

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND AFRICA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF FOCAC

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Abstract: Engagements of African states with emerging powers through South-South Cooperation (SSC), particularly China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), offers alternative investment and aid packages that are provided on different terms compared to traditional Western investment and aid regimes. SSC stretches back to the Bandung Afro-Asian Conference of 1955 which primarily focused on the political independence of the South from colonialism, however, current relationships are mainly economic. This article considers the case of FOCAC as a vibrant SSC arrangement giving Africa both an alternative and some form of agency. FOCAC is premised on principles of non-interference and mutual benefits as opposed to the traditional Western packages which are sometimes paternalistic in nature. This paper's main argument, however, is that the majority of African states lack effective strategies to engage China and the rest of the emerging powers from the South, moreover the African Union (AU) lacks an active and effective continental strategy. This may imply that most African states, negotiating singly with these emerging powers, may not get the fairest deals.

Keywords: Africa, South-South Cooperation, FOCAC, Brazil, China.

1. INTRODUCTION

South-South Cooperation (SSC) defines, generally, the interaction of developing countries in their attempts to establish political and economic linkages with the objective of obtaining economic advancement and significant global bargaining ability. The UNDP (2004) as cited in Roberto de Freitas and Mateus (2015:1) conceptualizes SSC as, '... a process through which two or more countries work together to develop their capacities through exchanges of knowledge, abilities, resources and technologies'. For Almeida (2004:26) the 'So-called South-South Cooperation (or technical cooperation between developing countries), [is] a foreign policy instrument for promoting the international development of 'non-aligned countries, created at the end of the 1970s...'. Furthermore, Kakonge (2014:1) defines SSC as a process;

'whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual or collective development objectives through a cooperative exchange of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how'. South-South Cooperation 'embraces a multi-stakeholder approach including Non-Governmental Organisations, the private sector, civil society, academia and other actors that contribute to meeting development challenges and objectives in line with national development strategies and plans' (Nairobi Outcome Document, 2009 para 19)¹.

South-South Cooperation places more emphasis on technical cooperation and skills transfer than programme and budget support (Silva, 2010). SSC is differentiated from traditional North-South cooperation by its emphasis on the mutual benefits of its engagement as well as non-conditional engagement based on the principle of non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. In South-South engagements, cooperation is not free, but is linked to the economic interests of the country providing assistance (Rampa, Bilal and Sidoropoulos, 2012). This is to say that their assistance is mainly in

¹ See High level committee on South-South Cooperation Seventeenth Session Report titled 'Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation' (online). Available: <https://www.cbd.int/financial/southsouth/un-framework2012.pdf>

the form of tied aid-aid that comes with a stipulation that the materials to be used in a funded project should come from the funding country. In its practice and results, SSC offers the hope that economic development can be achieved by the poor themselves through their mutual engagements (Gray and Gills, 2016). While historically SSC was concerned mainly with matters of political independence of former colonies in the South as well as the effects of the Cold War on the developing countries, contemporary SSC, at least from the beginning of the 21st century is based more on economic engagements. SSC is premised on the notion that developing countries share similar development experiences and they can pull themselves out of their common problems by learning from each other's experiences. In terms of development assistance, aid that comes from one developing country to another is not defined as aid but as some form of technical assistance or cooperation meant to help a sister/brother in need. This also entails that such aid is not given on the basis of political conditionalities as Organisation for Economic Cooperation (OECD) and Development-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) aid is sometimes delivered. Indeed, aid that has been delivered by such 'emerging donors' as China, Brazil, India and South Korea, among others has come without explicit political conditions, although it is tied to the business interests of the creditor countries.

SSC has also recently begun to be recognised as an important vehicle in the global development system developed by the United Nations. For instance, there is now a special unit for South-South Cooperation in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The increase in SSC has happened outside the ambit of the UN and the organisation appears to have been a spectator to the exponential growth of SSC over the years (Puri, 2010). In order to catch up and be part of the process, the UN facilitated the 2009 Nairobi conference on SSC. The UN also prepared a specific framework of operational guidelines for the entire UN system to implement the recommendations of the Nairobi Conference². The UNDP, has adopted South-South cooperation as one of the principal approaches for capacity development (Puri 2009).

In Africa, although Western OECD-DAC traditional donors as well as investors continue to dominate in terms of development assistance and investments, emerging Southern economic powers, especially China, are increasingly becoming visible in the continent's development discourse. A plethora of multilateral, subnational and bilateral regimes which characterize SSC include Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICs), India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA), Brazil Agency for Cooperation (ABC) and South Africa Development Partnership Agency (SADPA), FOCAC among many. However, the main thrust of this article is FOCAC and resurgence of China's interest in Africa in the 21st century. Utilising a non-paternalistic path of win-win cooperation and mutual gain, the Chinese have complemented Western development cooperation in the continent. The Chinese government and African states, through the tri-annual Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), have created a framework of negotiation, implementation and monitoring of aid and investment pledges made by China at these conferences. Important to note is the fact that China's geostrategic overtures and advances in Africa are based not only on the desire to access Africa's natural resources, but increasingly for investment and trade opportunities as well.

African states have themselves, including those without strategic natural resources such as Ethiopia, sought to tap into the increased Chinese interest in the continent by leveraging their resources and geo-strategic worth to attract Chinese investments and funding for infrastructural development. Indeed, having been subjected to DAC conditionality based development assistance arrangements for some decades, African states feel that Southern assistance, especially Chinese aid is a welcome alternative, particularly in the face of the pressing need to meet the targets of the African Union's agenda 2063³. China's development assistance can also be very significant in enhancing the African region's capacity to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals targets. However, although some countries such as Zimbabwe have sought to portray or exhibit Chinese aid as a replacement of Western aid and investment, most Africa states have approached Chinese development assistance as complementing rather than competing with Western aid and investment in the continent.

This article discusses the value of the resurgence of SSC in Africa's development. While focusing on the FOCAC, India and Brazil's engagements with the continent since the beginning of the 21st century are briefly analysed for their impact on Africa's development trajectory. The questions that are addressed in this article cover, among others, issues to do with

² The recommendations of the Nairobi Conference included, inter alia, the need for developing countries to promote, through South-South Cooperation, access to and transfer of technology as well as the need for developed countries and multilateral institutions to support South-South Cooperation.

³ Agenda 2063 is a common vision for African states that includes a number of aspirations. These include; a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, an integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance, an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law, a peaceful and secure Africa, an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics, an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children and Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner.

the importance of SSC as an alternative to traditional Western development engagements with Africa as well as the challenges confronting Africa's engagement with Southern partners in the continent's economic development. The need for an Africa strategy as well as 'agency' in engaging Southern partners is highlighted as critical if African states are to benefit from their engagements with the South.

2. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

This study employed the qualitative desk research approach through a synthesis of secondary sources. The study on the contribution of the SSC as an alternative development partnership for Africa as opposed to the traditional western engagement mainly focused on the FOCAC case study. The strengths of the case study inquiry according to Punch (2011:144), Gray (2004:61), Creswell (2007:73), and Bhattacharjee (2012:94) is that it takes a holistic elaboration, in-depth and comprehensive study of real life events, processes and phenomenon in one or more cases within a bounded system and has a heuristic impact. The researchers conducted an exegesis of articles on international relations in the form of journal publications, textbooks, conference papers and online internet material. The authors also used their expertise in the field of international economic relations to complement secondary sources.

3. AFRICA'S CONTACTS WITH THE SOUTH: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Africa has a history of cooperation with southern countries. The region's formal involvement in South-South cooperation dates back to 1955 when African and Asian nations held a conference in Bandung, Indonesia, to promote economic and cultural cooperation and bring an end to colonialism (UNCTAD, 2010 ; Silva, 2008). The deliberations at the Bandung conference in 1955 created the momentum for the establishment of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961 (in which African states became important stakeholders), the G77 as well the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 1964 (Gray and Gills, 2016). In these platforms and groupings, Africa played a key role in voting for UN resolutions to end colonialism as well as well as apartheid (in South Africa).

During the 1970s, African leaders became disillusioned with international development and sought alternatives ways and methods of bringing change (Arrighi, 2002). Thus, Independent African states also had their voices included in the call for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), which was formerly adopted at the United Nations (UN) in 1974 (Silvia et al, 2014). The NIEO 'was a forum for promoting dialogue on restructuring unequal trade relations between developed and developing countries' (Amanor, 2013).

However, the Bandung conference in 1955 did not do much in formalizing SSC hence there was a 'quiet' phase in terms of SSC initiatives up to 1978. The 1955 Bandung Consensus emphasised on geopolitical strategy, that is China's political influence in Africa as a supporter of 'Third World Movement' through the establishment of diplomatic ties with Africa's liberation movements (Mensah, 2010). Nevertheless, in the 1970s, 1980s Beijing neutralised Africa ties favouring bilateral relations with industrialised West, Japan, South Korea and international institutions: International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) (Pham, 2006). Thus, throughout this period the global West enjoyed hegemony over Africa's strategic resources, through bilateral agreements, trade and investment.

In that year (1978), the United Nations adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPOA) which was the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries held in August 1978⁴. The stated aims of the BAPOA were, among others, to;

- Strengthen economic, social and political interdependence among developing countries;
- Accelerate development;
- Correct distortions in international systems resulting from asymmetric power relations between developing and industrialized countries.

Recognising Africa's important position in SSC and in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the BAPOA, the UN convened a high level conference on SSC in Nairobi, Kenya in 2009. At the conference, emphasis was put on the need to strengthen and reinvigorate SSC as an additional measure for ensuring economic growth and addressing the development challenges facing developing countries (UNCTAD, 2010).

⁴ The whole BAPOA document can be accessed online at <http://hdrnet.org/516/>

The momentum of South-South Initiatives including Africa has spurred new efforts for the enhancement of North-South cooperation including the same (Gray and Gills, 2016). For example the renewed momentum evidenced in the holding of the US-Africa Summit (August 2014), EU-Africa Summit (5th Summit held in November 2017), the Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD-6th Summit held in Nairobi in August 2016) among others, following the precedent of the FOCAC are cases in point. Indeed, Africa's engagements with countries such as China, India and Brazil have seen significant increases in investment, trade and aid in the African continent.

4. BRAZIL'S ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICA

Brazil and Africa are bound by history. Brazil's historical origins owes much to Africa due to the role of the Atlantic slave trade and its part in the wider commercial network of the Portuguese (Alden 2010). However, of the three emerging powers (including China and India) that prominently feature in this paper, Brazil is the least engaged in Africa. This trend was mainly because of the mutual lack of interest between the two parties in much of the 20th century chiefly because of the Cold War. The 1970s witnessed the establishment of a number of Brazilian embassies in Africa and a few investments in Lusophone countries such as Angola and Mozambique as well in other African countries including Nigeria and South Africa.

It was however President Lula da Silva (term 2003-2011) who early in his term identified Africa as a top priority. Lula made twelve trips to Africa in his term as President while his foreign Minister made 67 official visits to Africa. In return, Brazil received 47 African heads of state from 27 Nations (Stuenkel, 2013). In this phase, Brazil initiated the IBSA dialogue forum including India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA). However, unlike China and India, which are looking for natural resources to feed into their massive industrialisation projects, Brazil is a resource rich country and an oil exporter. As a result, she sees Africa as a market for a diversified range of agricultural machinery, bio-fuels, food and seeds.

In terms of trade, Brazil Africa trade increased from \$4.2 billion in 2001 to \$26.7 billion in 2011. As a result of increasing trade relations, Brazil, among the BRICS countries has become the third largest trading partner after China and India respectively (Esteves et.al, 2014). The volume of trade has been growing at a rate of 16% per year since 1990 (Stolte, 2012). In development assistance, Brazil has availed a number of credit lines as well as providing technical assistance to African countries⁵, especially in the agricultural sector⁶. Evidence suggests that Africa is now the primary target of Brazil's aid programme. By 2013, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) had technical cooperation projects in 30 countries on the continent, even though most of these initiatives were very small. In 2010 a little over 50 per cent of ABC's budget was allocated to projects in Africa and the amount of money spent there has risen by 105 per cent since 2005 (Stuenkel, 2013). Brazil's experience in dealing with poverty and development issues is also reflected in the way it allocates aid. According to ABC's recent data, most of the money is going to agricultural projects (21.86 per cent), followed by health (16.28 per cent) and education (12.12 per cent) (Stuenkel, 2013). The fact that Brazil is a reservoir of vast experience dealing with development challenges at home that are similar to African development challenges strengthens cooperation and understanding between the two partners. As an 'emerging donor' Brazil still faces significant poverty and inequality at home, as Africans also do, and can thus present itself much more as a partner than wealthier European countries for which poverty is a distant memory (Stuenkel, 2013).

Because of its common history of Portuguese colonialism with Angola and Mozambique, Brazil has had comparatively significant relations with these African states. In Angola, Brazil's two-way trade with the Southern African country surpassed \$1 billion in 2007. Angola also received \$750 million worth of investments in 2006 from Brazil (Stuenkel 2013, Alden 2010). In 2011, Angola had \$315 million of debt forgiven by Brazil. Mozambique also had \$330 million of its debt forgiven by Brazil in the same year. In 2005 alone, Brazil's state run company Petrobras invested \$1.9 billion in Nigeria's coal, oil and natural gas sectors. In 2007, Vale invested around \$700 million in Mozambique's coal, oil and natural gas sectors as well (Stuenkel, 2013). It should however be emphasised that although Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff, continued with Lula's emphasis on SSC and tried to maintain some contact with Africa in terms of development

⁵ Such development assistance is availed based on the principle of non-conditionality as well as non-interference in other countries' internal political processes. This rings true for development assistance that comes from most emerging donors which is extended in the spirit of South-South Cooperation.

⁶ In Mozambique, which is a prime example of Brazilian agricultural cooperation in Africa, there are three technical cooperation projects: the Agricultural Innovation Platform, the Program for Improving Food Security in Mozambique (ProAlimentar), and the Program for the Development of the African Tropical Savanna in Mozambique (ProSavana) In Senegal, technical cooperation is focused on four structural pillars: the development of agro-fuels, support for rice cultivation, support for horticulture, and animal husbandry. (Gabas and Goulet n.d).

assistance, investment and trade, her foreign policy since 2011 did not put Africa high on its agenda (Esteves et al, 2012). This could be related to her excessive focus on domestic politics until her removal from power in 2016. Of the few visits she made to the African continent during her presidential tenure, especially in 2013, she pledged to increase Brazilian investment in Africa and also forgave the debts of twelve African countries⁷.

5. INDIA-AFRICA ENGAGEMENTS

India-Africa relations have evolved over a long time. In recent history, the main characteristic of India's Africa policy was its support for the continent's liberation from colonial bondage as well as efforts for ending racial discrimination, popularly known as apartheid, in South Africa. India, under Nehru's leadership was also instrumental in the establishment of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM), an organisation that was heavily influenced by the Afro-Asian summit at Bandung in 1955 (Beri, 2011). India's relationship with Africa is cast in terms which emphasise the political affinity between the sub-continent as one of the first decolonised countries after the World War II and the parallel nationalistic aspirations of Africa as well as their common development status. Like China, India supports non-interference into state sovereignty and supports South-South cooperation (Alden, 2010). Although India started availing technical support to African countries in the 1970s, it is in the present century that a serious stand on the economic aspect of the country's relations with Africa was taken.

In 2007, the Indian government launched a multilateral platform, the India-Africa Summit involving 15 African countries where it committed itself to raising the credit line for Indian businesses wishing to operate in Africa to \$5.4 billion, provide \$500 million for development cooperation, improved market access to African exports, training for over 1500 Africans in Indian Universities and improvements in defence cooperation. Furthermore, India has written off debt owed by African countries and established an India-Africa fund of \$200 million offering credit to projects that promote Indo-African integration (Alvarenga et al, n.d).

At the 2015 India-Africa Summit in New Delhi, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi announced concessional credit of \$10 billion over the next 5 years to Africa. The Prime Minister also announced a \$600 million grant assistance, which includes part of an Africa Development Fund of \$100 million and an India-Africa Health Fund of \$10 million (Financial Express, 3 August 2015). At this summit it was also agreed that India and Africa would work together in calling for United Nations Security Council reform as well cooperating in climate change mitigation strategy, technology transfer as well as food security, among other areas. This set the tone for further cooperation between the two parties⁸.

Indian corporates such as Tata and Vedanta mining as well as a range of pharmaceutical companies are driving large investments in traditional Eastern and Southern African markets as well as opening new operations in West Africa. The state owned Oil and Natural Gas Company ONGC has also been actively involved in bids for oil block leases in different African countries, a reflection of the Asian country's interests in energy resources for its booming economy which grew by 9.6% in 2006/2007 (Alden, 2010). Trade between Africa and India more than doubled from US\$25 billion in 2007 to US\$57 billion in 2011. By 2013, trade figures had reached over US\$67 billion. Projections forecast that the level of trade could increase to US\$80 billion by 2020 (Lucey et al, 2015). However, India's trade relations with African countries is centred on a few resource rich and economically vibrant African states including South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Egypt and Tanzania. A significant challenge in these relations is the dependency-style kind of trade that takes place between the two parties. While India has managed to diversify up the value chain, with the result that it's capable of exporting finished, semi-finished products as well as profitable services, African states still export primary commodities to India. Although the export of such products as oil sometimes pushes the trade balance in Africa's favour (Lucey et al, 2015), the terms of trade do not significantly benefit the continent. It is hoped that African states can use their natural endowments or strategic value to leverage on their flourishing relationships with emerging economic powers to acquire critical skills and expertise to assist in their economic diversification efforts. It is however China's economic relationship with Africa via the FOCAC that has become more significant in discussions of Africa-South Cooperation. This is the main thrust of the paper.

⁷ These include Congo, Tanzania, Zambia, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania, Sudan, São Tomé e Príncipe and Guinea-Bissau as well as Angola and Mozambique.

⁸ Financial Express (August 3, 2015). PM Narendra Modi at India-Africa Summit top ten key highlights from his speech. (online). Available: <http://www.financialexpress.com/economy/pm-narendra-modi-at-india-africa-summit-top-10-key-highlights-from-his-speech/158300/>

6. SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AND THE FORUM ON CHINA AFRICA COOPERATION: SETTING THE PACE.

China's 21st century geostrategy was shaped by the ideological shift from an ideational 'pre-Deng' or 'Bandung' to the 'Beijing Consensus' which courted criticism from the Western circles. Mensah (2010) opines that, 'China's strategic push in Africa is geared more to protecting its resources flow unhindered, and also open up markets for Chinese products and investments' (Mensah, 2010). Erika (2011:220) observes that,

The deepening of economic involvement in Africa is realized through a mix of aid, special concessions, debt relief, scholarships, the provision of educational and medical training personnel and infrastructural investment projects. This represents a stark departure from the past under Mao Zedong, when the relationship was guided by the ideological conflict of the Cold War and especially Beijing's attempts to dislodge Moscow's influence in the Third World.

Thus economic pragmatism and symbolic diplomacy appear to characterise Sino-African relations. China's new geo-economic interests in Africa are inextricably linked with its military and strategic analysis of a post bi-polar worldview (Mensah, 2010).

The above background informs the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) a tri-annual diplomatic event that is hosted by either China or Africa after every three years. From its inception in 2000, the FOCAC has become a renowned diplomatic platform in which both China and Africa discuss trade, investment and development assistance issues. The idea of the FOCAC was developed from Chairman Jiang Zemin's tour of six African countries in 1996 (Wekesa, 2015). During this tour, Zemin also delivered a speech at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, emphasising the need for both China and Africa to establish a relationship based on sincere friendship, equality and mutual respect, common development and mutual benefit, consultation and cooperation in international affairs and looking to the future to build a better world. These became known as the five principles for the building of comprehensive and durable cooperative China-Africa relations for the 21st century. Following Zemin's overtures for closer cooperation between China and Africa, Li et.al (2012: 15) state that;

African senior officials realized the importance of a China-Africa cooperation mechanism and proposed the establishment of FOCAC. Chinese academics and political professionals advised on upgrading and institutionalizing China-Africa relations and these ideas were finally put into practice. Without the active participation of and promotion by the African side, the establishment of FOCAC would have been impossible.

Thus, the establishment of an institutional framework in which to conduct Africa-China relations became a common objective for both the Chinese and African sides at the end of the 20th century. This led to the establishment of the FOCAC in 2000.

A cursory look at global politics at the beginning of the 21st century, FOCAC seems to have been introduced in the context of nascent geo-strategic competition between China, the United States of America and Europe in the sense that all these three players introduced frameworks to engage Africa at the same time. However, the fact that FOCAC is a SSC platform seems to have created a conducive atmosphere for the flourishing of China Africa relations since 2000. FOCAC came in the wake of EU's insistence on WTO compatible EU-Africa Caribbean and the Pacific Free Trade Area, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) regime, having phased out the former arrangement that began in 1963 under the Yaoundé Conventions (Makwerere and Chipaike, 2012)⁹. The EU also launched its 2006 trade policy instrument 'Global Europe, competing in the world' (ECDPM, 2006:3 and Bendini et al, 2012:38) and EU-Africa Strategic Partnership Agreement 2007 (Ering and Odock, 2013:2-3 and Olund, 2012:15).

Indeed, it is also in 2000 that the USA came up with the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGO) to avail duty-free and quota-free access into the US market to selected products from eligible Sub-Saharan African countries (Seyoum, 2007:515) and the US-Africa Command (US-AFRICOM) (Melber, 2013:11). Apart from FOCAC, China's offensive resource diplomacy includes the launch of China-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce of 2005 (Melber, 2013:13). It is noteworthy that FOCAC came in the wake of the failed western initiated SAPs in the last decade of the 20th century compounded with the 2007 Global financial crisis hence SSC offered a seemingly attractive alternative to Africa.

⁹ China's presence in Africa has also spurred the growth of Africa's economic and diplomatic ties with other emerging economies such as Brazil, India, Turkey and South Korea among others.

Assessments conducted by Johns and Marti (2009:10), Harbeli (2009:37), Khumalo and Mulleta (2010:210), Manyeruke and Muqayi (2011:149) show that the USA and Europe were responsible for the global financial crisis of 2007 which had spillover effects on Africa's economic growth and development.

Admittedly, owing to intensification of China-Africa engagements, the USA, through President Obama initiated the idea of development cooperation and hosted the first US-Africa summit in 2014 where trade, investment and security issues were discussed. AGOA has also been extended to 2025. On the side of EU-Africa relations, the current Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) expires in 2022. Four EU-Africa summits have been held since 2000 with the agenda including trade, aid, migration and peace and security issues¹⁰. Thus, arguably, China's non-conditional and non-paternalistic engagement with Africa have spurred growing relations between Africa and its traditional partners in Europe and the USA. China, however appears to have the upper hand in terms of engaging Africa as a result of its lack of colonial baggage as well as its identity as an emerging economy from the South. The historical role the country played in assisting a number of African countries (such as Zimbabwe and Angola) to fight against colonialism as well its generous funding of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Line (TAZARA) in the 1960s laid a firm foundation for future cooperation with the African continent. It should be stressed, however, that for most African countries, China's role is not only to compete with, but to complement the role of traditional partners in Africa. In fact, an increase in the number of investment, trade and aid partners also affords African states some degree of choice and agency in their engagements with their development partners.

Suffice to say, for both China and Africa, it is a case of reaping the 'profits' of the political capital invested in the past. The vibrancy of the SSC engagements between Africa and China is also anchored in Africa's diplomatic support of China in the United Nations starting from the 1970s. For example, Africa played a critical role in ensuring the admission of China into the United Nations Security Council in 1971. Africa voted against Taiwan/Republic of China in favour of mainland China. Since then, the one China policy, where the 'renegade' island of Taiwan must be taken as an inseparable part of China has defined China's diplomatic relations with Africa. Africa also played a key role in defending Beijing's handling of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 where 'brute' force was used against the pro-democracy protesters. Most African countries either refused to criticise Beijing or publicly declared China's right to maintain order within its domestic political system. Thus, the history of diplomatic conduct between these two players has structured a relationship of trust and predictability that has made contemporary cooperation fruitful.

7. FOCAC AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF CHINA-AFRICA ECONOMIC TIES

Since 2000, FOCAC has played a key role as a platform for the discussion, implementation and review of important economic decisions by both China and Africa. From 2000, a number of pledges (by China) and agreements have been made through FOCAC. In the first ministerial conference held in Beijing in 2000, China pledged to, among other commitments, provide assistance to African countries, provide special assistance for Chinese companies to invest in Africa and cancel RMB 10 billion debts for Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and Least Developed Countries (LDC) in Africa as well as grant more scholarships to African students to study in China (Li Anshan et.al, 2012).

The second ministerial conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in December 2003. Among the key results of this conference was the launching of the FOCAC-Addis Ababa Action Plan (2004-2006), the opening up of the Chinese market to grant duty-free access to selected products from African LDCs, expand tourism cooperation with Africa as well as increase people-to-people exchanges.

In 2006, the third ministerial conference and the first Summit were held in Beijing. The important outcomes of the 2006 event was the Declaration of the Beijing Summit as well as the FOCAC- Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009). Among other commitments, China pledged to double the 2006 assistance to Africa by 2009, provide \$3 billion in preferential loans and \$2 billion of preferential buyer's credits, set up a \$5 billion China-Africa Development fund (CADf) to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Africa, build an AU conference centre and cancel debts owed by African HIPC that matured at the end of 2005 as well as build 100 rural schools and increase Chinese scholarships for African students.

The fourth FOCAC ministerial conference was held in Sharm-el-Sheik in Egypt in 2009. The critical outcomes of the conference included the FOCAC-Sharm-el Sheik Action Plan (2010-2012), the commitment by China to provide \$10 billion in concessional loans to African countries, cancel debts associated with interest-free government loans due to

¹⁰ The first Summit was held in Cairo in 2000.

mature by the end of 2009 as well as increase Chinese-built agricultural technology demonstration centres in Africa to 20 and send 50 agricultural technology teams to Africa to train 2,000 African agricultural technicians (Lin Anshan et.al, 2012).

The fifth FOCAC ministerial meeting was held in Beijing in 2012. At this meeting China committed to expanding co-operation in investment and finance to support sustainable development, support the African integration process and promote peace and stability among others. The Beijing-FOCAC Action Plan (2013-2015) prioritised cooperation in agriculture, food security and poverty reduction, infrastructure development, science and technology and people-to-people relations.

The sixth meeting was a summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa. At this summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping made an unprecedented commitment of \$60 billion in aid to Africa to support agriculture, infrastructure and training on the continent for the next three years. The FOCAC-Johannesburg Action plan (2016-2018) gave a detailed focus on trade, investment, aid and peace and security issues. China also committed to scale up its direct investments to Africa to a stock of \$100 billion by 2020, providing more inclusive and accessible loans, expand the CADf and set up a China-Africa production capacity cooperation fund (Calabrese, 2016).

Indeed, an analysis of FOCAC and its tri-annual meetings exhibits both the seriousness and the commitment of both China and Africa to take their relationship to the next level. While it is not clear whether all commitments are met, it is evident that other commitments have been fulfilled. For example, the new African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa was completed in 2012, the China-Africa Development fund is now fully operational, schools are being built and increasing scholarship opportunities have been availed to African students. This is also complemented by increasing levels of China-Africa trade, which topped \$160 billion in 2015. Chinese concessional lending to Africa also reached \$10 billion in 2012 with commitments to double it to \$20 billion between 2013 and 2015¹¹. In 2014, China signed more than \$70 billion in infrastructure contracts in the continent and Chinese banks now offer loans to Africa more than the World Bank¹². China thus plays a critical role in reducing the African infrastructure gap of \$ 93 billion annually.

Opportunities availed through FOCAC have also benefitted individual African countries such as Ethiopia. In October 2016, Ethiopia opened a Chinese financed and built \$3.4 billion railway line that links Addis Ababa and the port of Djibouti. The 750 km line reduces the travelling time between the two points from 3 days to 10 hours. Chinese staff will manage the line for five years while training their Ethiopian counterparts to do the job thereafter¹³. Largely owing to Chinese investment and trade relations, in 2015, Ethiopia was the world's fastest growing economy at 10.2 per cent. Figures from the Ethiopian government show that private operational Chinese investments from 1992-2015 stood at \$773 million, bigger than any country's investment in Ethiopia¹⁴. Chinese telecoms company ZTE has also trained 1000 Ethiopian engineers for free to manage the mobile network system in the country. Thus, opportunities availed by China, through FOCAC, have significantly aided an otherwise less resource endowed African country to achieve significant levels of growth. The Chinese can also demonstrate through the Ethiopian success story that state capitalism, as enshrined in the Beijing Consensus, can be even more effective than Western conditionality driven development enshrined in the Washington Consensus. This is because, 'from their (Chinese) vantage point Ethiopia's economic success is critical, something for which they can claim some credit and demonstrate to other African countries that their mode of engagement goes beyond 'aid' and is more beneficial to Africans than the conditionality-based partnership with Western donors.' (Cheru 2016: 607). Critical to note, however, is the agency displayed by the Ethiopian government itself in ensuring that traditional partners, who view Ethiopia as a stabilizing force in the Horn of Africa, provide aid and investment in a manner that complements or is complemented by increasing Chinese engagement. Indeed, Ethiopia's development partnership principle, which is not based on ideology, has helped the country gain development assistance from both traditional OECD countries as well as emerging donors (ACDP-OXFAM Monthly E-Newsletter, September 2016).

¹¹ Yun Sun (February 7, 2014). China's aid to Africa: monster or messiah?. (online). Available: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinas-aid-to-africa-monster-or-messiah/>

¹² Frederick Kuo (May 22, 2016). What China knows about Africa the West doesn't (online). Available: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/what-china-knows-about-africa-the-west-doesnt-16295>

¹³ The Guardian (October 6, 2016). Next Stop the Red Sea: Ethiopia opens Chinese-built railway to Djibouti. (online). Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/06/next-stop-the-red-sea-ethiopia-opens-chinese-built-railway-to-djibouti>

¹⁴ Aljazeera (October 26, 2015). China rides the rails of Ethiopia's development. (online) Available: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/10/china-rides-rails-ethiopia-development-151020101955760.html>

8. FOCAC AND AFRICAN AGENCY

With the increasing intensity of SSC, or specifically, Africa-South cooperation, African states can bank on their relationships with emerging economic powers to achieve their developmental targets. The significant (non-conditional) economic relations between African states and such emerging economic powers as India and Brazil can be leveraged upon by African states in general skills development, agricultural development as well development of higher value service industries such as ICTs and pharmaceuticals. Africa's development initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Agenda 2063 among others recognise the need for strategic partnerships with external players to achieve set targets. SSC may just be one of the ways in which such strategic partnerships can be used to bring desired goals.

In this connection, China has, through the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) exhibited the potential of SSC in advancing the economic development of developing countries. The financing that Africa is receiving through development assistance from the Chinese policy banks, particularly the Exim Bank and the China Development Bank, shows the potential in the South for mutual economic assistance. In this way, China is playing a key role in the fulfillment of two of agenda 2063's targets: through financing Africa's transport infrastructure, China's efforts enhance Africa's aspirations towards a continent of inclusive growth and sustainable development as well as an integrated continent. Skills training through scholarships and skills transfer arrangements, among other initiatives, assist in the creation of an innovative African generation of workers and entrepreneurs who can positively impact continental development in the coming 30 years. For instance, the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) has established the CRBC Technology Transfer Competence Training Centre at the site of the Standard Gauge Railway project in Kenya. Experts from China will work together with Kenyan lecturers focusing on railway engineering and work on different posts along the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway¹⁵. Investments in transport infrastructure as is the case in Ethiopia's railway system as well as in Kenya (especially the Standard Gauge Railway currently underway) are key cogs in regional integration efforts that will ultimately lead to continental integration in the future.

However, for such arrangements to yield desired results, the African Union needs to negotiate with the Chinese government as well as Chinese private and public investors to focus on important economic sectors in a coordinated way. At the moment, negotiations and implementation of key infrastructure projects are done at a bilateral level since FOCAC is only a commitment platform where continent wide pledges are made by the Chinese. Indeed, although China is playing an important role in funding Africa's infrastructure, this could be more effective if African states allowed the AU Commission to take the lead role in negotiations for aid, investment and trade deals. Continental economic integration would be much faster if development funding was channeled through the AU commission. Targets in agenda 2063, NEPAD as well as Sustainable Development Goals would become easier to achieve. At the moment, the African Union and NEPAD only receive limited funding in the form of capacity building. Thus, the lack of true multilateralism in the China-Africa engagement may weaken the potential of an otherwise promising SSC arrangement.

The African Union also needs to come up with an elaborate strategy to engage not only the Chinese but all emerging economic powers as well. In most instances, except for a few such as Ethiopia, African states are not pro-active in terms of their engagements with emerging powers. They are rather reactive. This also connects with a lack of an overall strategy by the AU to engage these emerging powers. As African states engage emerging powers in issues pertaining to their own (African) economic development, they (and the AU) need to play the central role. They also need to adopt negotiating positions that do not lead to unfair agreements or increasing debt burdens, environmental damage and corruption among other ills. In this case, negotiations for aid and investment deals need not be solely state business, rather, civil society, members of the academia as well as other key non-state players should be involved¹⁶. In this way Africa can be able to show agency in its negotiations with China the same way its regional configurations delayed the signing of comprehensive EPAs with the EU and the concerted voice which stalled the WTO Doha Development round of negotiations as opposed to 'speedy deals' concluded by single countries partly out of desperation.

¹⁵ Centre for Chinese Studies weekly briefing (online). Available: http://www.ccs.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/CCS_Weekly_China_Briefing_09_December_.pdf

¹⁶ The author recently finished a study in Zimbabwe on how development assistance deals with China are negotiated. The research found out that state actors are the only ones involved and consequently some of the deals are 'unfair' and even exploitative.

Lastly, despite the fact that emerging powers have presented themselves as an alternative source of investment and development funding for Africa, African states need to mobilize significant resources domestically to fuel their own development. The AU needs to give guidance and direction in this regard. Although it is difficult since a significant portion of the AU's budget itself is donor funded, it is the only way Africa can implement the African Solutions for Africa's Problems idea. The continued development of African agency also hinges upon the ability of African states to cater for their major development needs with their own resources before they engage external players. Thus, in FOCAC and other Africa-South engagements, Africa should be at the centre and not at the fringes.

9. CONCLUSION

South-South Cooperation is anchored in a history of anti-imperialism as well mutual political and economic assistance. While the traditional concept of SSC was mainly political in orientation, the contemporary variant is mainly economic. For Africa, SSC has brought alternative options in terms of development assistance and investment deals. Indeed, Africa's traditional development partners use a paternalistic and conditionality-based system that privileges their own interests over those of Africa. However, Southern or emerging economic powers such as China, Brazil and India among others have introduced a different system of delivering development aid and investment which is non-conditional.

This is the kind of system that is used by the Chinese when they make their pledges within the Forum on China Africa Cooperation. The FOCAC stands as a good example of SSC with the Chinese emphasis on mutual assistance and non-interference in internal affairs. Indeed, significant amounts of aid and investment commitments have been made over the years and notable implementation progress is noticeable across the continent. However, Africa's economic development cannot be made possible by external players alone. African states need to be the main actors in their own development issues through the utilisation of domestic financing options. The African Union and African states and civil society need to play important roles in negotiations for aid and investments with emerging powers to ensure that fair and beneficial deals are agreed upon. This is the only way in which African agenda 2063's targets can be achieved.

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