, pays the richest countries \$15 billion every year in debt servicing. This is more than the continent gets in aid, new loans or investment. (Ismi, 2004).*

Emphasizing its deadly consequences on the African economy, Kolodko (1998) also described the Washington Consensus as follows:

*“The Washington consensus had the following message: ‘Liberalize as much as you can, privatize as fast as you can, and be tough in monetary and fiscal matters’” (Gregorz Kolodko, in *Transition*, 1998).*

Many scholars and policy makers have considered Washington consensus as western imposed ideology, values and norms on the poor countries; the case which Williamson himself appreciated as it stimulates further policy debates among the major international players (Kennedy, 2010). One of these scholars is former chief of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz who described this situation very clearly as quoted below:

*Whatever, its original content and intent, the term “Washington Consensus”, in the minds of most people around the world, has come to refer to development strategies focusing around privatization, liberalization, and macro-stability (meaning mostly price stability); a set of policies predicated upon a strong faith – stronger than warranted --in unfettered markets and aimed at reducing, or even minimizing, the role of government (Stiglitz, 2004).*

Africans have viewed and continuing to view these lists reforms as the tools used by the former colonial powers to limit sovereign independence of African states. According to Stiglitz (2004), “the Washington consensus” failed to recognize the nature of the developing countries, and the place of technologies in the changing of the market. He argued that the market alone could not steer the economy towards the right direction as proposed by the Washington consensus rather he argues that there has to be a space for government intervention to effect changes for better as recognized by successful East Asian countries, but “Washington consensus did not” (Stiglitz, 2004).

In addition, the concepts of externalities that include environmental pollutions, and issues of public goods are not clearly mentioned in the Washington consensuses (Stiglitz, 2004), which make the idea very narrow and less holistic to be called the consensus.

To be called a consensus, there has to be equal voices in deciding and constructing a given idea, policy and procedure among all the stakeholders. The Washington consensus is not a consensus like this, or to put appropriately, there is no universal consensus at all in “the Washington consensus”. It was coined as “the consensus” simply because it was derived from the western values and norms they wanted to transfer to Africa as part of their historical ties to the continent (Robel, 2010). This perceived supremacy of the western values was inherent to colonialism. It can be argued that, the idea of the supremacy of the system represents the continuation of colonial form of interaction between Africa and the western world.

The Washington Consensus's advice for Africa country is one that says; “western model is perfect model for all, and should be replicated as prescribed by the owner of the system”. However, within this prescriptions, African countries found that the system allows not only the involvement of western government into their internal affairs but also create huge opportunities for their multinational companies to gain access to African markets and resources at the expense of Africa's domestic industrial firm (Ismi, 2004). By forcing governments to liberalize economies for foreign companies and thereby driving large number of African domestic firms from market, Washington consensus has fueled social unrest, disharmonies and inequalities and encouraged regime change in some African countries, for instance, in the case of Benin, Kenya, Ghana...etc (Mahuku and Mbanje, 2013).

The cumulative effect of all these chaos further deteriorated the country's international prestige as the government try to silence opposition parties by using excessive forces. It was this unequal and superior-subordinate nature of the western approaches that finally forced many African policy makers to push to the edge the policies of international monetary fund (IMF) and World Bank for a more formal and welcoming Chinese rhetoric policies of equal partnership and cooperation for mutual gain. As part of its commitment to equal partnership and sovereign equality, China has no functioning military bases in the continent (ibid).

China-Africa relations has been based on mutual dialogue and cooperation, respecting each other's culture, provisions of loan and aid with no political conditionality attached, and defending each other's interest at regional and international levels.

In conclusion, western involvement in Africa through the Washington consensus has mirrored the colonial “mission of civilizing” the continent. The western interest in Africa has always been creating a “rouge state” that would remain totally dependent on the western countries' economic and military power to easily spread their values to the developing countries. There have been no features in the Washington consensus that indicates any commitments between developing and developed

countries to design genuine policy of equal partnership and cooperation and respecting sovereign equality of the state. The principles listed in Washington consensus emulate colonial motive that breed dependency of the developing countries on the policies of the western world. These modes of relationship have been proven more disgusting to Africa countries to approve enthusiastically because of its resemblances with colonial ambitions of superior-subordinate relationship.

### The Beijing consensus

The concept of Beijing consensus was developed to characterize the Chinese development model. Many scholars argue that unlike Washington consensus that is supported by lists of policies to be adopted by countries seeking loan, and aid from Bretton Woods Institutions, Beijing consensus has been devoid of any unilaterally formulated policy reforms to be adhered by the states.

In addition, unlike the Washington consensus, Beijing consensus does not claim existences of any values and principles that it promotes as a universal value. “Instead, China stays committed to a multi-polarity of ideas, in which different models can exist peacefully next to each other. The most obvious effect of recognizing this is its denying universality of one's own approaches especially in its relations with developing countries” (Robel, 2010). China stresses that each country has to find its own methods, policies and institutions that fit its local requirements instead of copying what has been apparently successful in another place.

Joshua Cooper Ramo coined the term “Beijing consensus” in 2004 when he wrote a book entitled “*The Beijing Consensus*” in which he outlined an “ambitious objective to debunk the famous doctrine of the “Washington Consensus” (Huang, 2011).

Ramo presented in his book alternatives to the economic goals of the “Washington Consensus” that built on post-World War II American economic policy of private property rights, economic opening, financial reforms, macroeconomic stability, and political liberalization to promote economic growth both at home and abroad (ibid). America pursued these economic doctrines throughout the cold war with much confusion due to global oil crisis and developing countries debt crisis respectively.

The end of the cold war brought much confusion to the western involvements into Africa. Unlike the cold war era that attracted the western countries to Africa particularly to contain the communist expansion throughout the continent, “the end of the Cold War marked at least temporary end of western strategic interests on the continent” (Tull, 2008). Since the end of cold war, Europeans failed to put sustainable and new relations with sound ideological backing with Africa and instead left primary responsibility to the Bretton Woods institutions to deal with African through policies of Structural Adjustment

Programs (SAP) that by and large have had disastrous consequences for much of the continent (ibid).

Unlike the percept of the Washington Consensus which dictates African countries to restrict their macro-economy policy, reduction of public spending and commitment to transparency and accountability and holding of democratic and competitive election, the Beijing Consensus is predicated on non-interference in domestic affairs and the promotion of sovereign integrity (Shelton, 2012). One of the democratically elected presidents of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade (Financial Times, January 24, 2008, quoted in Condon, 2012:13) reiterated the need to align African government along the Asian line when he stated as follows:

*“...the Chinese model for stimulating rapid economic development has much to teach Africa. With direct aid, credit lines and reasonable contracts, China has helped African nations build infrastructure projects in record time—bridges, roads, schools, hospitals, dams, legislative buildings, stadiums and airports. In many African nations, including Senegal, improvements in infrastructure have played important roles in stimulating economic growth. . . . It is a telling sign of the post-colonial mindset that some donor organizations in the west dismiss the trade agreements between Chinese banks and African states that produce these vital improvements—as though Africa was naïve enough to just offload its precious natural resources at bargain prices to obtain a commitment for another stadium or state house. . . . I have found that a contract that would take five years to discuss, negotiate and sign with the World Bank, takes three months when we have dealt with Chinese authorities. I am a firm believer in good governance and the rule of law. But when bureaucracy and senseless red tape impede our ability to act—and when poverty persists while international functionaries drag their feet—African leaders have an obligation to opt for swifter solutions.”*

Therefore, the traditional partners characterized by “the Washington Consensus and its “civilizing mission” to Africa turned to be unacceptable for many Africans as the only option. It was this conviction of conditionality of aid, long term negotiation to secure loan, and bureaucratic nature of the Washington Consensus that dictates many African governments to legitimize their shift from their traditional partners to China. Almost all African countries are turning increasingly to China as an alternative source for infrastructural loans badly needed to improve the life of Africans.

To recognize the shift of many African countries from traditional partners to China, it is better to look at the volume of trade between Africa and China over the last few decades. The trade between China and Africa increased by 700 percent during the 1990s and surged from US\$3 billion in 1995 to US\$32 billion in 2005 and about US\$55 billion in 2007 heralding the flourishing of

huge trade relations among Africa countries and the China (Roy, 2014). In 2009, China became Africa's No. 1 trade partner. In the following two years, the scale of China-Africa trade expanded rapidly.

In 2012, the total volume of China-Africa trade reached US\$198.49 billion, a year-on-year growth of 19.3%. Total China-Africa trade volume, China's export volume to Africa and China's import volume from Africa all reached new highs (China African Policy white paper, 2013:3). For example, there are about eleven investment agreements between China and Africa's most populous country, Nigeria from 2001 to 2010. In 2002, there were about four major investment agreements between China and Nigeria as indicated Table 1.

As indicated earlier, there has been impressive economic cooperation between China and Africa since 1990s, showing unprecedented level of economic cooperation between countries in the recent history of our world. For examples, within ten years (2000 to 2012), Sino- African trade has passed from USD 10 billion to USD 200 billion (Manrique, 2015). According to The Forum on China-African Cooperation (FOCAC) Action Plan (2016 to 2018), China will increase its stock of direct investment in Africa from USD 34.4 billion in 2014 to USD 100 billion in 2020 ( FOCAC, Johannesburg Action Plan 2016 to 2018).

FOCAC provide smooth and continuous interaction between African countries and China by providing high-level diplomatic forum on which Africa and China deliberate over their strategic cooperation on different economic sector. Unlike “the Washington Consensus” which based on the policy of Bretton Woods institutions, FOCAC provide opportunities for deliberations for mutual agreements and cooperation between African and Chinese governments.

According to Chinese MOFA (2006), the general principles and objectives that guide Chinese foreign policy towards Africa are; sincerity, friendship and equality (the political aspect); mutual benefit, reciprocity and common prosperity (the economic aspect); mutual support and close coordination (the international aspect); and learning from each other and seeking common development (the social and cultural aspect). These are how Chinese views and wishes to conduct its relationship with Africa. These principles run contrary to the Washington Consensus's principles of tutoring African governments to channel their economic, social, cultural and political policies towards the western orthodox principles without considering the unique situation of the socio-political conditions in Africa.

In creating economic, political and cultural ties with Africa, China follows its historic principles of friendship and collaboration of fighting colonialism, mutual benefit and reciprocity when creating trade relations with one another, learning from each other through social and cultural exchanges. China follows policy of “attaching no political strings”, bilateral respect of sovereignty and national integrity and non- intervention to domestic affairs and

**Table 1.** four major investment agreements between China and Nigeria.

S/N	Types of agreement	Year
1	Agreement on trade, investment promotion and protection	2001
2	Agreement for the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to tax and income	2002
3	Agreement on consular affairs	2002
4	Agreement on cooperation on strengthening management of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and diversion of precursor chemical	2002
5	Agreement on tourist cooperation	2002
6	Strategic partnership agreement	2005
7	A memorandum of understanding on investment cooperation between the federal ministry of commerce of Nigeria and ministry of commerce of India	2006
8	Economic cooperation agreement between Nigeria and Xinguang international group of China	2006
9	Agreement against fake products exported to Nigeria from China	2009
10	Memorandum of understanding on promotion bicameral economic co operation and partnership between Ogun State of Nigeria and Zhejiang Province of China	2009
11	Memorandum of understanding on peace co-operation 2010	2010

Sources: Egbula (2011) West African challenges No. 05.

equal treatment of one another and protection of shared interest at regional and global levels (Aydin and Tekin, 2015).

China has been providing assistances free of conditionality, grants loan at a very low rate payable after a long period of time, offered training for professionals and technical personnel. The west's employment of conditionality of aid and recent humiliation of China at the hand of former colonial power of unequal treaties foisted on China and recently by USA, which was characterised by conditionalties and gesture to interfere into internal political situation of China, shaped the Sino-African relations free of such features (Alden, 2008 cited in Schiere, et. al. 2011).

### **China-Africa Deepening Cooperation in the Eyes of the Sino-Phobic Narrations**

America and its western allies have already developed Sino-phobia. According to their Sino phobic narratives, "China is new colonial power, spoiler of peace of oil rich countries such as Sudan and supporter of despotic government" such as Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe which are known by their poor human rights records. Moreover, "China is resource and energy hungry giant, an exploiter of corrupt and incompetent governments, a trade opportunist and massive polluters of the African environment" (Mehari, 2013).

While China argues Sino-African relations as based on the principles of fraternity and goodwill for mutual gain and development, traditional western powers present Chinese engagements in Africa as derived from Chinese narrow economic and political interest of extracting African resources, promoting corruption and authoritarian regime,

damage anti-poverty efforts and reckless to environmental issues (Aydin and Tekin, 2015).

The study conducted by Shelton and Kabemba (2012) provided very inclusive and holistic western critics regarding ever growing and deepening Sino- African cooperation as follows:

*"Western critics contend that China's African agenda is driven by China's narrow self-interests, and thus often undermines efforts to promote regional peace and democratization. China's urgent drive to access the continent's strategic resources may not favour local development, while the European Union (EU)-United States (US) vision of an Africa governed by western-style democracies, the rule of law and free markets is being challenged by Beijing's offer of non-interference and infrastructure in return for resources"*(Shelton and Kabemba, 2012).

As indicated here, western countries feared that aid and loans given for African countries without any precondition would impede development of democracy, free trade and human rights in the continent. China's firm commitments in providing free or soft loan and huge investment opportunities under the pretext of non-interference in domestic issues of African country has been viewed as a pragmatic policy option dominated by hustle economic ambitions at best and insurrection of war and support of authoritarian government at worst. Today, Sino-African relations have been seen as a threat in the western countries because Africans are deciding on their fate of developing their institutions and expending their aid and loan without rigorous directions from the external forces. China is reversing historical "civilizing mission" of the western world in Africa which is a threat to centuries of the

western world.

The Pro-China narrative depicts China as “a savior and genuine partner of Africa”. This camp further argues that, “China is a partner without a history of colonial aspirations and, in fact, shares with many developing countries a similar historical background”. It also is a partner that provides much-needed funding with no conditional strings attached and that appears to understand Africa’s priorities. Furthermore, it has a reputation among African countries for respecting other cultures and states (Mehari, 2013). Many Africans have considered and continued to consider the shift from traditional partners to China as a relief from century old agonizing colonial history of slavery and exploitation. Africans consider their new ties with China as emanated from continual historical assistance given to African in the fight against colonialism, apartheid system and underdevelopments in Africa.

Recent data on Sino- African relationship indicated that Sino-African cooperation has entered a new chapter. The 2016 FOCAC held in South Africa indicated increasingly deepening cooperation between China and Africa in all endeavours including security issues. FOCAC was launched in 2000 in Beijing as a tri-annual collective dialogue platform for cooperation between Africa and China. The second Africa-China Cooperation Forum Summit, which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa on the fourth and fifth of December 2015, under the theme “*China-Africa Progressing Together: Win-Win Cooperation for Common Development*”, endorsed the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Action (African Union Directorate of information and communication press release, No.268/2016).

During the meeting, unprecedented economic, political, social and cultural cooperation was promised between African countries and China. During the closing ceremony, Chinese prime minister commented, “the meeting was perfect and extraordinary” (Xuejun, 2016). The final outcome of the summit was the adoption of multiple agreement among which five major pillar for china Africa cooperation are extraordinary. These include “*equality and mutual trust in politics, win-win cooperation in the economy, mutually enriching cultural exchanges, mutual assistance in security and solidarity, and coordination in international affairs*” (ibid).

Specifically, in the areas of development cooperation, the Johannesburg Action plan states that China’s assistance will be primarily used in the areas of human resources development, infrastructure, medical care and health, agriculture, food security, climate change response, desertification prevention and control, and wildlife and environmental protection, and for humanitarian purposes, with the aim to help African countries alleviate poverty, improve people's livelihoods and build up capacity for independent African development (FOCA, Johannesburg Action Plan, 2016-2018: 20-24).

On the Johannesburg Summit, China promised to offer

20,000 degree education opportunities in China and 30,000 government scholarship for African countries, welcome more African youths to study in China, innovate and expand more ways to training and train more African professionals on economic development and technical managements (ibid). With regard to cultural cooperation, both side pleaded to respect the unique culture of one another and uphold dialogue between Chinese and African culture to contribute to the development and prosperity of the world culture (FOCA, Johannesburg Action Plan, 2016-2018, p. 29).

With regard to security cooperation, China promised to provide African Union with US\$ 60 of free military assistance over the next three years, support the operationalization of African Peace and Security Architecture, including the operationalization of the African Capacity for the Immediate Response to Crisis and the African Standby force. Furthermore, the two sides agreed to undertake mutual visits by defence and military personnel for information and intelligence exchange between themselves (FOCA, Johannesburg Action Plan, 2016-2018, p. 34-35).

Regardless of these massive and deep involvements of China into Africa, many Africans indicated that Chinese involvement in Africa has not been free from harm. According to Fantu and Obi (2011), the main criticism targeted at China in its relations with African has been their blindness towards the human rights and democracy in the continent. Chinese friendship with many African leaders known by abusing their citizens’ human and democratic rights has been the growing concern not only for the western countries but also for some Africans.

Similarly, Chinese cheap industrial products are flooding the African markets. “The displacement of local manufacturing firms by Chinese cheap products has aroused growing anti-Chinese sentiment and popular antipathy across the continent” (Fantu and Obi 2011).

Another widely recognized critic of Africa’s trade structure with China indicated that Sino-Africa merchandise trade mirrors Africa’s total trade with the rest of the world. Natural resources underpin the continent’s exports to China. In 2012, 93.5% of China’s imports from Africa consisted of primary commodities, such as oil and minerals, precious stones and non-monetary gold. This represents an increase of more than 7% points from 2002, when primary commodities constituted 86% of imports. When evaluating Africa’s export profile in relation to, for example, the United States (US), a similar trend emerges. In 2012, 87.5% of US imports from Africa were primary commodities, down from a high of 92.8% in 2007 (Edinger and Sandrey, 2013).

## Conclusion

The nature of state interaction has been continually changing. The rapid rise of China as a global power has

changed the traditional notion of western hegemony. Investment and trade relations between China and Africa has increased very rapidly reaching multi-billion dollars reflecting a significant shift of African's trade and investment relations from their traditional western partners to China under the umbrella of South-South cooperation.

There have been contradictory narratives over this paradigm shift. This contradiction presents dilemma to identify the best partners for African peoples. These contradictions have been based on the ideological differences followed by China and Africa's traditional partners. Pro-western narratives in these contradictory debates argue that Sino-African relations has been built on shaky ground and disastrous for Africa's long term dream of achieving viable democracy and liberal economy for sustainable and inclusive socio-political developments.

The West mainly believed that China economic relation with Africa have been motivated by China's narrow economic interest of robbing raw materials from feeble and fragile African states by confusing them with provision of huge concessional loan, no conditionality stringed aid and investment opportunities. For pro-westerners, China's policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of African state represented the repudiation of African peoples' urgent need for good governance, respect to human rights, democratization and free market economy. Dominant country like USA consider Chinese mode of involvement in Africa as new threat to western interests of transferring western values and norms to African countries.

The opposite narrative articulates that African people welcome the Chinese engagement in Africa more than they discourage western involvement in the continent. For many Africans, western approaches have been built on the century old concept of the supremacy of the system and unilaterally decided principles that many Africans fail to accept, as it does not include their voices. These street-jacket-advice has been denounced by many African countries believing that these advices further puts Africa into deep downturn and increases African dependency on the western governments and their multinational companies by allowing them free and unrestricted access to African resources.

The wound of colonialism which is still fresh in the mind of many Africa peoples has also a legitimizing effects on the engagement of China into Africa convincingly in light of the pervious humiliation of African peoples under the colonial power. China is free from such kind of historical and psychological ties with Africa that one looks in to remember how much worst it was, instead, China was partner to Africa in the fight against colonialism and apartheid making China the best friend of Africa.

Many Africans have condemned the western interest of transferring western values and norms through their military and economic intervention into domestic politics of Africa in many ways. Firstly, it has been indicated in this study that the relation between Africa and its traditional

partners has been based on the superior-subordinate relations and thus has echoed colonialism. Secondly, Africans have understood that reliance on the policies of the western backed institutions (Bretton woods Institutions) will continue to perpetuate their dependency on the western world that has been a failure story for many African and Latin American countries in 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. These historical failures of western institutions and the convictions that these institutions would increase Africa's dependency on western world, make Africans to distance themselves from prescription of the western government. Thirdly, the western military presence in the continent and their growing influences on the domestic affairs of African countries has a negative effect in their relationship to Africa. Post-colonial African state has witnessed western interventions through arrangement of fake election by the name of democracy, conditionality of aid and loan, pressurizing governments to open politics and economy, excluding government that stand against their interests from public international forum and changing regime through false elections are the sign of western interventionist approach which mirrored also colonialism.

In addition, their relentless supports to the government that up hold their stand at regional and international level as reflect in the west African state has a harmful effects on the western country's images in the eyes of many Africans. The existence of former colonial power military base in Africa and their continued influence on domestic affairs of many African countries indicate that the purpose of the Organization of African Unity to fight western colonial domination and apartheid system in Africa has yet to be completed. Western government should make themselves free from all these historical and current influences and domination on Africa to create sustained and smooth cooperation with African countries.

China's close relationship with Africa has also been emanating from several factors that run contrary to the western "civilizing mission". Firstly, unlike the former colonizers, China has no history of colonizing any nations and it has not been accused of it. Instead, China has been known by supporting colonized countries in their war against imperialism and colonialism. China has been advancing the core mission of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to decolonize the continent. China has been a partner to Africa not only in time of peace but also on the struggle against colonialism and imperialism that made the continent one of the least developed continent today. China wrote off severe debts of 33 African countries which have close relations with the Chinese government (Aydin and Tekin, 2015).

Secondly, China-African trade relations have been based on the principles identified and discussed by both parties. China-African trade and investment relation is based on their mutual discussion, consensus, and deliberation through The Forum on China and Africa. China has been cautious of top-down involvements into

African sovereignty like Africa's traditional partners. Fourthly, Sino-Africa relations are based on principles of sovereign equality, neutrality in the domestic affairs of another state. Its does not condition its aid and loan intended for another country. Fifthly, as part of its commitment to remain free from any kind of intervention into sovereign independency of African countries, China has no any functioning military bases on the continent to promote its values and norms. With this policy, China is and will continue to challenge the western influences over Africa. China will continue to be the most important players that will shape the continent's future development.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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