China and many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have a long history of relations which date back to the Mao era of the 1960s and 70s, but over the past 10 to 15 years there has been a meteoric expansion of diplomatic relations and economic interchanges between China and Africa and a growing attention to these exchanges. These increasingly strong China-Africa links have been hailed by some as meaningful forms of South-South partnership that harbor novel forms of development cooperation, while others see them as harbingers of a new world order yet to be revealed that will challenge the existing global order. In either case, the expansion of China Africa links means more Chinese coming to Africa (and also more Africans going to China), with important social and economic implications for Chinese living and working in Africa and for African communities that receive them – something that may be quite different from the interactions described in the media, often promoted by Chinese and African political and economic elites with their distinct domestic and geopolitical agendas.

The motivation for this symposium on China’s Presence in Africa is to examine diplomatic and economic interchanges between the People's Republic of China and many African countries over the last several decades, focusing on the flows of people, trade and development assistance between China and Africa, resulting in a growing Chinese presence in Africa. At Duke University, there is a great amount of interest from numerous disciplinary perspectives regarding the nature of these interchanges and the experiences of the Chinese and African people and communities involved. The speakers invited come from different disciplines and employ different analytical approaches in their work but they speak with one voice as they seek to provide systematic evidence on the multiple forms of China’s presence in African countries and their country-specific economic, social and political impacts.

Bios of invited speakers

Engseng Ho, Professor of Cultural Anthropology and History, Duke University, graduated from Stanford University, where he majored in economics and social science. Before enrolling in the doctoral program in cultural anthropology at the University of Chicago, he worked as an international economist in Singapore. After receiving his PhD and teaching at Harvard, Engseng joined the departments of History and Cultural Anthropology at Duke. He is the author of the book *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, explores the vast trading networks established by Hadrami Yemeni descendants of the Muslim prophet Muhammad and reconstructs the cultural, political and economic life of their powerful empire far from the European capitals where most studies of empire begin. Because his work disrupts conventional views of diaspora, empire, and geopolitics, he is ideally suited to open our symposium. His paper today is titled: China Africa Thought in Relation to other Regional Axes.
Vijaya Ramachandran holds a PhD in Business Economics from Harvard and is a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development (CGD). Vijaya has written extensively on donor accountability, private sector development, and development interventions in Africa and Haiti. She is the author of a CGD book entitled Africa's Private Sector: What's Wrong with the Business Environment and What to Do About It?, as well as numerous articles in top tiers development economics journals, book chapters and numerous media outlets. Prior to joining CGD, she taught at Georgetown University and also here at Duke University, where she was the deputy director of the Duke Center for International Development (DCID). She has also worked at the World Bank and in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Vijaya is also a co-author of a study on China’s development assistance in Africa which was just released this week by the Center for Global Development in conjunction with the release of a media-based database, AidData, which tracks Chinese development assistance in Africa.

Deborah Bräutigam holds a PhD from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts. She is Professor of International Development and Comparative Politics and Director of the International Development Program at Johns Hopkins University/SAIS. Deborah started researching China Africa links as a China specialist 30 years ago, before anybody thought this would become a major topic of scholarly and policy interest. Her research has focused on China-Africa diplomatic relations, foreign aid, industrialization, state-building, and development. She is the author of *The Dragon’s Gift?: The Real Story of China in Africa* and of *Chinese Aid and African Development* and many articles, book chapters and commentaries detailing various aspects of China’s presence in Africa. Her work addresses both academic and general audiences and it seeks to elucidate myths and realities of China’s engagement in Africa. This is an effort which she is also undertaking through her popular blog: *China in Africa: The Real Story*.

Yoon Jung Park received her PhD in Sociology from the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa; and an MA in International Relations from The Fletcher School at Tufts. She is a visiting professor in the African Studies Department at Howard University and maintains an affiliation with the Sociology Department at Rhodes University in South Africa where she previously taught. Yoon is currently working on a new book on Chinese migrants in Africa for ZED books and is the author of numerous articles and book chapters in scholarly publications on Chinese in South Africa, Chinese migration to Africa and perceptions of Chinese by African communities. She also serves as the Convener/Coordinator of the Chinese in Africa/Africans in China (CA/AC) Research Network, an international network of scholars, researchers, graduate students, journalists, filmmakers and practitioners, which she helped to establish in 2007.

Barry Sautman, is Associate professor in the Division of Social Sciences at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He has a PhD in Political Science from Columbia, and a JD from UCLA. He has two main line of research: one on ethnic politics in China, especially ethnic policies and the Tibet and Xinjiang questions, the other on China-Africa links about which he has written extensively on topics surrounding political economy, labor rights, China Africa migration, interactions between Chinese and Africans, representations and perceptions of China and Chinese in Africa, human rights and a forthcoming book on labor practices in Zambian Mining. Most of his work on China Africa links is co-authored with Yan Hairong, an anthropologist at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
Symposium Agenda – see attached agenda and publicity flyer

Précis of talks

After welcoming remarks by Giovanna Merli and John Bartlett, Engseng Ho opened the symposium with “China-Africa Thought in Relation to Other Regional Areas,” a comparison of great power rivalries in Southeast Asia as well as Africa over the last century and a half. Particularly after Bandung (1955) anti-colonialism set China, Africa and Southeast Asia apart from the USA. Its linkage of policy and aid has earned the USA the reputation of a 'fair weather friend;' whereas China's more consistent and lower-profile aid gives it the image of an "all weather friend." China, the more nimble of the two, operates with fewer policy constraints to support a wider range of financing for infrastructure and marginal, higher risk, endeavors (particularly in the extractive industries) that combine state-private initiatives with considerable ingenuity and more favorable terms for Africans. Because US aid is tied to its foreign policy and its personnel (including businessmen and NGO staff) live lavishly by African standards, they can more easily be seen as the heirs of colonial policy than the Chinese whose life style is more humble. By citing a wide array of case studies, Ho cautioned against generalization and called for analysis that is specific to national and regional context, sector, and type of finance. The immense weapons gap between African nations and investor/donor nations, combined with Africans’ dependence on foreign loans, inferior infrastructure, and weak (often corrupt) political systems, leaves Africans in a weak bargaining position vis-à-vis the USA and China. Ho recalled the 19th-century rivalry between the “British whale and Russian bear” -- and also the colonial era exchange of raw materials for cheap products. Summing up the situation, Ho observed that the dynamic instability throughout Africa is increasingly prone to militarization.

Deborah Bräutigam, in "An analysis of China’s commodity backed loans to Africa," disputed the media image of China as a “rogue creditor,” with the state as an unscrupulous and pernicious competitor that hands out 'toxic aid," illustrating her very different perspective with a thought experiment in which China today acts very much like Japan in the 1960s and 1970s which privileged trade over aid, she examines the way China has used resources modernize its economy. Since the 1960s the US Export-Import Bank (EX-IM Bank) makes low-or no -interest loans that encourage nations to purchase US goods, although private and government investment are separate. Correcting generalizations distorted by the media, Bräutigam uses the case study of commodity secured loans Of 308 loans to 39 nations, 32 were commodity based loans (i.e. loans for a particular project, like a power plant or bridge, that would be repaid by raw material, income from a particular product, or a government levy). She estimated their total worth at $200 billion. Since the mid-2000s the China Construction Bank and China Development Bank have become active in this area. These loans usually have no strings attached; are not tied to special interests; and only sometimes stipulate the nationality of the labor force that will build the project. Bräutigam insisted that the data be reliable -- as we analyze China's trajectory from a recipient nation in the 1970s to a donor nation today. She underscores the importance of these commercial loans because they often "fly under the radar net" of media attention and yet are often more transparent than government loans and aid. Because they need not be tied to access to resources and often are often tied to the import of Chinese products, commodity backed loans conform to a business, not an aid, model. While the US is relatively stagnant, China is catching
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up to the position it would have attained gradually if it had not been for the collapse from the
1950s through the early 1980s.

Respondent Mark Butaine asked about the impact on borrower: when do locals benefit? how
does a loan affect political reform?  He advocated the use of media-generated data on these and
other financial transactions because the lack of transparency frustrates research.  Imperfect data,
which can be improved through triangulation and crowdsourcing, is better than none.

In her paper, "Africa's Industrial Costs:  Where Might Chinese Investment be Most Effective?”,
Vijaya Ramachandran observed that the World Bank encouraged China to support the African
manufacturing base as a counterweight to its investment in extractive industries.  But for this
option to be realized we need to know more about the relative costs of production -- particularly
labor costs. The existence of enclave dualism makes . Using data from the World Bank’s
Enterprise Survey on manufacturing collected from 10,500 firms in 25 countries (half of which
are African) she observed that when one controls for productivity, African labor looks more
expensive at every level -- as much as 35 per cent more costly than it should be given income
levels of African countries. Expecting increased Chinese investment in manufacturing (as
opposed to exporting Chinese goods) may be unrealistic. Factors that explain the high cost of
labor and low foreign investment in manufacturing, include; high price levels relative to GDP,
expensive food (due to the continued low productivity of African agriculture), high housing
costs, and poor infrastructure. Total Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) grew over the
2000-2010 period but only a small fraction went to Africa.

Respondent Daniel Xiu asked about the shadow costs of manufacturing in Africa and Vijaya
added her concern about African entrepreneurs' tendency to stash their profits overseas and not
reinvest them in Africa.  Discussion revolved around these issues, as well as drags on African
economies caused by disease, large proportions of young people, and chronic high
unemployment.  Given these realities, perhaps a better method of guaranteeing Africans a share
of the benefits of foreign investment would be to distribute profits from extractive industries
directly to citizens.

Yoon Jung Park's “Chinese in Africa, African Responses,” looked closely at attitudes toward
China and the Chinese in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. Yoon Jung contradicted the
prevailing view that clashes between Chinese and Africans are becoming worse. Her qualitative
study, set within a half century time frame, looks at Chinatowns, Chinese-owned malls, and
small scale businesses.  A comparison with xenophobic hostility to South Asians further sets
both the "new" and "old" Chinese apart. Starting in 2007 Yoon Jung conducted opinion research
using local interviewers in Maseru (Lesotho), Harare (Zimbabwe), Johannesburg (South Africa)
and Namibia. She looked back on a positive history of cooperation between Africans and
Chinese (despite confusion among leftists as Chinese communism transformed itself). Despite
myths of overweening Chinese influence, actually the Chinese are scattered geographically &
occupationally diverse -- a conclusion illustrated by her vivid photographs of Chinese enterprises
and businesses. Each nation has its own distinctive economic and demographic patterns – and
consequently, distinctive perceptions of resident Chinese as well as the Chinese government.
South Africa has the oldest and largest Chinese population in Africa (perhaps 50% of it) and a
history of collaboration in enterprises that range from tiny Chinese shops to the ICBC investment
(20%) in Standard Bank. In Lesotho a complex relationship among Taiwanese, PRC Chinese, British and Americans makes generalization difficult. In Zimbabwe, between 5,000 and 10,000 Chinese barely count in a country of just over 12 million but financial support from China has funded important infrastructural projects, including a military training school for Robert Mugabe who bills himself as a “friend of China” to spite the USA. In other words, domestic political agendas drive negative perceptions of the Chinese in Africa.

Respondent Stephen Smith drew parallels reminiscent of French colonial policy and noted the difficulty of assigning agency for changes given the fuzzy line between private capital and state investment – and the distortions promoted by the media. He praised Yoon Jun Park’s “eulogy to specifics” as a corrective for misleading generalizations.

Barry Sautman, in "The Chinese Defilement Case: racial Profiling in an African ‘Model of Democracy’," examines a recent case in 2011-2012 in which the government charged four Chinese workers with "defiling" two young Zambian girls -- which would be the equivalent of "statutory rape.” In a nation where prostitution is legal; the age of consent is 16; and prostitutes are usually young girls, these charges were unprecedented. Although the Chinese were found innocent when the girls admitted they had lied, the publicity around the case deepened hostility to the Chinese, which had started already with Zambia’s president Michael Sata’s first (unsuccessful) presidential election campaigns in 2006, accompanied the government’s abandonment of its allegiance to Fidel Castro and its search for new potential allies, including the US. After the Foreign Minister, Patriotic Front (PF) Chishimba Kambwili (who had sided with the prosecution) used the occasion to lecture Chinese workers, the Voice of America uncritically broadcast his speeches. Sautman sees this case study as an example of "biased assimilation" -- the persistence of prejudices even after their factual basis has been discredited. Moreover, this "tempest in a teapot" appears to have had a desired policy outcome: the rabid anti-Chinese propaganda played a part in winning US support. He concludes that negative perceptions of the Chinese are manipulated by political, economic and media elites with distinct agendas that often involve building support for opposition parties.

Respondent Eddy Malesky praised Sautman's paper and noted three of the many issues it raises: 1. the denial of equal protection for outsiders in Africa; 2. the spillover effect in the media; and 3. the deepening impression of the US as a "political gadfly."

Emmanuel Ortisejafor (Carolina Central University) provided concluding remarks in which he surveyed the general direction of the day’s papers and reviewed the main themes of the symposium.

Emerging Themes and Future Steps

This symposium was relatively small in scope but the presentations and the ensuing discussion exposed several themes which we would like to explore further in a larger conference that we hope to organize in the near future, possible on the Duke Kunshan campus. The flow of topics covered in the symposium moved very well from different global geopolitical strategies dating back to the late 19th century to two more focused contemporary directions: (a) Calculations of economic benefits and liabilities of trade, loans, and investment; and (b) Studies of state-
sponsored and of spontaneous attitudes toward Chinese in particular Lesotho, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.

Beginning with Engseng Ho’s references to specific historical precedents, the commentators eschewed macro-level generalizations and delved into the complexities of particular locations, financial instruments, and local politics and policies.

Another theme that emerged (though not new) was Africa as the stage for the implementation of China’s business model, which prioritizes trade over aid, and more often than not does not require policy conditions.

Participants agreed on the need to develop innovative methodological approaches to measure China’s micro-level effects on the wellbeing of African communities. Good research designs, data (qualitative or quantitative) and measurement tools are important in seeking the right answer to obvious but still unanswered questions such as “What does this new wave of Chinese aid and economic cooperation across Africa mean? What does this mean for African poverty relief and development? What does it mean for China? What does China’s presence mean for African communities within each particular national and political context?”

Equally important participants agreed on the need for more research on how particular African communities have been affected by the presence of Chinese capital, managers, engineers, laborers and entrepreneurs, and on the need for comparisons across cases. In short, fifty four African nations cannot be lumped into media-driven stereotypes about “Africa.”