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PUBLIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE OF CHINA TO OIL AND MINING COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL AFRICA: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of China's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In this perspective, the article highlights the criticisms of Chinese ODA and the different approaches to it. It is clear from this article that the Central African countries would make the most of Chinese aid by improving their value chain and adopting reforms of their public policies. However, the article concludes that China's official development assistance to Central African countries could be part of a genuine win-win partnership if these countries adopted the model of Chinese development, oriented towards a rise of the sectors.

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INTRODUCTION

Economic and social development remains the major concern of the developing countries, including those in the Central Africa. For these countries to improve their welfare multiple purpose efforts have been made internally and externally over the years. The efforts consist on adding many countries to development programs backed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. But these programs have not produced the desired effects neither in African countries nor in Central Africa in particular. On the other hand, some developing countries (China, India and Brazil, for example) have managed to reduce their development gap with the industrialized countries by adopting the endogenous development models operating in parallel with the ultra-liberal model of development embodied by the famous "Washington Consensus". China, for example, has become the engine of the global growth. To meet the fast growing needs of its industry, China relies on the import of raw materials as well as the size of the market demand. Therefore, since the 1990s, China's ODA has been placed in a more flexible strategic perspective, combining the program with the need to meet the spectacular needs of its industry. It has succeeded in diversifying its sources of supply of raw materials and has to create external opportunities for its industry and technology (DZAKA, 2008).

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According to YANITCH (2007, this new mode of transfer of decentralized development management brought by China is accompanied by a new form of official development aid to developing countries. This mode of management transfer is characterized, as shown by DZAKA (2008), by a technical assistance focused on training, the allocation of grants, interest-free loans, preferential loans with interest-rate subsidies and opportunities, debt relief. In this perspective, the oil and mining countries of Central Africa are real recipients of this type of privileged partnership with China. A reality that should, on the contrary, encourage western countries to reconsider their approach to the issue by taking into account the new political, economic and diplomatic world, as well as the interest that China arouses on the African continent. Official development assistance (ODA) comprises, as defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, grants and preferential loans from the budget of donor countries. Thus, this committee defines ODA as: "all the flows of resources that are provided to developing countries or multilateral institutions to be then channelled to developing countries and that meet the following criteria:

- from public bodies, including States and local authorities, or from bodies acting on behalf of these bodies, bearing in mind that each transaction must also have the essential aim of promoting economic development and the improvement of living conditions of developing countries;

- be accompanied by favorable conditions;
- have a grant element (grant element) of at least 25% (based on a discount rate of 10%)".

The amount of ODA also includes technical assistance. On the strictly financial side, aid is characterized by its liberal conditions. It is made up, for the most part, of donations and, for the remainder, loans with symbolic rates that can cover several decades and come with a significant grace period. Most of the aid is financed by the national budgets of developed countries. The purpose of this article is to analyze the positive and negative aspects of China's official development assistance to the oil and mining countries of Central Africa. It is also concerns with determining the economic policy measures likely to improve the efficiency of the Chinese development aid of these countries.

To achieve this goal, the problematic of this article can be summarized in two questions:

- To what extent does China's ODA promote the development of the oil and mining countries within Central Africa?
- What are the possible measures which may positively influence the contribution of Chinese aid to the development of the oil and mining countries of Central Africa?

To answer these questions, two hypotheses are considered:

- Chinese ODA favors the development of the oil and mining countries of Central Africa insofar as it is oriented essentially towards the creation of basic infrastructures;
- to improve the efficiency of Chinese development assistance to oil and mining countries in Central Africa, special emphasis should be placed on transparency measures and impact assessment.

The approach adopted in this article consists of an analysis of the contours of China's official development assistance to identify its strengths and weaknesses in the countries of Central Africa. This analysis, which refers to the existing literature on the subject, leads to a proposal for economic policy measures that can boost the development of Central African countries. This article is structured in three sections. The first section reviews the existing literature on Chinese ODA in Africa. The second section analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese ODA to Central African countries. The third is devoted to economic policy measures that can positively impact the impact of Chinese ODA on Central African countries.

Review of the Literature

In the economic literature, many authors have been interested in Chinese ODA to African countries, some to criticize it bitterly, and others to support it. In this perspective, JACOBY (2007) explains that although she herself a developing country, China is rapidly taking a key role in the development of sub-Saharan Africa. Its strong growth and the need for oil and other commodities that it brings have boosted trade with Africa, especially as more aid promised by western countries at the 2005 Gleneagles Economic Summit is slow in coming. China reassures and promises to increase its aid, which is a remarkable goal for a country that is still one of the top ten recipients of official development assistance. The inclination of China to gradually impose itself as a new donor raises controversy. On the one hand, those who find a chance for poor countries to improve the living conditions of their populations and accelerate their development process and, on the other hand, those who see it as a competition against the countries industrialized countries and criticize the ways of managing aid and respecting international legal frameworks governing international financing issues.

The case for Chinese ODA

JACQUET (2007) argues that the emergence of China is for developing countries both an extraordinary opportunity and a source of multiple challenges. The openness and dynamism of its domestic market benefit the recipient countries, and the induced recovery in commodity prices is contributing to economic acceleration by being a source of financing for several countries at the same time. But the author is worried about the risks of confining the specializations of poor countries on raw materials. DZAKA-KIKOUTA (2008a), believes that, in addition to recent controversies over China's ODA practices and traditional DAC donor countries, aid from emerging countries, specifically China is showing more flexibility. It combines pragmatism and response to the needs of its specular economic growth. The most important is that it is implemented through a "win-win" partnership defined at the first China / Africa Summit held in Beijing in 2006. A meaning that KHALIL FALL (2006) supports by noting that the diversification of the African economy requires an investment of Chinese companies in the new local tracks and presents at the same time an excellent opportunity for the Chinese producers to widen the overseas market in order to alleviate the pressure of the domestic competition. Within this same trend, some political and scientific writers justify and place this Chinese-African perspective in favor of their criticism of neo-colonial financing methods. For KONARE A.O. (2006), outgoing President of the African Union Commission, these would be all occasions of building relationships and going beyond the colonial logic of seeing in Africa only 'a market. Antoine GLASER (2006) adds that, moreover, unlike the old colonial powers like France who remained in the "beaten tracks", the Asian giant is present everywhere. Mr GLASER (2006) expands this thinking before this strategy, which applies across the continent and in all sectors, is completely at odds with the Western consensus, particularly on the attitude to be taken towards of Africa.

Criticism of the new Chinese ODA: With regard to the new Chinese ODA, critics are coming from everywhere. They are political, social as well as economic. Their analysis does not allow them to be separated from each other. COUSSY (2007) first notes that it often has negative effects and these effects constantly lead to redefinitions and new legitimizations of aid. In addition, he notes on the diversification of donors (public, private, NGO) the willingness of emerging countries to change the rules of the game, both as recipients and donors of aid. YANITCH and CHAUVET (2007) raise ethical questions in this form of partnership. As much as they argue that the emergence of China as a creditor could diminish the leverage effect of the collective debt reduction initiatives launched by the international financial institutions, especially the HIPC Initiative, as much as they think, on the other hand that it would bring less transparency to the public finances of the recipient countries because China is less aware of the amount of aid it provides. PINAUD (2006), economist at the OECD, is concerned about the future of host country entrepreneurs in the face of the Chinese diaspora's invasion of economic activities and informal sector activities. Indeed, according to this author, the Chinese diaspora by investing the informal sector with its many products creates a formidable competition in the sector that supports 85% of the African population and beyond, seeks to establish its influence on the continent. In addition, as explained by WOLFOWITZ (2006), former president of the World Bank, Chinese aid can have the consequence of the re - indebtedness of the continent. For him, the loans and debt forgiveness of poor countries would help to rein in corruption in the continent given the dubious practices of Chinese businessmen in the award of contracts. This dimension of ethical and equitable trade is still resurfacing in GAL LUFT's (2006) thinking that Chinese people are inclined to conduct their business in a way that Americans and Europeans are beginning to reject: paying bribes and other things. Under table; hence the interest of some Africans to work with Chinese companies rather than with Western companies. Finally, the last criticism formulated by MOELETSI MBEKI (2005) challenges the "win-win" principle that would govern the partnership by Chinese ODA because, for him, in exchange for raw materials that Africans will sell to Chinese, Africans will purchase manufactured goods with a predictable end result due to the deterioration of the terms of trade: a negative trade balance. A last conciliatory trend of the first two is that of WANG and BIO-TCHANE (2008) who argues instead that it is incumbent on Africa to make the most of its economic relations with China and with other countries by aligning, for example, help with priorities identified by itself in its economic and social development strategy.

Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese ODA to central African countries

Before analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of China's development assistance to Central African countries, it would be interesting to present the volume of Chinese aid and the share reserved for Africa. Similarly, the distribution of this aid by nature and sector would give an idea of the importance of this aid for Central Africa.

Structure of China's Official Development Assistance: Gifts are the most important part of China's official development assistance as shown in the table below:

Figure 1. Distribution of actual Chinese "aid" by type (end of 2015)

Type of help	Value (RMB billion)	Share of total (%)
Free help (Grants)	206,25	44,23
Interest free loans	126,53	27,14
Preferential rate loans	133,48	28,63
Total	466,26	100

Source: White Paper on Chinese Foreign Aid, published by the Chinese Information Office of the State Council, 2016.

With regard to sectoral distribution, public equipment and industry are considered as the most attractive sectors of Chinese aid. For example, Central African countries are counting on Chinese aid to fill their basic infrastructure gap.

Table 2. Sectoral distribution of Chinese "aid" in projects completed abroad (end of 2015)

sector	Number of projects	Relative share in total projects
Agriculture:	215	10,6%
Agriculture, livestock and fisheries	168	8,3%
Water conservation	17	0,8%
Public facilities:	670	33,1%
Conference centers	85	4,2%
Sports facilities	85	4,2%
Theaters and cinemas	12	0,6%
Civil buildings	143	7,1%
Municipal equipment	37	1,8%
Well and water supply	72	3,6%
Science, education and health	236	11,7%
Economic infrastructures:	390	19,3%
Transport	201	9,9%
Power supply	97	4,8%
Broadcasting and telecommunications	92	4,5%
Industry:	635	31,4%
Light industry	320	15,8%
textiles	74	3,7%
Radio and electronics	15	0,7%
Equipment industry	66	3,3%
Chemical industry	48	2,4%
Wood Processing Industry	10	0,5%
Treatment of building materials	42	2,1%
Metallurgical industry	22	1,1%
Coal industry	7	0,3%
Oil industry	19	0,9%
Geological prospecting and mineral exploration	12	0,6%
Others:	115	5,7%
Total	2025	10,6%

Source: White Paper on Chinese Foreign Aid, published by the State Council Chinese Information Office, 2016

China has also canceled debt. At the end of 2015, out of 50 countries benefiting from these debt cancellations, there are 35 African countries including all Central African countries (Table 3).

Figure 3. Debts to China canceled by the Chinese government (end of 2015)

Regions	Number of countries	Number of canceled debts	Amount canceled (RMB billion)
Africa	35	312	18,96
Asia	10	41	5,99
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	14	0,40
Oceania	3	13	0,23
TOTAL	50	380	25,58

Source: White Paper on Chinese Foreign Aid, published by the State Council Chinese Information Office, 2016

In the 1960s and the early 1970s, China was already present in Africa in the world of ODA. Only it was limited in the ideological context of the cold war and third worldism. It was not until 1978 that this aid was motivated for economic reasons. Thus, we have witnessed the arrival of Chinese technicians in the field of health, agriculture, building and others who were to implement different projects.Since the 1990s, China's ODA has been placed in a more flexible strategic perspective. Thus, China's allocation of ODA is less restrictive than that of OECD countries, to the full satisfaction of neglected countries:

- aid is given even to undemocratic countries;
- good governance is not a prerequisite for the allocation of aid;

- the sectors neglected in recent years by traditional donors and infrastructure also benefit from the aid.

The major condition imposed by China for the granting of its aid is not to recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state but rather as a province of China.

Strengths and needs of China

Strengths

Being a developing country but making extraordinary progress, China is transposing its development model to other poor countries, a development model with characteristic features different from the traditional development assistance model of the IMF, namely:

- a strategic partnership developed in parity characterized by equality and mutual trust;
- recently out of the pockets of poor countries, it probably has experience and a model of economic development adapted to poor countries;
- technology and technical assistance at a lower cost;
- very attractive country with better country risk.

Needs

China is the second largest consumer of energy (oil) in the world after the USA. In 2005, according to JACOBY (2007), China consumed one-quarter of Sub-Saharan Africa's raw materials exports and one-sixth of that of fuels. China needs a lot of oil to run its energy-hungry industry. It then needs raw materials of agricultural and mining origin. It consumes nearly one-third of global consumption of aluminium, steel, iron and copper, as well as other mining products such as cobalt, gold, diamond, bauxite, etc. China finally needs outlets for its flourishing industry that is running at full speed, especially in less industrialized countries to avoid intense competition. On the other hand, China needs a global rise on the political, economic and cultural levels like the USA.

Strengths and needs of Central Africa

Strengths: The Central African countries are for the most part endowed with important natural resources such as oil and various minerals. According to LAFARGUE (2006), since 2003, ECCAS countries are among the main oil suppliers to China. Angola is the largest supplier in Africa at 9%, followed by Equatorial Guinea with 2.2%, Congo Brazzaville with 1.5%, Gabon with 1.2% and Cameroon with 1.1%. Chinese imports. The countries of ECCAS, with more than 100 million inhabitants, whose industrial sector is still embryonic, represent a vast market for Chinese industry. China's exports to these countries consist mainly of manufactured goods. China is, according to DELEFOSSE (2007), in 2006, the first supplier of sub-Saharan Africa with more than 10% of market share.

Africa's needs: For its economic and social development, Africa needs an effective development strategy through equitable cooperation that is reflected in symmetry in relations with its partners. However, it is established that, the more the general conditions are satisfactory, in particular a high human capital, the more efficiently the aid is absorbed. This is why any action for sustainable development must be preceded by actions that improve the living conditions of the population (for poor countries), in line with the MDGs defined by the OECD countries. Central Africa needs skills within it to increase not only the capacity of aid but also in the implementation and steering of development projects. It must be emphasized, however, that the development of a country cannot be done only with a mereaid. A country also needs foreign direct investment for the dynamism of its industrial and commercial fabric. A transfer of new technologies through various technical assistance is necessary for the competence of African managers.

III. ECONOMIC POLICY MEASURES

The measures to be considered to improve the effectiveness of China's official development assistance within Central African countries are both in the direction of a new strategic partnership, the reduction of the cost of investment the sustainability of public debts.

Towards a true win-win strategic partnership

The announced intentions on the one hand, to increase the share of aid and to produce more international public goods on the basis of the needs defined by the poor countries themselves and, on the other hand, to resort to more than in the past to donations, suggests a quantitative or even qualitative improvement in official development assistance. The strengthening of international solidarity is now conditional on the implementation in the beneficiary countries of adjustment programs and the priority concern of resolving recurrent humanitarian crises. This solidarity is also part of the obsessive line of increasing the total amount of money mobilized for the aid. This is more like the expression in donor States in general and their relatively sensitive public opinion in particular, to a more charitable than economic activity. One can also wonder whether the announced increase in aid reflects, depending on the case, the respective predominance of economic motivations (growth) or arguments of justice or equity, security or defense ... In general, ODA-funded projects rarely integrate a country's economic and social development programs. Aid is most often negotiated independently by the beneficiary structures. Aid will be more effective if it is aligned with the priorities identified by countries in their poverty reduction and development strategies. It is a good idea for Central African countries to think about how to get the most out of China's booming partnership. One of the approaches to achieve this is first of all to reduce the cost of the investment and the expenses of the company, to create the conditions for fair competition, then to rationally manage public finances, to prevent the accumulation of unsustainable debts to safeguard the environment and finally to move forward in the value chain.

Reducing the cost of investment and business expenses

As WANG and BIO-TCHARE (2008) point out, ECCAS is lagging behind the rest of the world in investment and business climate. ECCAS countries can only attract capital if they reduce regulation and other barriers to private activity. According to these authors, the evolution of the time and cost indicators necessary to meet the requirements for the creation of enterprises and the operation, trade, taxation and closure of these enterprises reveals that 24 out of 30 countries where the business climate is more expensive are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Out of a total of 178 countries studied, the DRC and the Central African Republic are respectively (178th place) and the second last (177th place). The Republic of Congo ranks 175th. It would be desirable to create a favorable business climate with flexible taxation, a customs regime facilitating the movement of goods and services and rules that at the same time make the labor market more flexible and guarantee the rights of workers. Inadequate infrastructure, especially in energy and transport, is one of the constraints on African businesses and should be addressed to integrate into the globalization of trade and industry.

Creating the conditions for fair competition

The relations of cooperation between China and the African countries should not suffer from any complex compared to those between the latter and the Western countries, where the weight of the colonization is always above them, where one has like the impression of being always between colonized and colonizers. With China, African countries can be treated as equals. Moreover, a new type of strategic partnership based on equality and mutual benefits announced at the Beijing summit in 2006 should be put in place. African countries should seize this opportunity to ensure fair competition for projects and to treat all foreign investors equally. The implementation of an initiative for the transparency of extractive industries or any other international action increases the transparency of all transactions sponsored by the State and the private sector and at the same time helps to promote good governance and rational use of natural resources in Africa. ECCAS countries need to accelerate trade liberalization by encouraging trade and division of labor within the sub-region. This would allow them to keep costs low and competitiveness high. The transformation of some of its raw materials into higher value-added manufactured products would increase the value of exports and make better use of their preferential access to the European and American markets, especially as the Chinese have the experience of penetrating Western markets.

The rational management of financial flows: Sound management of public finances is needed to avoid parallel transactions that make it difficult to compare financing options. To do this, we should take some steps such as:

Prioritize projects according to their nature, scope and donors based on cost-benefit analysis in line with best practices;

- Separate the development of the project and its financing;
- Ensure that bids are truly competitive (bidding process);
- Base funding decisions on a serious assessment of the most favorable conditions.

Prevent the accumulation of unsustainable debts: Although they face a dilemma: the need for abundant financing to build their infrastructure and increase their production capacity and the insufficiency of their production and export bases, thus limiting the amount of external financing they can absorb, African countries should prudently manage debt and closely link their financing to the potential of generating capacity that can bring in revenue. Foreign creditors have the responsibility to minimize the vulnerability of debt-generating flows to African countries. For this purpose, the recent OECD (REISEN, 2008) studies on the impact of Chinese loans on the debt sustainability of African countries, tend to conclude that these loans do not compromise the sustainability of external debt because the concessionality of these crebitterlydits and their impact in boosting the growth of beneficiary countries (modernization of infrastructure and acceleration of exports of petroleum products and other raw materials). For example, Angola, where China is the largest bilateral donor, has even improved its external debt indicators since 2000, i.e. a DEBT / GNP ratio which rose from 126% of GNP in 2000 to 41% of GNP in 2006 ; over the same period the debt service ratio [(Interest + Principal) / X] which was 21% fell to 9%, according to REISEN.

Compliance with environmental standards

African exports are essentially natural resources. On the market, the demand is exploding especially for countries like China that must support their growth. However, these resources are largely non-renewable and the abusive exploitation of these can lead to their total disappearance with adverse effects on the environment. The exploitation of natural resources should be subject to rigorous regulation, sound planning and strict adherence to standards for sustainable development and environmental protection. The rise in commodity prices and therefore the improvement of the terms of trade is a boon for the oil and mining countries of Central Africa, only there are risks to that including mortgaging the quality of their environment . These countries could indeed pay a heavy price if they do not already anticipate the environmental impact of the exploitation of their natural resources.

Progress in the value chain

The oil and mining countries of ECCAS should, for sustained growth of their economy, diversify their exports from the simple export of raw materials to processing or at least to another form of added value. A policy of reducing internal barriers to entry and exit and eliminating severe supply constraints is necessary. According to WANG and BIO-TCHARE (2008), Chinese companies' assets recently acquired the experience of moving up value chains in their field of activity and were therefore intended to benefit African businesses. For all this to be effective, it is important for each government to put in place development strategies with well-defined priorities and expected results, strategies in which the various forms of aid will be integrated. International negotiations need to be renewed by putting in place credible reform incentives backed by sustainable mechanisms. In this perspective, it would be necessary to move from a vision of "aid" to countries, more or less legitimate depending on whether they are more or less poor to a more integrated approach.

Conclusion

The structure of financial transfers to Africa has been modified and their volume has increased significantly in recent years to offset weak local savings. But, the development is still not at the rendez-vous. The situation of some economies (recipients of aid) has even deteriorated. Development aid has therefore not allowed the countries of Central Africa, in particular, to develop or even significantly reduce poverty. Awareness is therefore needed to reform both the functioning and management of ODA and to rethink the issue of development with a view to rebalancing the current process of globalization and the international political agenda that accompanies it. Some questions about the nature of the duty to help, i.e. to help on the merits or need, and its real ineffectiveness on the beneficiary economies, require adequate answers on two fundamental elements. First, on the effectiveness of ODA, first on the growing number of requesting countries for declining amounts, then on those controlling the performance of aid agencies in rich countries. Secondly, the desire to reorient the use of aid towards activities that are not very visible but essential for the well-being of the poor and the construction of a real international social program. Moreover, the desire to improve the effectiveness of development programs is only conceivable if one accepts the structuralist idea that development can only come from within. To accept this requires, first of all, a profound challenge to North / South relations, shaped today more by trade liberalization reproducing the old asymmetries and creating new ones, and then putting an end to the bilateral nature of aid to the benefit of better co-ordination of the different international financial institutions and the developing countries, and finally, a reformulation of the notions of good governance in the beneficiary countries. The political factor plays a decisive role. It requires time and listening. It is the main advantage of Chinese aid, which has become one of the instruments of its foreign policy that it responds to the partners' demands, with no other project than to build a relationship of immediate mutual interest.

The conception of Chinese aid management, however, goes beyond international standards, democracy, good governance, traceability and the publication of the amounts allocated to aid which are not, of course, the necessary condition for the success of policies help, but are still important in the proper management, control, analysis and planning of aid. Promoting democracy in these states requires exploring two types of solutions. On the one hand, to put in place appropriate incentives to limit the misuse by the main State managers of ODA, of vast ranges of discretion inherited from the complexification of economic and social life. If this market solution is not possible, encourage on the other hand, the development of counter-powers in particular, by promoting the effective participation of beneficiary populations in the management and / or control of ODA. The association of these populations in the development of strategies for their own economic and social development has a triple advantage. Firstly, to ensure sufficient autonomy for the actors while limiting the effects of interest groups, then to ensure the construction of modern state institutions relying in particular on the delegation of power and finally, to encourage accumulation of endogenous human capital and technological knowledge (capital - knowledge) from the perspective of economic modernization, justice and social protection.

The "win-win" partnership must not be a simple slogan in order to allow ECCAS member countries to get the best out of their economic relations with China, which has an interest in the sustainability of this cooperation so that its partners can find also their accounts. Thus, Fund the priority projects defined by the countries in their strategy of reduction against poverty; match the terms and amounts of loans with the debt sustainability framework of low-income countries that many African countries use; multiply local sources of spare parts, manufactured goods, equipment and labor to facilitate a real transfer of technology and move Africa out of Ricardian specialization, would help boost income growth and increase market expansion of ECCAS countries.

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