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Africa's Development Metamorphosis: Lessons from China

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Abstract

China is a fast growing world economy that has overtaken the United States of America. Africa has for a long time relied on donor funding and grants from Bretton woods institutions and Western countries to fund its development programs. However with most African countries having been independent for over fifty years not much can be seen or written about on the benefits of the partnership between Africa and the West. Many African countries have now coined the term "Looking East" literally translated to mean partnership with China to fund development programs. China has been welcomed in many African states as a partner in development. The foray of China and Chinese companies in Africa has unsettled the West since its dominance in Africa is under threat. This partnership between China and Africa is more pragmatic now with many Chinese companies doing business in Africa. The Chinese government has been offering scholarships for Africans to study in China and also giving bilateral support in areas like medical teams and kits notably the peace keeping mission in Darfur, Sudan and the global war on Ebola in West Africa. This paper discusses four critical pillars namely: Political leadership, Social cohesion, Agricultural cooperation and Economical use of foreign aid that are relevant to Africa. In these three areas, lessons from China will be addressed and to see how they can be into the African context. Most African Countries are faced by political instability, hunger, social unrest, malnutrition among the citizens and poor governance. China has never received any food donations from World Food Program neither has it had a case of a leader overstaying in office beyond his/her term. This stability and strong governance structures is what Africa needs. Are there lessons that can be drawn from China?

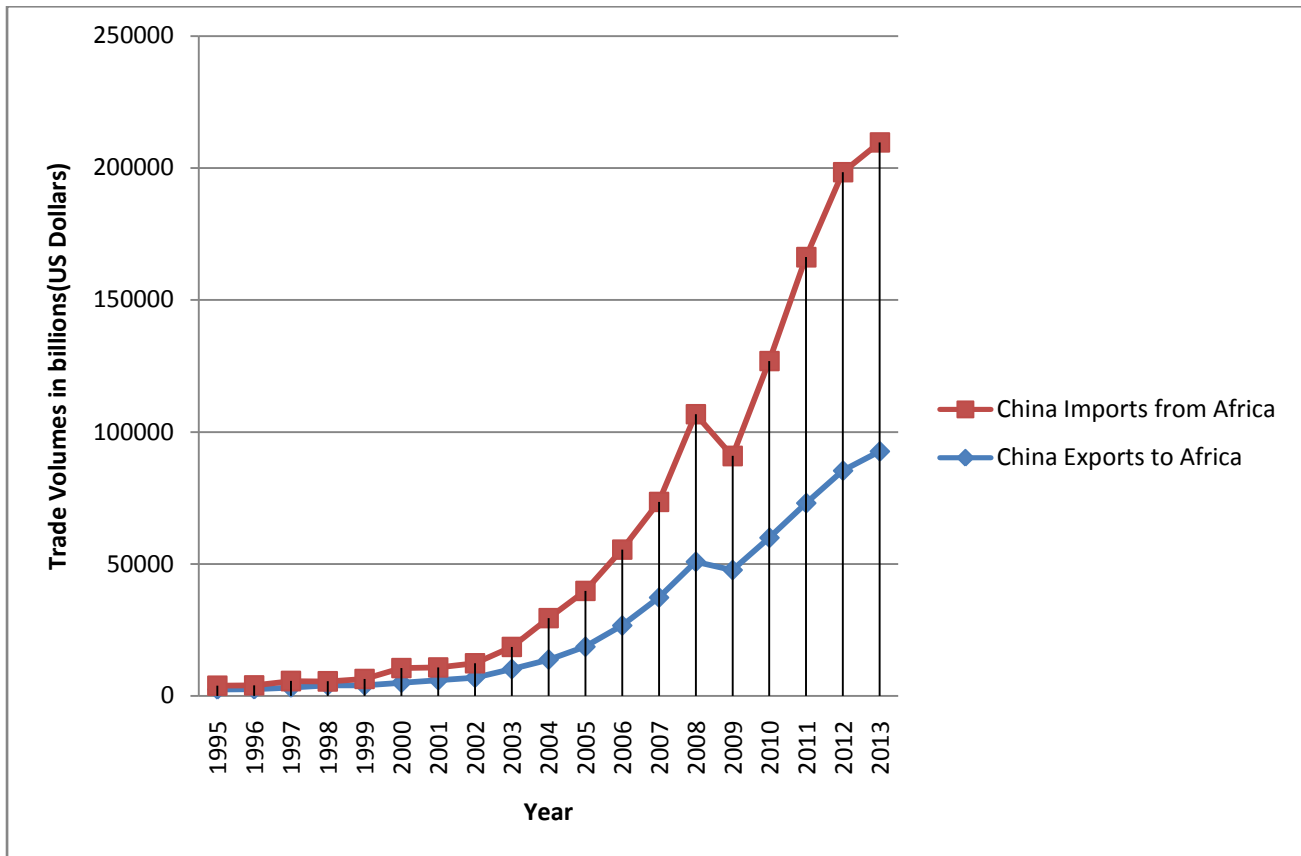
Keywords: Development partnerships; Donor funding.

1. Introduction

Reforms are China's second revolution - Deng Xiaoping

China's economy has been growing rapidly making it have great demand for raw materials to sustain its insatiable economic appetite. Using the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) as its vehicle, the foray of China and its companies into Africa has alarmed many western nations. Some commentators have argued that this Sino-Africa partnership is what is needed as an antidote to the Western world view and Bretton woods institutions programs which have been punitive to many African nations that has seen African states heavily indebted. The Trade partnership between African and European nations is in favour of the West. As can be seen on the trade volume between China and Africa, the benefit is skewed in favour of African countries since China is buying more raw materials from Africa than what it is selling to African nations (Figure 1). These trade volumes point to the fact that the Sino-Africa relations are beneficial to both partners since the variation is negligible.

Figure 1: Import and Export Trade Volumes Between China and Africa (1995-2013)



Source: www.trademarksa.org/news/china-africa-trade-china-and-africas-global-trade-perspectives

The compound growth rate of China’s total trade with Africa shows that total trade volume between China and Africa increased by over 26 per cent between 1995 and 2013. Over this period Chinese imports from and exports volumes to Africa increased by 29 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively (www.tralac.org). During the 2011/2012 period, the value of total trade volumes between China and Africa increased by 19 per cent from approximately US\$ 166 billion in 2011 to approximately US\$ 198 billion in 2012. Over these twelve months, imports from Africa increased by 21 per cent, while exports to Africa increased by only 17 per cent. In value terms, imports increased by approximately US\$ 20 billion while exports increased by approximately US\$ 12 billion during the same period (www.tralac.org and www.trademarksa.org). China is becoming Africa’s greatest trading partner in terms of the exports of goods from Africa as seen in figure 1 above. Thus it is playing a very significant role in developing African economies. This continuous steady rapid growth indicates that both trading partners are willing to actively promote their mutually beneficial trade cooperation so as to better the livelihoods and economies of their citizens. Some critics of this growth have accused China of becoming the second colonial power by exploiting Africa’s natural resources after the Western countries left. However this partnership has led to improved infrastructure something traditional partners (western countries) of Africa had ignored for a long time. China has helped African countries invest in road infrastructure, Health, communication among other key areas that many African countries have been struggling with since independence.

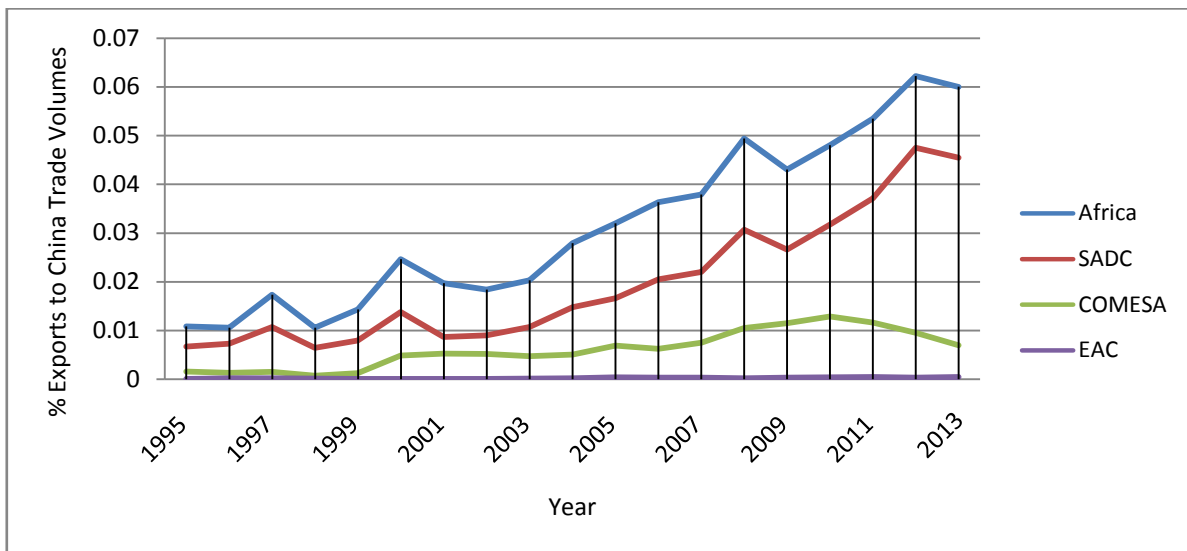
It is evident that there are many development lessons that African countries can borrow from China. These experiences that China underwent through and is still going through in its rapid economic rebirth and transformation may be relevant to African states. Most African Countries are faced by political instability, hunger, social unrest, HIV/Aids pandemic, malnutrition among the citizens and poor governance. This paper will address four pillars that are critical to the phenomenal rise of the dragon. The four issues are Political Leadership, Social Cohesion, Agricultural Production (Food Security) and reasonable use of resources and foreign aid (Economic Growth and Donor aid) shed light on the course African development ought to take.

1.1 Social Cohesion

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership realized long ago that in order to achieve social stability, more emphasis should be put on economic development. Unstable countries cannot develop economically at all. For African countries to develop economically and enhance the quality of life of their citizens, then, a cohesive social political order is extremely important. Africa has got so many raging civil wars in countries like Somalia, South Sudan, Mali, Chad, Darfur and

Nigeria. Most African countries have weaker social cohesions because of absence of social stability due to negative ethnicity, poor governance and weak institutions of governance. Thus, many ethnic conflicts witnessed around the continent are as a result of the absence of stable social cohesion fabric. China is home to more than 55 ethnic groups who have managed to coexist peacefully due to strong governance structures. Africa is home to many conflicts especially in countries with minerals and oil. Chinese policy makers it appears have focused their efforts in addressing conflict directly without outside help or interference. Most conflicts in Africa are as a result of poverty and neglect by the government of its responsibility to citizens. China has policies that tend to directly address grievances of minorities thus reducing cases of government resentment that easily degenerate into armed conflicts as is the case in Africa. Chinese government has tangible and visible mechanisms of addressing minority issues through targeted financial payments and economic assistance in minority areas (Collier and Hoeffler 1998). In contrast, to Africa, directed payments to minority groups or poorer provinces is non-existent. Thus, it can be seen that economic incentives can be used as trade-offs for peace. China has increased its imports of raw materials from Africa for its industries as seen in figure 2 and figure 3.

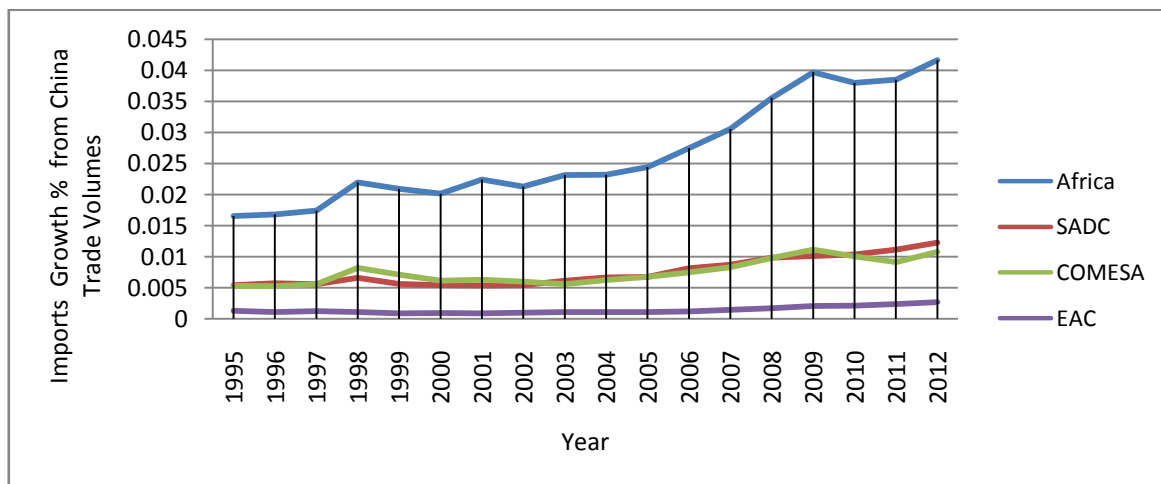
Figure 2: Percentage Increase in Import Trade Volumes by China from Africa (1995-2013)



Source:www.trademarksa.org

Due to this closer economic cooperation, China has been able fund construction of roads, airports, Rail roads, Ports, Dams and sports stadias. This kind of soft economic diplomacy has enabled China to win contracts to help African countries to explore their natural resources. China’s rapid economic growth has led to its increase in demand for raw materials to quench its appetite for economic growth. African countries have pursued an increase of the share of raw material transformation both to add value to their exports and to provide manufacturing jobs for citizens in the continent thus helping address the problem of youth unemployment. Revenue generated is slowly weaning off African countries from donor aid and loans from Bretton woods institutions.

Figure 3: Percentage Increase in Exports Trade Volumes by China to Africa



Source:www.trademarksa.org



In 2012 Chinese exports to South African Development Community (SADC), Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC) accounted for 29 per cent, 26 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively of China's total exports to all African countries. During the 2011/2012 period, China's total trade with SADC increased by 31 per cent, while China's total trade with the EAC and COMESA increased by 18 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively during the same time period (www.tralac.org). Although China's total trade with COMESA increased between 2011 and 2012, this was mainly due to an increase in China's exports to COMESA, given that China's imports from COMESA declined by 14 per cent during the time period (www.tralac.org).

China's development is built on an effective economic system. Its Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are an integral element of its pursuit of economic development progress. SEZs, as the pioneer instrument of the Reform and Opening up Policy, have made great contributions in creating employment for its young population. They have absorbed capital and technology, especially from Hong Kong, which helped in the establishment of China's first SEZ in the early 1980s. This has created jobs for many Chinese young populations thus minimizing cases of civil unrests, riots and politically instigated violence.

1.2 Political Leadership

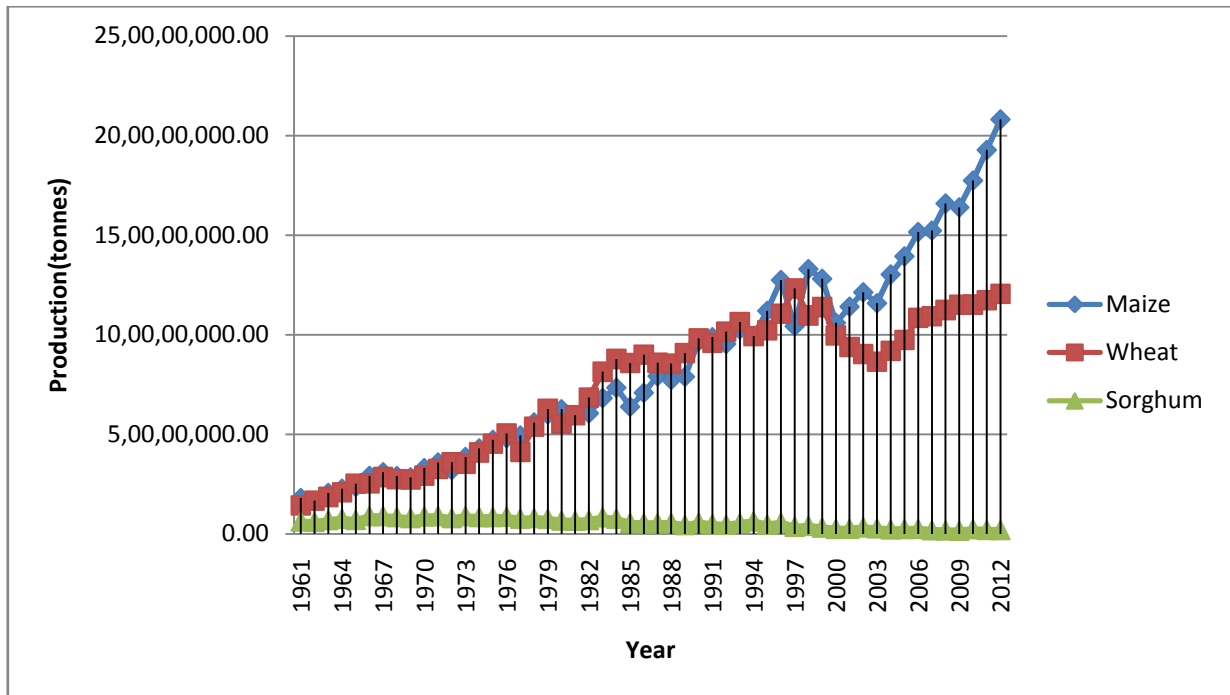
China has a very strong centralized political system whose Communist Party leadership represents the interests of the Chinese people. Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has two levels. That is, the Paramount party leadership and the political leadership that is in charge of running day to day affairs of the government. The Communist Party put a lot of emphasis on young party leaders during the era of Deng Xiaoping. Leaders were and are chosen through a strict meritocratic selection process and are rotated regularly in various work positions so as to get experiences in various work environments. This is the opposite in Africa where anybody can vie for leadership as long as he/she has money.

The CCP advocates for Collective leadership instead of the "the one man show" that characterizes most African states. The party and state are run collectively by the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC). Party and government are separate in that The CCP focuses on long-range goals and planning for the country. Day to day running of the government is left to professional administrators in the State Council and regional governments who implement policies of the PSC. According to Nathan (2003) China's leadership is stable and the regime resilient, which presents a great challenge to the classical European political theories which lay much emphasis on popular democracy that sees even weaker leaders being elected to office without experience to govern a nation. In this paper, Nathan gives several examples citing the stability in the Communist party'. For example, Jiang Zemin served his full term and never overstayed beyond the mandatory term. He set a record as being the first Chinese leader not to hand pick his successor. The Chinese military did not play any role in influencing Jiang's successor rather it was done on merit through consensus by the party politburo. This power transfer was smooth and effective. It has remained so up to date. This could be a pointer to the fact that China is never affected economically because of power transfers or regime changes as is the case in most African countries where regime change is done through bloodshed or leaders simply choose to overstay beyond their mandatory terms during which street demonstrations will be the norm to try and force the unpopular leader out of office. The Chinese, value cohesion so highly that before any leader starts reform agenda he/she must be prepared to take along everyone in the country with them so that the reforms are owned by all citizens. So reform tends to be a lower-common-denominator exercise to protect strong leadership consensus, but that means moving slowly on policy areas so as to keep society more cohesive.

1.3 Agricultural Technology Partnerships

China has the highest population in the whole world. One would therefore expect it to have problems with feeding its citizens. This is far from the truth since the country is an agrarian nation and thus able to feed its population with ease. Agricultural production is critical for the country's growth and food stability. The Chinese have an expression '*wuliangbu wen*', which when directly translated, literally means '*without grain, there is no stability*'. This has made China with a big population not to rely on the international market and imports from other countries for its food basket. Because of its population, China cannot afford to be food insecure. The government of China has put much emphasis in having a food secure nation to the effect that it is a major food donor to international agencies (Ravallion 2008). The production of cereals in china has been rising steadily with years as seen in figure 4:

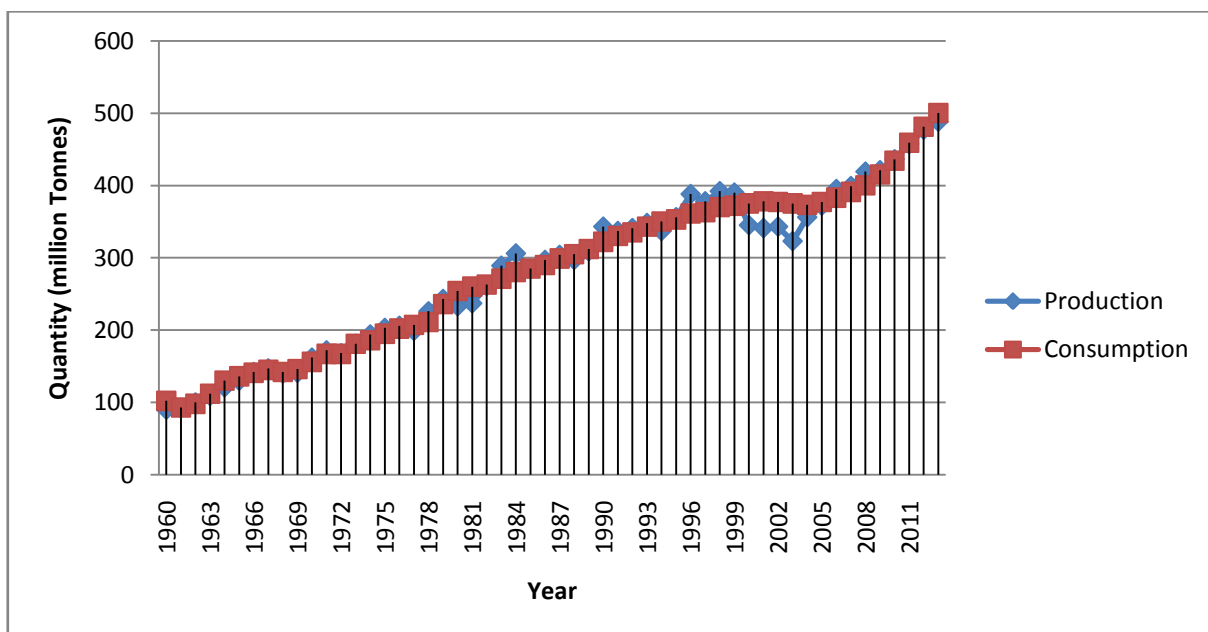
Figure 4: China's Production of Selected Cereals (1961-2012)



Source: FAO 2013

As seen in figure 4 above, the production of cereals in China has maintained a steady rise in tonnes. This may be attributed to sound agricultural policies put in place by the Chinese government. The production of maize in 2012 stood at over 208 million tonnes compared to over 192 million tonnes in 2011. The production of wheat stood at over 120 million tonnes compared to slightly over 117 million tonnes in 2011. The production of sorghum in 2012 stood at 2 million tonnes. The production of sorghum appears to have stagnated. It appears that the production of maize and wheat is immense because the two cereals are highly consumed by the Chinese society. It should also be noted that its production of grains has managed to meet the demand/consumption with few variations where demand overshoot production as seen in figure 5:

Figure 5: Grain Production and Consumption (million tonnes) in China (1960-2013)



Source: www.fas.usda.gov/psdonline

Note: Grain includes barley, corn, millet, mixed grain, oats, rice, rye, sorghum, and wheat.



Africa has the largest arable land which remains underutilized due to lack of enough technological expertise. The under cultivated arable land as per the world Bank estimates stands at 60 per cent. Food production ought to take center stage in China-Africa agricultural technological cooperation. China's agriculture driven economic growth and poverty alleviation and small holder agricultural development policies can provides vital critical lessons for African countries to develop their home grown agricultural development strategies that will reduce poverty and address the problem of unemployment.

Because of its huge population and diverse ecological systems, China's adaptation to climate change has been critical in achieving food security. State-owned agricultural firms have adopted modern farming techniques to mitigate against effects of climate change. Financial institutions such as County Cooperation Credit Organizations among others provide subsidized financial support to farmers. Farmers are encouraged to get credit facilities from financial institutions to enable them purchase seeds, fertilizer and other farm implements to venture into new agricultural activities to improve on food security. This has led to enhance agricultural production (Bi and Li 2004). China's agricultural structures continue to lay emphasis on food crop production. China's market moves in agriculture are supported by strong state investment in research and extension. This is critical if production and output are to increase and meet the needs of any nation. Investing in institutions, such that support national agricultural research and extension system, as well as building up education and training for researchers, farmers, and extension workers will go a step forward in improving agricultural productivity in Africa.

Most African countries have put the blame on harsh and unpredictable climate and weather patterns. African governments have simply not paid enough attention to food production and agriculture. There have been numerous food crises in countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Somalia among other countries. Most African countries are struggling to feed their fastest growing populations. The right to food is among key basic rights that are frequently mentioned in United Nations Treaties (FAO 1999). But it is also among the most violated in most African nations suffering from food insecurity.

China has also put in place the following strategies to enhance food production (Fang XQ, Sheng JF 2000). These measures are:

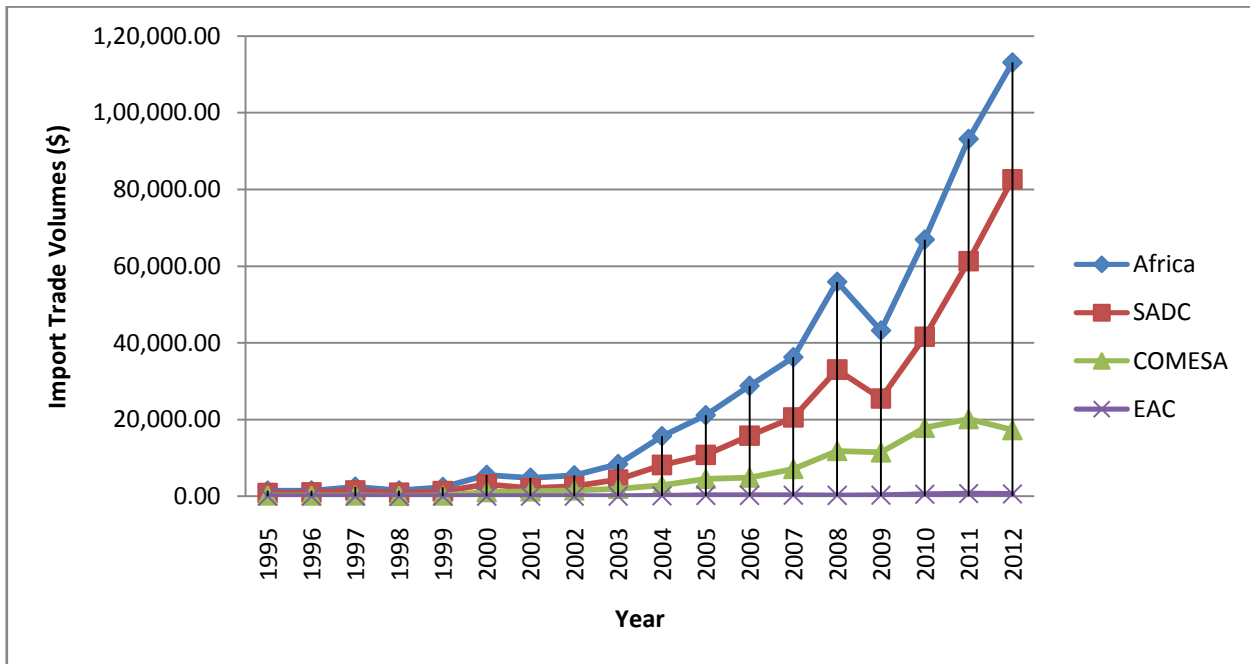
- Enhancing the control of soil erosion, desertification and pollution of farmland by industries and human activities like mining and other industrial activities.
- Improving saline and alkaline land for agricultural production
- Encouraging opening up wasteland and multi-cultivation
- Optimizing ecological environments for agriculture
- Controlling the use of cultivated land by cities and industries

China has a transformation geared towards a market system that supports the provision of irrigation, improved seeds, and fertilizer and market facilities provided by the state to farmers. In contrast, despite the consensus reached on the vital role of agricultural policy in Africa, most countries are unable for instance to increase land that is under irrigation to boost agricultural production. This will also wean off the continent from overreliance on rain fed agriculture. African countries can borrow leaf from China by empowering rural farmers who are the backbone of agriculture in most African countries. Africa has great potential for agricultural growth and nonfarm expansion if proper sound policies are put in place.

1.4 Economic Growth and Donor Aid

Most African countries do not have stable functioning economies that can meet the economic needs of their citizens. They are heavily indebted to European countries and Bretton woods institutions in form of loans given which are then mismanaged through corruption. Most African countries suffer from donor dependency syndrome and they cannot give any financial support to other continents. Since African countries are in dire need, they have always received aid and loans from International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and European Union (EU).

Figure 6: Import Trade Volumes between China and Africa (1995-2012)



Source: www.tralac.org

As seen in figure 6, SADC was both the most important regional configuration in terms of China’s imports and exports (www.tralac.org). The value of goods China imported from SADC, COMESA and the EAC in 2012 were approximately US\$ 83 billion, US\$ 17 billion and US\$ 559 million, respectively. In 2012 Chinese exports to SADC, COMESA and the EAC accounted for 29 per cent, 26 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively of China’s total exports to all African countries (www.tralac.org). History as shown that China in its quest for economic growth can and cannot compromise on some issues. First, it should be noted that, while China compromises on some issues, it has never given up its sovereignty in exchange for foreign aid as is the case in many African countries. For example, in 1958, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics(USSR) asked China to make a concession in the issues of long-wave transceiver and allied fleet, Chairman Mao Zedong turned down this request since he discovered that it was meant to control China. Secondly, China has never let western countries and Bretton woods institutions interfere with its internal matters since Chinese treat foreign aid as a peripheral issue. Thirdly, China puts its foreign currency where it is needed most thus making the citizens benefit more. Fourthly, China has always tried to keep its foreign debt under check and at its minimal level. This is because overreliance on donor aid develops a tendency of dependence on institutions and nations that lend money to the government. This is what is ailing many African economies because they have surrendered their sovereignty to European nations for financial support and grants. African countries have been receiving aid and loans since independence yet there is very little to show for this in terms of improvement of living standards (William 2005). Most African leaders are known to use this aid from donors to enrich themselves and their family members.

1.5 Lessons for Africa

We think too small, like the frog at the bottom of the well. He thinks the sky is only as big as the top of the well. If he surfaced, he would have an entirely different view - Mao Tse-Tung

There are several lessons that Africa can borrow from China.

1.5.1 Managing Ethnic Diversity

In Africa, negative ethnicity is the major root cause of civil wars and political instability. Because of poor governance and archaic policies, many ethnic communities across the continent consider each other as enemies/rivals for political power. Political leaders thus use political power to dispense state resources to their ethnic communities. This has in turn been counterproductive in the long run and had serious consequences for the quality of life of citizens. China’s act of blending its ethnic diversity positively has benefited the country immensely. The multiplicity of ethnic groups in China has been advantageous not only to the Chinese government, but also to the minority groups as it has encouraged them to excel economically, have positive identity and become patriotic to their nation.

Unlike in Africa where larger ethnic communities use their huge ethnic numbers to oppress and misrule minority ethnic groups in order to get better political dispensation and resources, ethnic numbers for the Chinese people are just a matter of statistics. The government has deliberate policies intended to give every Chinese opportunity for economic



development especially in geographical areas that are underdeveloped. In most African countries, ethnic minorities are unable to access education, political representation and even investment in social programs like health and infrastructure. Ethnic and political conflicts have led to economic output declines in a number of countries, rendering macroeconomic and monetary management to be a mirage. This has more often resulted in feelings of resentment and eventually civil wars. In China, on the other hand, in order to empower the minority ethnic groups, the government invests heavily on education to enable the minorities' access equal openings. This is one critical area that Africa can borrow from China in order to make the continent more stable and avoid power struggles which eventually lead to armed conflicts.

1.5.2 Pragmatism and Reforms

The Chinese have over the years been reforming their institutions and way of doing things as opposed to most African countries that have remain stagnant since they got independence more than fifty years ago. One cannot do things the way they used to be done in the 70's and expect to get better results. African nations need to embrace change at all levels, be it in governance, agriculture or trade partnerships. For the Chinese they have been able to be the economic powerhouse of the world by virtue of the pragmatism of their leadership. This is what is lacking in Africa. Ideas that work should be expanded and those that do not work should be discarded. The World Bank does not play any significant role in Chinese economy yet this has not stopped the economy from growing. China's embracing of bureaucratic and administrative reforms have improved the participation of its citizens in national decision making peasants and ethnic minorities which is critical to their standard of living and quality of life. This partly explains why china has little civil disturbances and those that occur are easily managed without involving international bodies like the United Nations (UN) or United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

1.5.3 Financial Reforms

China's willingness to embrace financial reforms has allowed government revenues to grow at rates well ahead of the growth of national income hence providing it with the wherewithal to sustain double digit growth in government spending on education, health, and social overhead infrastructure development. This is key to development and poverty alleviation. China also does not condone corruption and wastage of public funds as is the case with African countries. If African states embraced zero tolerance to corruption, then a lot of funds will be available to fund development projects.

1.5.4 Diversification of Economies

African countries must diversify their economies in order to stay afloat and serve best the needs of their citizens. This will help create the much need employment for the growing population. China has been able to keep unemployment under manageable levels by diversifying its economy which has helped create much needed employment for its youth. For example, most African countries still rely on rain fed agriculture. This is why whenever there is drought, hunger and malnutrition hits hard African populace. The number of acreage for irrigation schemes around the continent should be increased to address the problem of food security in the continent. Also handling of cargo at various ports across the continent can boost economies of landlocked countries together with those that have ports if transport corridors are improved in terms of efficiency. For example,

- Central African Republic and are Chad dependent on Douala port in Cameroon
- Burundi, Democratic republic of Congo Uganda South Sudan and Rwanda dependent on Mombasa port in Kenya
- Niger, Mali, and Burkina, dependent on Cotonou port in Benin, Abidjan port in Ivory Coast and Lome port in Togo
- Zimbabwe and Zambia, dependent on Durban port in South Africa
- Niger dependent on Lagos port in Nigeria
- Mali dependent on Dakar port in Senegal

Inefficiencies and corruption in these ports undermines the economies of landlocked nations. It is hoped that the entry of China in Africa especially in development of infrastructure will to a great extent improve processing of cargo in these ports hence spur economic growth.

1.5.5 Job Creation

African governments should direct foreign investment into the labour-intensive industries through preferential trade and tax policies, such as tax exemptions for manufacturing companies and export tax rebates. This will attract much need investments in the continent where labour is in abundance. Governments should use the foreign capital to develop domestic industries and absorb the low-skilled non-agricultural workforce into the manufacturing sector. Absorbing low-skilled workers in these labour-intensive industries has a ripple effect in the economy as these people who now will be earning wages will change their consumption patterns and demand for other services and products will increase. As



industries will be responding to this increase in aggregate demand, the economy will not stagnate but rather will grow. Job creations will dissuade many young jobless people in the continent who may be idle the temptation to participate in armed conflicts to overthrow governments. China's SEZs have already shown that manufacturing; trade and retail industries can absorb low-skilled workers, for instance, in the clothing, electronics, chemicals and machinery sectors and help bring unemployment down.

1.5.6 Meritocracy in Leadership

Creating a system that appoints and promotes capable leaders on meritocracy is important. In the case of China, promotion is explicitly tied to past performance. Corrupt leaders are never promoted to senior positions but rather jailed. Education is also explicitly delineated to be a criterion for promotion. In most African countries, the corrupt and economic criminals are the ones who hold and run state institutions. This means the quality of leadership is compromised and can never achieve national goals. We need a visionary leadership across the continent, leaders who are not self-serving but rather have the interests of citizens at heart. In Africa, conflicts have been heavily concentrated in low income countries and are usually prominent in countries where there is resource abundance, such as oil or diamonds, gold, among other minerals. With good leaders and sound policies, conflicts can be managed much better than it is done now.

1.6 Conclusion

China's rapid economic transformation holds vital lessons for Africa whose countries are entangled in poverty fetters. There is so much that Africa can learn in this Sino-Africa partnership. In areas of zero tolerance to corruption, conflict resolution, food security and social cohesion are some of key lessons Africa can draw from China. The key message from China is that no matter the political system, smart and workable policies are critical to accelerating economic growth. This paper has suggested several lessons that may be useful to African continent and policy makers and implementers in order to reinvigorate the continent's economic viability. While Africa and China may be different in many ways, it is possible that Africa can really learn a lot from China in this Sino-Africa partnership that will help the continent develop sound policies that will help Africa economies to wake up from their slumber. Smart policies will result in smart results.

It is hoped that the spirit of South-South cooperation, will enable Africa to learn numerous development lessons from China in a wide range of areas so as to improve the quality of governance in Africa and also lead to better service provision within the continent. Africa should carefully identify and make adjustments to China's experiences in order to adapt to local and regional situations; just as China has done throughout its long history. It should not just accept whole meal everything from China rather it should only borrow those evidence based lessons that will transform the continent.

Abbreviations

KIPPRA: Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis

UN: United Nations

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

IMF: International Monetary Fund WORLD BANK

EU: European Union

SADC: South African Development Community

COMESA: Common Market for East and Southern Africa

EAC: East African Community

SEZ: Special Economic Zones

PBSC: Politburo Standing Committee

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

FOCAC: Forum for China-Africa Cooperation



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Finally Above all other things, I am nothing without the ever present help from God..... Deus lux mea est.

aquila non capit muscas

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- ❖ The Role of Informal Traditional Justice Systems in Enhancing Kenya's Judicial Service Delivery. *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Sciences*. Volume 2,(Issue 3):128-135(<http://www.ikpress.org/abstract.php?iid=475&id=46&aid=3933#.VWWcVEacIT4>) (2015)
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