

David Robinson, Edith Cowan University

The Political Economy of China in Africa: The Case of Mozambique

Introduction

There is currently much debate in the field of International Relations regarding the rise of China and the trajectory of its economic growth, military build-up, and strategic designs. China's state-capitalist economy, enormous population, and renewed international relationships are facilitating its emergence as a Great Power, and Africa's oil and natural resources have motivated China to deepen relations with the continent (Jakobson, 2009: 404). China's diplomatic success was demonstrated by its Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2006, which welcomed 48 African leaders to Beijing during 'China's Year of Africa' (Jakobson, 2009: 408). However, while many African countries welcome Chinese engagement as less intrusive than the conditionalities attached to relations with the West, commentators fear that China's 'non-interference' regarding governance and human rights will hamper campaigns for political and economic reform (AFRODAD, 2008: 3). Mozambique is one of the countries embracing relations with China. After centuries of Portuguese colonialism and a post-independence civil war, Mozambique became a poster child for Western-backed democratisation and economic reform; however, "[l]ife for most Mozambicans still tends to be characterized by poverty and hardship more than a decade and a half after the fighting ended" (Reisinger, 2009: 490-491). Meanwhile, Mozambique's political class have used their positions to corruptly accumulate wealth and status, leaving many Mozambicans nostalgic for the solidarity and self-sacrifice of the nation's socialist period (Sumich, 2008: 112, 122). In this context, China has brought Mozambicans new infrastructure, consumer goods, and the promise of a 'Green Revolution' in agricultural production ('Mozambique and Angola', 2009).

This study will examine China's growing relations with Mozambique, to derive insights for wider arguments regarding China's aims and impacts in Africa, and the trajectory of its growing global influence. It is argued that details of the China-Mozambique relationship support positions that: China's engagement with Africa is overwhelmingly economic and diplomatic, rather than military and strategic; that even in a non-oil producing country Chinese aid and investment is driven by the aim of acquiring natural resources; but that, contrary to assertions China is not interested in Africa's long-term development, China is attempting to foster general economic growth and social stability, and to maintain a positive public image. Evidence supports concerns that Chinese activities lessen Western leverage to induce reforms, and may also undermine elements of the host economy and cause environmental degradation. However, China's presence remains popular because of perceived social and economic benefits that it delivers, in contrast to neoliberal structural adjustment's failure to significantly bolster social and economic progress. It will finally be suggested that China's relations with Mozambique support the wider diagnosis of declining American hegemony, but that China is not yet assuming that mantle.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework informing this investigation draws on contemporary Marxism, Neo-Gramscianism and World-Systems Theory, which have a “radically ‘historicist’ and social-relational ontology of world politics [which situates] international relations within the context of capitalist social relations” (Anievas, 2010: 2). The capitalist world-system is characterised by the asymmetry of an integrated world market without a sovereign political authority – creating differentiated power between classes and nations (Herrera, 2008: 2009). Capitalism developed within a pre-existing system of states, but also reconfigured those states – naturalising the capitalist market and separating the spheres of politics and economics, thus facilitating, “the institutional separation of the relations of rule and surplus appropriation” (Teschke and Lacher, 2010: 30). Despite the separation of governance and economics the state must serve the interests of capital-as-a-class (‘the national interest’), internally regulating inter-capital relations to preserve market conditions, mediating relations between labour and capital, and externally representing domestic capital’s interests in relation to other states.

In many developing nations like China and Mozambique the process of separating state and economy is incomplete. The Chinese state is still facilitating the formation of a capitalist class, often consisting of Communist Party members using preferential access to state resources to establish themselves as capitalists (Van der Pilj, 2006: 305). China also now has many state-owned enterprises operating *as* private corporations, though state ownership allows these to forego profitability in the service of foreign policy goals (Moss & Rose, 2006). However, the Chinese state is still bound to operate in ‘the national interest’ in a similar way to Western states by dependence on national production for its resources, and the interpenetration of the state and capitalist classes, supplemented by a particular focus on preserving social (and thus regime) stability. As with other states, overall ‘Chinese’ international policy is the amalgam of parallel operations by the Chinese state and independently-operating Chinese businesses.

World-Systems theorists such as Immanuel Wallerstein and Giovanni Arrighi argue that global capitalism passed through a series of systemic hegemonies maintained by the Netherlands, Great Britain, and most recently the United States. The golden age of American hegemony was the post-war boom from 1945 until the early 1970s, during which social democratic states developed in the West, and Third World countries undertook nation-building programmes (Amin, 2003: 11-13). Crisis in American hegemony then began from the late 1960s, initiated by failure in the Vietnam War, the global challenge of anti-war and anti-systemic movements, and economic recession in the early 1970s (Silver & Slater, 1999: 214). During the 1970s, neoliberal economists such as Milton Friedman linked declining business profitability with the inflationary pressure of increasing Third World commodity prices, and subsequently a monetarist economic turn forced up American interest rates, restoring the strength of the US dollar and sending much of the developing world into debt-related crisis (Van der Pilj, 2006: 189-190). By the 1980s neoliberalism became a new hegemonic discourse (Harvey, 2007: 23), and for Africa neoliberal reforms enforced currency devaluations, dismantling of industrial protections, and substitution of private for public enterprise (Arrighi, 2002: 7). The impacts were declining levels of growth, foreign take-overs of domestic industries, rising levels of corruption, and less social

subsidies for Africa's most vulnerable people (Bond, 2005: 232). By 1989 the international financial institutions were arbiters of development policy for most African states (Harrison, 2005: 1308).

However, though neoliberal triumphalism spread alongside US financial expansion during the 1990s, World-Systems theorists maintained that the financialisation of the American economy was actually a sign of developing hegemonic crisis (Arrighi & Silver, 1999b: 272). Instead, Giovanni Arrighi writes that in reflecting on the history of the late twentieth century, "no single theme will prove to be of greater significance than the economic renaissance of East Asia" (Arrighi, 2007: 1). Over the past 30 years China has averaged economic growth rates of around 10%, has become the world's top exporter, and is now the second largest economy (Marks, 2010). From the 1950s Communist China engaged in state-dominated autarkic development, but this changed following Chairman Mao's death in 1976 (Kaplinsky, 2008: 7-8). Deng Xiaoping turned China onto a path of engaging with the global economy through his 'Open Door' policy, introducing market practices and increasing international trade (Kornberg & Faust, 2005: 67). While a high level of funding and advice from the World Bank and IMF were important in maintaining China's growth rates (Kornberg & Faust, 2005: 228-230), it only accepted this assistance "on terms and at conditions that served the Chinese 'national interest'" (Arrighi, 2007: 355).

With its reach from Central Asia to the Pacific, good natural harbours, and proximity to other vibrant economies, geography ensures that China will be a geopolitical hub. But the need to secure energy and mineral resources is driving China to expand its global connections, potentially causing friction with other nations (Kaplan, 2010). Although "it is against China's national interest to be in direct conflicts with other countries" (Yang, 2011), some analysts suggest China is involved in a complex game of counter-balancing US, Russian and Indian influence in Asia (Rozman, 2010: 5), while seeking in the next few decades to rise to regional pre-eminence (OSD, 2010: 15). For Marxists and World-Systems Theorists the path of China's rise remains contingent on historical events, but Arrighi notes that while most analysts compare the rise of China to the military challenge presented by Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, an overlooked example is the transition of hegemonic power from the United Kingdom to the United States. While the United States is entering a period of decline and China will probably take its place, this does not necessitate conflict between the two powers. Perhaps, gradually and peacefully, China may overtake the US in the structural areas that ultimately underwrite hegemony – production, commerce and finance (Arrighi & Silver, 1999: 24).

The China-Africa Relationship

Much of the contemporary literature on Chinese activities in Africa advances, "[t]he stock notion that China practices neocolonialism in Africa and promotes corruption ... [is] harmful to the environment ... [and conducts trade] that is damaging to African antipoverty efforts" (Sautman & Hairong, 2007: 76). However, African opinion polls have been more positive about China than the United States, and view China's model of state-directed growth with greater esteem than the neoliberal 'Washington Consensus' (Kurlantzick, 2007: 9, 134). Three major interpretations of China's role in Africa abound in the West: that of a

development partner, whose operations will be mutually beneficial; an economic competitor, whose success undermines African development goals; and a coloniser, whose long-term project is to displace Western influence and enforce geostrategic control (Alden, 2007: 5-6). The choice of interpretation is often highly ideological and based on the observer's interests.

China's modern engagement with Africa was shaped during the decolonisation period from the 1950s into the 1970s, forged heavily in the rhetoric of unity in anti-colonial struggle and solidarity between developing nations (Mohan & Power, 2008: 27-28). During the 1960s and 1970s China provided support to several African independence struggles, as well as assisting newly-independent African nations with doctors, technical experts, and infrastructure (Jakobson, 2009: 407). By the 1980s China's activity on the continent declined as it focused on domestic reforms, and its trade with the continent shrank dramatically (Yi-Chong, 2008: 23). However, the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre was a turning point in the relationship as African governments declined to join the West in isolating China (Jakobson, 2009: 408). The rising importance of energy resources for China's foreign policy during the 1990s then led China to devote increasingly substantial resources towards the African continent (Mohan & Power, 2008: 30).

The growing China-Africa relationship became incontrovertible following the official proclamation of 2006 as 'China's Year of Africa', hosting 48 African leaders at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing (Jakobson, 2009: 408). African leaders were engaged with a discourse of common economic, political and cultural exchange, which confirmed that China was now serious about courting Africa, and within a year President Hu Jintao toured Africa again, visiting eight nations (Pant, 2008: 33). The Chinese government now highlights the complementarity of economic needs between China and Africa: Africa needs Chinese capital and infrastructure investment, while China needs Africa's natural resources (Yi-Chong, 2008: 27). China's economic engagement with Africa has accelerated greatly over the past decade, as bi-lateral trade increased by ten times to over \$100bn annually ('China Praised', 2009) and China became Asia's leading importer of African products (Broadman, 2007: 11), with oil constituting 80% of China's imports by value (Alden & Alves, 2009). Meanwhile, Chinese investment in Africa grew by 300 times between 1990 and 2007 to around US\$14 billion (Naidu, Corkin & Hermin, 2009: 103). The majority of these Chinese FDI inflows to Africa have been concentrated in the extractive industries (Broadman, 2007: 12). In concert with trade and investment, China has cancelled almost \$3 billion in African debt (Bräutigam, 2010: 27), and recently pledged \$10 billion in concessional loans to African countries (Horta, 2009). China also invests billions of dollars a year in funding roads, railways, dams and power projects across Africa, which have been neglected as unprofitable by Western aid agencies and business (Naidu, Corkin & Hermin, 2009: 96). And unlike reluctant Westerners, more than 750,000 Chinese are now living in Africa (Hurt, 2009).

Perspectives on China in Africa

With China's expanding influence in Africa, concerns have been raised about its impact on issues of democratisation, human rights, and sustainable development (Liang, 2008: 153).

China's relations with the governments of Sudan and Zimbabwe have been of particular concern, sustaining the regimes and undermining Western sanctions (Pant, 2008: 39). In addition to supporting some of the worst human rights abusers, it is argued that China's financial alternatives for African states lessen Western leverage for democratic reform through donors and the international financial institutions (Alden & Alves, 2009). There are also concerns raised about the negative effects of China's economic involvement in Africa, beginning with the contention that China is primarily motivated by resource extraction, and does not care about Africa's long-term economic prosperity (Large, 2008: 55). Additionally, it is argued that China sees Africa as an opportunity to expand the market for Chinese products, and that major infrastructure projects in Africa are primarily to provide employment for Chinese labour (Jakobson, 2009: 410). Chinese aid projects may also require recipients to spend the money on goods or services from Chinese companies (LaFraniere & Grobler, 2009), and use Chinese contractors for construction. When locals are hired, it is then suggested that Chinese companies are undermining labour standards. Chinese companies operating in Africa may also pose risks for the environment and sustainable development, as African regulations are poorly enforced and Chinese projects may either cause destruction incidentally by ignoring environment impacts, or directly through activities like predatory deforestation (Alden & Alves, 2009).

Defenders of Chinese involvement in Africa highlight important counterpoints, and actions by China to improve their conduct. For example, Pant writes that China, "played a crucial role in persuading the Sudanese government to allow an expanded United Nations presence in the Darfur region..." (Pant, 2008: 39). In response to claims that Chinese aid undermines Western leverage, it can be also argued that conditions imposed by Western aid and the international financial institutions equally represent the interests of Western elites (Jakobson, 2009: 405). And that while authoritarian African regimes will certainly use Chinese money to avoid genuine democratisation, "there has been case after case where the IMF and other IFIs have found self-serving excuses for continuing to fund authoritarian regimes" (Friedman, 2010: 142). Economically, Chinese trade and investment in Africa *is* aiding development, "if for no other reason than that little investment is forthcoming from other sources" (Taylor, 2006: 951). And the broad spectrum of China's engagement with Africa, including infrastructure, training, education and medical care, "strongly suggest a balanced and long-term approach to promoting African economic growth" (Hofstedt, 2009: 86).

Infrastructure expansion has been a major part of co-operation with Africa, and internationally China has a comparative advantage in building that infrastructure (Ling, 2010: 12). While Chinese products and investors do compete with African producers, developmental benefits may accrue as Chinese investors in Africa tend to create larger-scale operations than domestic firms, realise economies of scale, produce goods higher up the value chain, and help to better integrate economies internationally. These businesses then create significant domestic spill-over effects, and China is meanwhile taking steps to open up its own markets to African commodities (Pant, 2008: 33-43). In terms of labour, while oil-fuelled construction booms in Angola and Algeria have involved Chinese companies importing much of their labour, Chinese companies in nations like Tanzania, Egypt and Zambia tend to hire 80%-90% of their workforce locally (Bräutigam, 2010b). Environmental standards are also rising, and as Chinese leaders become increasingly concerned with

pollution, energy consumption and global warming these principles will be reflected in Chinese development finance (Bräutigam, 2010: 29). Meanwhile, criticisms of the predatory nature of Chinese resource and timber companies often also apply to their Western competitors, and “China does not participate at all in the biopiracy in Africa carried on by Western pharmaceutical firms” (Sautman & Hairong, 2007: 76).

Geo-strategically, some see China and the US as now being engaged in a new ‘Scramble for Africa’ focused on oil and strategic resources. The US has recently been expanding its strategic presence via the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), under the pretence of fighting terrorism (Yi-Chong, 2008: 16-17), but even those who suspect China of nefarious designs cannot point to military intervention wider than arms sales and deployment of Chinese Navy warships to fight piracy (Holslag, 2009: 23). For the most part then, China’s military presence in Africa is seen as an inevitable *future* manifestation (Jakobson, 2009: 422). Unable to point to threatening Chinese deployment in Africa, analysts instead castigate China for the opposite: “China is viewed as a ‘free-rider’ in the international system, taking advantage of the order and stability being maintained by other great powers” (Pant, 2008: 41). Thus for the meantime China seems to have little enthusiasm for unilateral intervention in Africa, and the interests of both the US and China converge in Africa being a stable and secure environment for trade and economic development (Hofstedt, 2009: 91). While competition will obviously continue for access to economic resources in Africa, China’s diplomatic and ideological mobilisation of African states is also important at a global level. China has already made severing ties with Taiwan a pre-requisite for relations (Pant, 2008: 35). Thus China is mobilising African states in institutional alliances, attracting “[y]oung, intelligent, well-educated Africans ... to the Chinese model ... [instead of the] ‘neo-liberal overdose of deregulation, cutting social expenditure, privatizing everything ... and jettisoning the public good’” (Sautman & Hairong, 2007: 80-81).

China and Mozambique:

Most analysts generally agree that, “China’s [recent] involvement with Mozambique can be described as just short of meteoric” (Horta, 2007: 1). Throughout the 1960s China supplied training, equipment and money to the various Mozambican liberation organisations, including the eventually ascendant FRELIMO party (Chichava, 2008: 3); though FRELIMO’s leadership balanced Chinese and Soviet support to ensure autonomy (Roque, 2009: 2). China was among the first countries to recognise independent Mozambique in 1975, but Sino-Mozambican relations soon cooled due to political differences on various international issues. (Jackson, 1995: 412-416). Relations with China again improved in the early 1980s, and a low-level relationship of trade and aid thus continued into the 1990s (Taylor, 2006: 100-103).

The China-Mozambique relationship in the twenty first century has then flourished following the 1997 establishment of a \$20 million incentive fund for Chinese companies, and the 2001 creation of a Joint Economic and Trade Commission (Roque, 2009: 3). Mozambique is still not in the top ten African nations for Chinese trade and investment, but it has had one of the fastest growth rates of trade with China experienced by any single nation (Horta, 2007: 1). While Mozambique may be marginal to China’s global interests, for Mozambique,

“China is fast emerging as the most important economic and diplomatic player ... bringing billions of dollars in investments and asking no questions” (Horta, 2011a: 12). Mozambican politicians have welcomed Chinese interest, with President Armando Guebuza making clear that they are “very satisfied with the support offered by China” (Ilhéu, 2010: 57), and that China is “a partner and not a colonizer” (Chichava, 2008: 2). Some analysts suggest that many average Mozambicans believe the Chinese are “looking only after their own interests” (Chichava, 2008: 10). However, a number of independent surveys have concluded that Mozambicans generally welcome the Chinese, despite some mistakes they made early in the relationship (Ilhéu, 2010: 55). The relationship has emerged as mutually-beneficial, and China’s strong focus on building infrastructure has made it a particularly appealing partner for a nation devastated by war (Roque, 2009: 4).

Economic Relations

A major share of economic input from China is in the form of aid. This encompasses Chinese grants for public projects, cheap loans, and programmes of social, cultural, technical, and humanitarian cooperation. Programmes include, in education: hundreds of scholarships for Mozambican students to pursue higher education in China (Horta, 2011a: 11); training for 500 Mozambican professionals in China; the building of rural schools (Ilhéu, 2010: 55); and funding for long-distance learning (‘China Grants’, 2011). Medical assistance has included free medical supplies (Ilhéu, 2010: 55) and teams of Chinese doctors to work in Mozambican hospitals (‘More Chinese’, 2010). China provided US\$22 million of debt forgiveness in 2001 (Horta, 2007) and another US\$20 million in 2007, clearing Mozambican debt accumulated since the 1980s (Ilhéu, 2010: 3).

Many concessional Chinese loans fund infrastructure, which have beneficial flow-through effects for Mozambicans and high-visibility for political returns. Including “roads, bridges, military installations and hospitals” (Horta, 2011a: 10), infrastructure funded by the Chinese is prolific, varied, and includes many high-profile projects. Chinese companies have carried out a third of all recent road construction, including “important transportation link[s] between the north and south of the country”, with funding being sought for roads linking with neighbouring countries (Roque, 2009). This has provided Chinese companies with a long-term physical presence along these key arteries, and a central role in national rehabilitation (Horta, 2007: 3); and Chinese funding for major railway projects connecting industry to important ports is being arranged. In the capital Maputo, projects being considered include a bridge across Maputo Bay, a road to Mozambique’s southern tip, and schemes to decongest city traffic (‘China Grants’, 2011). China has invested more than US\$65 million in the modernisation of Maputo International Airport (‘China Pledges’, 2011), and begun work expanding the Vilanculos aerodrome – a key tourist gateway (‘Chinese Company’, 2010). Direct flights between Mozambique and China are soon expected, with optimistic companies hoping to attract a million Chinese tourists over the next decade (Horta, 2011a: 10).

Chinese funding paid for the construction of Mozambique’s new Parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, High Court, and national Conference Centre (Ilhéu, 2010); and Chinese companies refurbished the symbolically important Polana Hotel – the most luxurious in Maputo (‘Chinese-owned’, 2009). The new Zimpeto national soccer stadium was another

prestige project for the Chinese, who funded and built the FIFA-approved 42,000 seat venue ('China Hands'). Chinese construction companies have been building urban water supplies ('Chinese Companies', 2010), cement factories ('Chinese Investors', 2010), cotton processing plants ('Chinese Banks', 2010), and vehicle assembly workshops ('China to Fund', 2010). Recently construction began on a Chinese-funded US\$439-million housing project outside Maputo, building a 5,000-house middle-class suburb ('Chinese Building', 2011). Meanwhile, the current Chinese-funded 'mega-project' is the US\$2.3 billion Mphanda Nkuwu dam in central Mozambique (Horta, 2007: 2), a hydro-electric dam on the Zambezi River that aims to service both Mozambique and regional markets ('Mozambique to Start', 2009).

Agriculture is another sector vital for Mozambique, and China recently built a US\$6 million agricultural research centre to facilitate scientific research, training, and technology development ('Chinese Ambassador', 2011). The Chinese hope to increase Mozambican rice production from 100,000 to 500,000 tonnes a year – ultimately aiming to import surpluses into Chinese markets ('China's Farming', 2009). There is hope that new crop types, farming techniques and technology might initiate a 'Green Revolution' in Mozambique ('Mozambique and Angola', 2009), of particular significance for the over 80% of Mozambicans who work in agriculture (Sachs et al, 2004: 148). Biofuels are another major area of interest, with estimates that Mozambique could produce liquid biofuels equivalent to 3 million barrels of oil per day. After domestic markets were filled, China would again envisage importing excess supplies (Roque, 2009: 11).

Bilateral trade between the Mozambique and China has increased dramatically over the last five years, from US\$120 million in 2006 (Roque, 2009) to \$690 million in 2010 (Horta, 2011a: 10). Thus far Mozambique's main exports to China have been minerals, and natural resources like wood, oil seeds, cotton, vegetables, and seafood (Ilhéu, 2010: 53). Wood is the main non-mineral export, with more than 90% of Mozambican timber exports going to China (Chichava, 2008: 9). Meanwhile, there is a massive expansion in mining operations, with the Brazilian company Vale Moçambique aiming to produce 1 million tonnes of iron concentrate annually – mostly to sell to China ('Brazil's' 2010); along with steel and coal projects by Australian-listed Riversdale Mining, and China's Wuhan Iron and Steel Corp ('Riversdale', 2010). Mozambique's imports from China "are dominated by vehicles and parts, electrical appliances and iron and steel articles, construction materials and related machinery, manufactured goods, like footwear, bags, electronic products, [and] textiles...." (Ilhéu, 2010: 54).

Chinese investment in Mozambique has also multiplied by at least six times over the last decade to make it Mozambique's second largest investor by 2008 – after South Africa. Dozens of Chinese companies are registered by Mozambique's Investment Promotion Centre (Ilhéu, 2010: 51-52), and Chinese businesses have signalled plans to investment more than US\$13 billion over the next 10 years in Mozambican infrastructure, mining, agriculture and tourism. China's single largest investment has been US\$1 billion in coal mining by Wuhan Iron and Steel; while the Chinese company Kingho plans to invest \$5 billion in the industry (Horta, 2011a: 10). The coal sector will thus be one of the biggest drivers of Mozambican economic growth ('China and Brazil's', 2010). There is promise of related infrastructure development, through projects such as the modernisation of Beira harbour – a potential export gateway for Chinese companies in Malawi, Zambia and

Zimbabwe (Horta, 2011a: 11). In line with Chinese tourism plans, investors are building new five-star hotels around Maputo, worth more than US\$230 million (Hanlon, 2010a), and businessmen from Macau are hoping to build a casino ('Macau Businessmen', 2011).

Political and Strategic Relations

Unlike the Cold War period, when Chinese-Mozambican relations were dominated by ideology and geo-politics, contemporary political relations are dominated by economics. China's political interest in Mozambique was signalled by President Hu Jintao's 2007 visit, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi's 2009 visit, and a steady stream of lower officials (Marks, 2010). Meanwhile, in recent years the Mozambican President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister have travelled to China annually for meetings with their Chinese counterparts (Seabra, 2011: 10). This is also within the context of wider Chinese efforts to forge relations with the Portuguese-speaking countries, with annual Lusophone conferences held in Macau ('China's Trade', 2010). Militarily a very low-level relationship forged between China and Mozambique over the last five years has involved: meetings between defence ministers ('Senior Chinese', 2009); technical, logistical and infrastructure assistance in the form of vehicles, computers, uniforms and houses (Chichava, 2008: 8); and funding for non-lethal equipment that rose to US\$3 million annually in the year 2011 ('Chinese Gift', 2010). This can be compared to relations with the US military, who are actively training Mozambican forces for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations (IPRIS, 2010: 10).

While the Mozambican government is quite active in ensuring proper regulation of Chinese enterprises, and is watched closely by the media and civil society (Roque, 2009: 12), overall the political establishment has great enthusiasm for growing relations with China (Horta, 2007: 3). So the exhortations of high-level politicians are of no surprise – President Guebuza saying those who criticise China “are delirious” ('President Guebuza', 2011). A former Mozambican foreign minister noted that, “[i]n the end it's up to us, the Chinese like anyone else have their interests and will plunder us to the extent that we let them” (Horta, 2009); and for the foreseeable future the Mozambican government is advancing with that in mind.

Assessing China-Mozambique Relations:

With economics being at the forefront of China's growing relationship with Mozambique it is clear that a key motivation for China is the profitability of the association. A large part of China's activity in Mozambique is building infrastructure, often undertaken by Chinese companies and paid for by a mixture of Chinese and other donor funding. Trade with Mozambique has also increased, however neither of these areas is particularly profitable for China, especially compared to investments such as the US\$2.3 billion Mphanda Nkuwa dam (Horta, 2007: 2). Chinese interest thus seems to be more in the material imports from Mozambique. Over the next decade Chinese businesses intend to invest in Mozambique's extractive industries – mining, forestry and agriculture – along with tourism. The largest private Chinese investments China have been in the coal industry (Horta, 2011a: 10). Mozambique produces minerals such as gold, tantalum, and bauxite – and the Mozal aluminium smelter is Africa's second largest producer of aluminium. Deposits of other

minerals such as copper, iron ore, manganese, and titanium have also been identified (Yager, 2004: 30.1). Mozambique has three relatively large coal deposits, with reserves estimated at about 2.4 billion tonnes, and mines likely to last 35 years. Detected natural gas accumulations are estimated to hold 3.5 trillion cubic feet of gas (Cuvilas, Jirjis & Lucas, 2011: 2141), and oil has been discovered in Mozambique's north, though not necessarily in commercial quantities (Hanlon, 2010a: 11).

In agriculture, Mozambique has lightly exploited land, favourable climatic conditions and abundant labour, which give it great growth potential (Schut, Slinglander & Locke, 2010: 5155). The modernisation of agriculture aims to create export surpluses, thus Chinese assistance is additionally motivated by Chinese food security interests ('China's Farming', 2009). Biofuels are another major area of potential. As an importer of oil Mozambique has motivation to seek domestic alternatives, and it has been identified as a promising region for biofuel production. China is driven by its need to secure energy resources, and diversification into biofuels could be a productive investment (Cuvilas, Jirjis & Lucas, 2011: 2141). However, all sides seem keenly aware that, as Mozambican food prices sparked recent riots, domestic food consumption will have to increase in tandem with other usage of those supplies (Thaler, 2011: 3).

China is thus clearly attracted by Mozambique's fuel and non-fuel minerals, timber, biofuels and food production. In addition, Mozambique's transport infrastructure is logistically important for other regions of Chinese investment. China's presence is growing rapidly in neighbouring Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, all of which are landlocked with their closest exit to sea via Mozambique (Horta, 2011: 11). The ports at Maputo, Beira and Nacala are all of great potential in servicing the regions, while the deep harbour at Pemba could be East Africa's primary port once developed. Several projects are thus looking to base regional offices in Maputo, but Mozambican harbours, roads and railways will need upgrading to facilitate this regional vision – thus helping to explain China's infrastructure assistance (Roque, 2009: 13-14).

Diplomatically, Mozambique does not have great influence or importance on the world stage, but it does belong to larger associations of interest to China. China is interested in building alliances of states in global institutions, which will defend Chinese principles interests. This is already displayed in the United Nations, where China's soft alliances can influence votes regarding China (Pant, 2008: 24). Mozambique is also part of a number of regional and cultural groupings that China seeks to influence. In Africa, it belongs to the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, and culturally it is a member of the Lusophone world. The Chinese government has identified the Portuguese-speaking countries as a strategic group for investment and cooperation, as this community of 230 million people is linked by language and culture to Europe, Latin American, Africa and Asia. Regular meetings in Macau are cultivating these connections, and embracing the Lusophone world as a whole creates a stronger network of cooperation than piecemeal arrangements (Ilhéu, 2010: 47).

Strategically, Mozambique's significance lies in its position on the Mozambique Channel through which 30% of world oil passes, including en route to China (Seabra, 2011: 1). With China's potential Great Power-rival India developing relations with East African states, and

upgrading its navy with “state-of-the-art aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, and other surface combatants”, China has strategic reasons to establish relations with states throughout the region (Holslag, 2009: 26). If military rivalry does begin to develop in the Indian Ocean, the importance of East Africa will greatly increase (Horta, 2011: 12). Additionally, a growing piracy threat to shipping along the Mozambican coast may require greater regional cooperation to combat (Seabra, 2011: 1).

Conclusion: Mozambique and Debates on China in Africa

How does this state of affairs reflect on debates regarding China’s aims and impacts in Africa? In relation to the argument that China’s financial alternatives for African states lessen Western leverage for democratic reform (Alden & Alves, 2009), while the continuing presence of Western donors and the international financial institutions in Mozambique, and Mozambique’s strong civil society, mean that this is still far from a reality – it is certainly the desire of the Mozambican state. However, this must be understood in the context of those corrupt elites being an outcome of Western reform policies in the first place. China has not created the corruption, but may help to perpetuate it. The argument has also been raised that China’s economic involvement in Africa is primarily motivated by resource extraction, and thus it does not care about Africa’s long-term economic prosperity (Large, 2008: 55). This would seem to be correct in the first claim, but incorrect in the second. The Mozambican case shows a clear tendency towards extractive industries being the primary driver of engagement – but the diversified strategy of the Chinese government to build infrastructure, improve agriculture, and win the political approval of both elites and the populace seems to point, as Todd Hofstedt argues, to “a balanced and long-term approach to promoting African economic growth” (Hofstedt, 2009: 66).

On specific claims that China will undermine domestic labour conditions, violations of labour laws by unfair dismissal, physical assault, excessive workload, racial discrimination, and below-minimum wages have been recorded (Chichava, 2008: 10), and there are examples of worksites dominated by Chinese workers (Horta, 2009). Counter to this there have been some government actions to reprimand poor employers (‘Work Permits’, 2010), and new labour laws do set local hiring quotas (Ilhéu, 2010: 58), but it is still to be seen how effectively these laws are implemented. On the question of Chinese companies posing additional risks for the environment and sustainable development (Alden & Alves, 2009), the Mozambican example confirms that Chinese companies are causing damage directly through predatory exploitation of natural resources such as timber and fisheries (Horta, 2011: 11), and incidentally through projects such as the Mphanda Nkuwa dam, which critics say may cause ecosystem destruction as well as social dislocation for local subsistence farmers and fishermen (International Rivers Network, 2006: 1). But again, the Mozambican case also demonstrates that Chinese trade and investment is helping with economic growth, because they are funding projects and undertaking development that few other investors have been willing to back, and are providing results in a cheap and timely manner (Taylor, 2006: 951).

Geo-strategically, the Mozambican case confirms that any military engagement by China is at a very low, developing elementary relationships and keeping open communications. But

diplomatically, Mozambique has certainly emerged as an advocate for Chinese causes, supporting international multilateralism, and defending Chinese influence on the continent. This is also in step with Mozambique's Lusophone sister-states, who are all being courted by Beijing as a cultural bloc (Ilhéu, 2010: 47). Thus the Mozambican case would seem to support assertions by those on both sides of the China debate.

While this situation may change in the future, for the present this generally confirms the assertion of some analysts that,

China's global strategy, including its Africa strategy, has been to avoid antagonizing the U.S. politically and militarily but in the meantime, to present itself as an alternative and benign power with a global reach through soft diplomacy and economic means (Liang, 2008: 168).

For Africa, this presents both dangers and opportunities, but certainly a chance to find assistance for development far more effective than forthcoming under previous regimes of Western aid and economic reform. On this broader scale then, does the Mozambican case provide any insight into the question of China's global systemic challenge to the American hegemony? The Mozambican people have lived through the developmental stagnation of neoliberal structural adjustment, and are happy for a change; and the Mozambican elites pay lip-service to Western values, but will only remain loyal as long as aid money is forthcoming – and this situation abides in a nation held up as a poster child of US hegemonic ideals. The Mozambican case will no doubt be replicated across the globe. The United States will remain the world's dominant military power for some time, but gradually its power in international institutions will reduce, as will its overwhelming global military and economic preponderance (Arrighi, 2007: 385). As Giovanni Arrighi notes, "US hegemony, as opposed to sheer domination, in all likelihood has already ended" (Arrighi, 2007: 384).

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