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**South-south cooperation or core-periphery contention? Ghanaian and
Zambian perceptions of economic relations with China**

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Abstract

The geopolitics of development are explored through an examination of development assistance to two African countries as a mechanism of competition between China and the US. The processes of competition include the actions and rhetoric of African leaders. We define a geopolitical context for the agency of political leaders and opinion-makers in Ghana and Zambia. The geopolitical context consists of the structure and dynamics of the world-economy; especially the competition to capture the newest round of innovations and the related need to establish supply chains of raw materials from peripheral countries. By analyzing quotes from Ghanaian and Zambian elites we identify the possibility for geopolitical agency in the periphery that is constrained by, and largely maintains, China-US competition and the core-periphery hierarchy of the world-economy.

Keywords: development; geopolitical context; China; Africa; Ghana; Zambia

Introduction

US National Security Advisor John Bolton claimed that Africa is a crucial battleground in which the greatest threat is from “an expansionist China” and American legislators and newspapers alike have categorized Chinese loans as a form

of “debt trap diplomacy” (Landler and Wong, 2018). Bolton’s comment was a reaction to President Xi’s efforts to secure investment contracts in many African countries, from the east coast to the west coast, as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These specific comments are part of the rhetorical battle over the meaning of China’s increasing role in Africa, and are just the latest example of a history of framing development as a geopolitical practice (Sidaway and Woon, 2017; Slater, 1997). We complement critical analyses of the rhetoric of development by situating such geopolitical representations within the structure of the capitalist world-economy to illustrate the persistent structural imperatives within which development policies, and their accompanying rhetoric, are formed.

As John Bolton clearly demonstrates, the African continent is once again an arena for competition between more powerful countries located in other parts of the world. The imperial ‘Scramble for Africa,’ and the Cold War era courting of friendly states and the fighting of proxy wars were past episodes of competition (James, 1994, pp. 288-306; Halliday, 1983, pp. 39-42). Today the competition is, primarily, between the US and China (Bachmann, 2010; Power, et al., 2012). One form of competition is the practice and language of access to economic resources and the financing of infrastructure projects (DeBoom, 2017; Mawdsley, 2008). This competition is a manifestation of the geopolitics of development (Power, 2019).

Inter-state competition through the development of economic relations exemplifies the inter-related nature of geopolitics and development (Power, 2019; Duffield, 2001). Recent analysis has illuminated the tropes and practices of “development” as a means to mobilize technologies of security and governmentality

through identifying a series of crises that must be managed and, to some degree, securitized (Power, 2019). One set of tropes has been geopolitical representations over the purpose and perceived benefits of Chinese and US involvement in Africa (Power, et al., 2012; Mawdsley, 2008). More broadly, compartmentalizing the terms “geopolitics” and “development” is itself a form of representation that attempts a twin separation of processes and conflicts: It separates economic and political processes and attempts to disconnect “great power” politics from relations between the wealthiest and poorest countries. Our approach challenges these twin separations, and contributes to the understanding of the geopolitics of development through an emphasis upon enduring structural relations, and the way they frame agency by African leaders in Ghana and Zambia.

Development strategies are framed by broad structural imperatives. Our structural approach does not deny that specific development policies and projects are assemblages with degrees of contingency (Power, 2019; Power and Mohan, 2010; Carmody and Taylor, 2010; Carmody et al., 2012). We see such contingencies as forms and outcomes of agency, and inquiry into the details of these projects a vital component towards understanding the practices of development. However, to fully understand these practices requires defining a geopolitical context to interpret and understand agency.

The geopolitics of development involves the construction and dissemination of competing models of development models, or more broadly pathways towards modernization (Power, 2019, pp. 80-83). The dynamics of hegemonic competition, which is driven by economic processes of technological change, explain the timing of

the debates around competing models. The core-periphery structure of the world-economy helps explain how and why the models are adopted by political elites in the periphery, and why voices in civil society challenge the interpretations of political leaders. The contribution of the paper is two-fold. First, we define a geopolitical context to identify the structural imperatives underlying the geopolitics of development. Second, we analyze the voices of political leaders and opinion-makers in Ghana and Zambia discussing the relative merits of engagement with the US or China as a development partner to show the limited agency of actors in the periphery and how they enable and challenge the geopolitics of competition between China and the US.

After briefly introducing the rise of China's influence in Africa, we discuss models of development as competing geopolitical representations. Next, we define the geopolitical context of US-China competition through the structure and dynamics of the world-economy. The empirical focus of the paper analyzes quotes from Ghanaian and Zambian political leaders and opinion-makers to explore how their agency is framed within the contemporary geopolitical context. Finally, we offer some brief concluding remarks.

China, Africa, and South-South Cooperation

China has a long history of economic and political relations with the countries of Africa, including the establishment of ties and ideological fraternity during the Cold War (Power, et al., 2012, pp. 26-48). With economic and political changes in China, and internal pressures making trade ties imperative, the level of interaction has reached unprecedented levels. China's annual development finance

to Africa has risen dramatically, from US\$121 million in 2000 to US\$16 billion in 2013 (Landry, 2018). The growing influence of China has provoked allegations of “rogue aid” (Naím, 2007), and a geopolitical narrative that Chinese development strategies favor corrupt regimes and only seeks access to Africa’s natural resources (Lum at al., 2009). Comparative analysis of Chinese and Western aid gives a more nuanced picture. Instead of a simple geopolitical narrative, the interactions between China and African countries involve a number of actors and strategies (Power and Mohan, 2010; Carmody and Taylor, 2010). Furthermore, empirical analysis suggests that the Western geopolitical narratives marshaled to describe China’s engagement with Africa do not reflect reality. The main predictors of Chinese aid flows are commercial, or trade, relations and political alignment, measured by UN voting patterns (Brautigam, 2011; Landry, 2018).ⁱ

To justify its increased presence in Africa, and elsewhere, China has developed rhetorical devices, including the term south-south cooperation (Sidaway and Woon, 2017). The term south-south cooperation was originally coined at the 1955 Asian-African conference, or Bandung Conference, but only became institutionalized in 1978 with the formation of the United Nations Unit for South-South cooperation (Power and Mohan, 2010). More recently, it has become one of the geopolitical representations adopted by China to describe its expansion of trade and investment, including the BRI, as a non-threatening economic strategy and sees its burgeoning economic relations as “mutually beneficial” or “win-win” actions (Sidaway and Woon, 2017). China has allocated enormous amounts of money in the name of south-south cooperation. For example, in September 2015 President Xi

pledged a total of \$5.1 billion for a China South-South Climate Cooperation Fund and a more general aid package.

The African continent has been a focus of China's south-south cooperation practice and rhetoric (Power and Mohan, 2010; Brautigam, 2011; Woods, 2008). For example, at the September 2018 opening ceremony of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing President Xi said:

“China values sincerity, friendship and equality in pursuing cooperation. The over 1.3 billion Chinese people have been with the over 1.2 billion African people in pursuing a shared future. We respect Africa, love Africa and support Africa. We follow a "five-no" approach in our relations with Africa: no interference in African countries' pursuit of development paths that fit their national conditions; no interference in African countries' internal affairs; no imposition of our will on African countries; no attachment of political strings to assistance to Africa; and no seeking of selfish political gains in investment and financing cooperation with Africa. (Xinhuanet, 2018).

The “five-no” approach validates a key element of the China development model, discussed below: namely, no political interference (Yizhou, 2012). Thinly veiled behind the rhetoric is a critique of Western development practices that are implied to be exploitive, and the identification of an alternative Chinese model that has the best interests of African countries in mind. Furthermore, the rhetoric of China's south-south cooperation defines a flexible approach that implies a critique of dogmatic Western approaches (Li et al., 2014; Tekdal, 2018).

For the two countries that are the focus of this paper, Ghana and Zambia, relationships with China have been recently enhanced through a number of aid and investment packages. China and Ghana have a diplomatic history spanning back to the 1960's; China maintained a relationship with Kwame Nkrumah, revolutionary and first prime minister of Ghana, throughout Ghana's independence efforts and maintained that relationship to ensure an ally in the China First policies against Taiwan. After the Cold War, China's presence in Ghana has been increasingly more economic, providing economic assistance to develop infrastructure and benefitting from raw materials (Amanor and Chichava, 2016). China has financed many completed infrastructure projects in Ghana, including the Bui Hydroelectric Dam and the Western Gas Infrastructure Project (Government of Ghana, 2017). In 2018, China and Ghana signed eight memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements, representing \$2.3 billion in ventures in September 2018 (GhanaWeb, 2018a; Gokoluk, 2018). This includes a \$2 billion infrastructure deal to be constructed by Chinese firm SynoHydro Corporation and \$350 million project to improve Tema Port's capability to transport natural gas (Bax and Dzawu, 2018). A study of China's growing role in Ghana's construction sector concluded that Chinese enterprises were more likely to invest in local skill development than Western enterprises (Meng and Nyantaki, 2019).

Zambian debt has been a main topic of concern for the country for many years. In 2012, public debt held at 35.5% of GDP (Trading Economics, no date). Just four years later in 2017 public debt was 55.6% of GDP. Of its current public debt, one-quarter to one-third of it is owed to Chinese creditors (Laterza and Mususa,

2018). In 2018, Zambia's negotiations with the IMF for a bailout fell through. The following month at the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation, President Lungu negotiated a loan with China. Later, it was confirmed that Zambian national energy supplier Zesco was the guarantee for the loan; sparking fear of public assets such as the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport being used as further collateral in the event of a default (Chutel, 2018; Elcoate, 2018). In October 2018, a joint venture between the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation and China's Exim Bank, caused further concern about Chinese control of Zambia (Cotterill and Pilling, 2018). Government officials state that they are not worried about defaulting and losing public assets to the Chinese because Zambia has never defaulted on a loan before (Chutel, 2018). The unprecedented levels of debt with no relief available have continued to worry both local and international entities (Elcoate, 2018; The Economist, 2018; Laterza and Mususa, 2018). However, it is false to paint a simple picture of an exploitive set of relationships. For example, Chinese investment in Zambia's cotton industry has included value-chain integration, in terms of seed development and oil extraction, that are value-added enterprises (Tang, 2019).

Broad patterns of trade and aid, and specific projects, are enacted through the perceptions and statements of policy- and opinion-makers that create a narrative of African development and Chinese aid. Constructing representations to define and promote development policies is a form of geopolitical agency (Mueller, 2008). This particular form of agency by African elites is framed through reference to competing models of development.

Models of Development as Geopolitical Representations

The competition between China and the United States over economic influence in Africa falls within the practices and representations of development. Competing visions of what is meant by development are defined, disseminated, and put into operation by particular countries and in particular temporal contexts of the capitalist world-economy (Peet, 2007). Economic competition between China and western countries illustrates tensions between two competing models of development: the Washington Consensus and a new model being disseminated by China.

Stark contrasts between policies favoring comparative advantage and those favoring emulation is a theoretical divide that translates in to a more complex mixture of policy instruments. On one side of the divide is a particular interpretation of the neo-classical models of Ricardo and Adam Smith that believe in the power of comparative advantage to foster economic growth for all. The ideology of comparative advantage expresses reliance on the power of free markets, free trade, and a limited role for the state. Reikert (2007) argues that such an approach only benefits the richer countries and prevents poorer countries from “catching up,” as the tenets of developmentalism say they should. Instead, countries that have managed to increase their national wealth have eschewed the policies of comparative advantage and pursued a strategy of emulation: state intervention in the economy to copy the higher value-added economic practices of wealthier countries (Reikert, 2007).

The contemporary manifestation of the comparative advantage emphasis has been labeled the Washington Consensus (Williamson, 1990), which is driven by the

underlying neo-liberal assumptions of individual decision making, and the ability of markets to maximize the efficient pricing and use of capital and labor (Peet and Hartwick, 2015, p. 96). In practice, the application of the Washington Consensus is more nuanced, and amended or augmented versions of this umbrella definition of policy instruments has added a partial role for the state in the name of good governance (Williamson 1997; Rodrik, 2007). The practice and rhetoric of the Washington Consensus is a manifestation of the core-periphery hierarchy of the world-economy. The very name indicates the ability of core interests to coalesce in particular places, such as D.C., to generate a common sense understanding of “development” that is then imposed upon the periphery (Peet, 2007 and 2009; Stewart, 1997, p. 63). As such, it is not surprising that the essence of the Washington Consensus is policy instruments that claim the benefits of comparative advantage and that sustain the unequal hierarchy of the world-economy (Reikert, 2007).

The contemporary competing representation of development paths has been labeled the Beijing Consensus, though this is a geopolitical trope rather than an accurate description of China’s history or policy prescriptions. The term Beijing Consensus was coined by Ramo (2004a and b), an employee of Goldman Sachs, and has been adopted by Stefan Halper (2010) as a polemical device to claim a “clash of values” and “two versions of modernity.” The Beijing Consensus was deemed to consist of three theorems: innovation-based development, the inclusion of equality and sustainability as measures of development success, and an emphasis on sovereignty or self-determination (Ramo 2004b; Kennedy, 2010). Others claim that the Beijing Consensus is a myth (Kennedy, 2010; Naughton, 2010; Peerenboom,

2007; Zhao, 2010). Chinese development practice has featured pragmatism and flexibility, making the term Beijing Consensus an oxymoron (Naughton, 2010, p. 437; Bräutigam and Gallaher, 2014). The particular application of the Chinese model to African countries has been one of nuance and flexibility (Carmody and Taylor, 2010; Carmody et al., 2012).

A more accurate and useful tool is the identification of a China development model (Naughton, 2010; Peerenboom, 2007) that has characteristics of some degree of public ownership, investment-led growth, and state intervention to spur private sector growth (Naughton, 2010). In addition, the model advocates for foreign policy relations emphasizing sovereignty, self-determination, “mutual respect”, and an overall sense of pragmatism (Peerenboom, 2007, p. 8). Such pragmatism has included adoption, in some circumstances, of elements of the Washington Consensus (Peerenboom, 2007, p. 81). In sum, with its emphasis upon the role of the state and emphasis on investment, the China development model is akin to Reikert’s (2007) general policy of emulation.

But why the debate between a Washington and Beijing models, now? Answering that question requires defining a geopolitical context to situate policy debates and actions.

The Geopolitical Context of Development

To fully understand the politics of development as an element of the US-China competition in Africa more broadly, a theoretical framework needs to address the following five points:

- 1) the role of economic processes in competition between states (primarily the most powerful ones);
- 2) the identification of temporal context to understand the contemporary relations between the powerful and less-powerful states of the world;
- 3) the role of economic relations with poorer states in the competition between powerful states, or the construction of a 'generative sector' (Bunker and Ciccantell, 2005 and 2007);
- 4) unpacking these economic relations to be able to understand inter-state and intra-state politics (Galtung, 1971);
- 5) the role of geopolitical representation in these dynamics – specifically competing models of development as forms of geopolitical rhetoric.

We describe points 1-3 theoretically and with reference to existing literature. We explore points 4 and 5 empirically to illustrate the context for the agency of actors in two African countries, Ghana and Zambia, who are addressing their constrained choices within a space-time context largely determined by the unequal structure of the world-economy and the political agendas being disseminated by two competing states, the United States and China (Flint and Taylor, 2018, pp. 26-28).

Economic processes and inter-state competition

Our starting point is a world-systems approach that identifies the scope of social processes within historical social systems, specifically the capitalist world-economy (Wallerstein, 1983). States are political units within the capitalist world-economy, a system that necessarily constructs core-periphery relations that are expressed in the global inequities commonly referred to in the language of

development (Taylor, 1994; Wallerstein, 1979 and 1984). The scope of economic relations is the breadth of the system, while the idea of state sovereignty expresses the ideal that countries have the ability to create national economies. In practice, states assert some control over some economic processes in a strategy of maneuver within the world-economy (Flint and Dezzani, 2018).

Two sets of economic processes define the nature of the world-economy. Core processes are those adding high-value, resulting in high profits, and demanding high salaries, and thus enabling high consumption. Peripheral processes are those adding low-value, resulting in small profits, and allowing low wages, and thus minimizing consumption opportunities (Flint and Taylor, 2018, pp. 20-21). These processes have a territorial expression in “spatial fixes” of economic agglomeration (Harvey, 1982). In aggregate, states have either a preponderance of core or periphery processes within their borders; resulting in the short-hand terminology of core and peripheral states. States actively pursue strategies to capture particular sets of core and peripheral processes.

Increasing the proportion of core processes within a state is a process of maneuver, in which a state may be able to move up the hierarchy of richest to poorest states in the world-economy (Flint and Dezzani, 2018). Such success would be commonly labeled ‘development’ but maneuver is a more appropriate term as it allows us to understand that significant upward movement in the hierarchy is rare, and would not change the overall core-periphery structure. In past decades, since the Premiership of Deng Xiaoping, China has maneuvered successfully and increased the proportion of its economy based on core processes (Brautigam, 2011;

Shambaugh, 2013). The BRI is a suite of policies aimed at maintaining that trajectory (Yeh and Wharton, 2016). To do so requires interaction with elites in peripheral countries, and so provides those elites with a degree of agency.

The temporal context

There is a flux between periods of systemic economic growth and stagnation driven by the emergence and adoption of innovations; technological advances that form new highly profitable sectors of the economy, or new core processes. The innovations are initially clustered within particular states, leading to subsequent domination in global trade and financial flows (Arrighi, 1990 and 1994). Without hindsight it is hard to definitively classify the current moment, but the emergence of AI, robotic, nano- and bio-technologies, plus new sources of energy, are indicative of a new wave of technology (Flint and Taylor, 2018, p. 23; Grinin and Grinin, 2015; Lee, 2018). Countries are competing to harness, or capture, these technologies within their own borders. Such competition over the “capture” of emerging technologies, and their related core processes, has been the driving force between cycles of hegemony, or the rise and fall of great powers.

One manifestation of such hegemonic competition is the formation of new modernities, including practices and representations of contemporary forms of global production, trade, and investment (Taylor 1998). The competing sirens of the Washington Consensus and the China Development Model are representations of competing modernities that are a feature of a temporal context of declining US hegemony in which liberalism in general, and the universalism of US-driven models in particular, are being challenged. As would be expected, as US hegemony declines,

in the world-systems sense of the term, then the Gramscian hegemony of its models and institutions will also have diminished authority (Peet, 2007; Taylor, 1998; Cheung, 2018). In this moment alternative models will have the ideological space to gain traction and the geographic spaces, within the periphery and semi-periphery, to be implemented through new economic relations.

The systemic context expects a debate within African countries between the Washington Consensus/comparative advantage and China development model/emulation representations of development pathways (Power and Mohan, 2010). Geopolitical representations of stark differences between Chinese and Western models, adopting crude or bare-bones caricatures of their content, are likely to be mobilized as national elites across the diversity of African countries favor different economic sectors in the tactics of maneuver, within a global context of competition between China and the US. However, as China promotes the idea of development, including in some places support for investment in manufacturing, the structural imperatives of the world-economy will likely result in the maintenance of core-periphery relations through the formation of new and emerging geographies of the generative sector (Ciccantell and Bunker, 2004).

The generative sector

Though the focus over the control of new innovations is focused upon those richer countries trying to capture or dominate such industries, the operation of the world-economy is based upon an unequal hierarchy (Babones, 2009; Dezzani, 2012). In the past, the ability of states to benefit from new innovations has also entailed the geopolitical control of a 'generative sector': The raw materials essential

for the manufacturing activities, and related service sector, further along global value networks that produce the new innovations (Bunker and Ciccantell, 2005 and 2007). For example, the emerging automobile industry post World-War Two required control of rubber and oil production, and today's smart phones require rare earth minerals (Klinger, 2017, pp. 67-102).

The economic basis for competition between core states requires establishing relations with poorer countries to ensure access to raw materials (Bunker and Ciccantell, 2005 and 2007). Hence, core-periphery relations are as much a part of geopolitics as what are commonly identified with the term "struggles between great powers." In addition, we may expect periods of time, such as the contemporary one, in which emerging innovations will heighten competition between states, and bring relations with the periphery to the fore. The importance of African countries, depending on their evaluation as resource-based economies, in the geopolitical codes of the US and China support such theoretical expectations.

Political relations within the capitalist world-economy

The co-dependency of core and periphery countries is maintained through what Galtung (1971) has called the four relations of imperialism (Figure 1). In relationship (A) the elites of countries collaborate in order to facilitate economic relations between countries that will enable the exploitation of the country in the periphery, while providing some reward to their elite who sustain the relationship.

ⁱⁱRelationship (B) is one of repression and discontent within peripheral countries as a result of the macro-flow of wealth from periphery to core. Relationship (C) is a division of interests between the non-elite populations of core and peripheral

countries. There is no common interest because relationship (D) is one of social imperialism; the non-elites in core countries benefit from the unequal trade relations between core and periphery that sustains a relatively prosperous standard of living.

* Figure 1 about here *

Our analysis of discussions by elites in African countries is an example of relationship A and how this is being constructed through engagement with the US and China. In pursuing such relationships, including the rhetoric used, the elites must also consider relationship B, the internal class politics of their country. The structural realities of the world-economy may constrain the options of the elites, but there is still some room for agency. In the medium and long terms, elites are unlikely to maneuver a political country out of its position in the lower tiers of the world-economy. However, there are short-term options for elites to make choices. To gain public support these options must be framed through effective geopolitical representation.

Geopolitical representations of development

Though there is flexibility in the policies China proposes, if not imposes, on African elites (Carmody and Taylor, 2010; Carmody et al., 2012), the structural imperatives driving such choices are based upon the constraints on peripheral countries in the world-economy. In practice, we would expect both the US and China to be seeking to maintain connections with peripheral countries that enable the flow of commodities to fuel their own higher order economic activities (Ciccantell and Bunker, 2004). The necessary creation of such a 'generative sector' would lead to

the expectation that both countries would like to construct and maintain policies based on comparative advantage, contemporarily expressed as the neo-liberal Washington Consensus. Such geopolitical competition over the 'generative sector' is expected at this moment of economic innovation and related inter-state competition (Cicanntell and Bunker, 2004; Flint and Zhu, 2019). This competition requires practice, such as actual investment. Chinese development assistance, and US reaction to it, is the clear practical manifestation of such competition.

The competition also requires rhetoric and representation for China and the US to "sell" themselves as the better partner in Galtung's (1971) relationship A that facilitates the generative sector. China's official statements are replete with such representations. Touting itself as a former colonial country and, still, a "developing country," China frames itself as a country with a similar history to African countries, and hence with a goal of enabling countries to flow its own path of growth. In other words, it is selling policies of emulation (Reikert, 2007). In return, the US is using the particular framing of economic philosophy, a select reading of Ricardo and Smith, to push for neo-liberal policies and the power of the market, to claim intellectual authority as a means for securing the compliance of African countries with the policies of institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF (Peet, 2007 and 2009).

Research Design and Case Selection

The qualitative analysis of representations of China-Africa relations circulating within the policy and opinion-making circles of African elites requires selecting countries to investigate that represent the diversity of attitudes and engagements

across African countries. First, we used Afrobarometer data to understand the variation in attitudes towards China. Afrobarometer has been the primary African public attitude survey network since 1999, focusing primarily on democracy and governance.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Afrobarometer data were used to distinguish comparative attitudes toward US and Chinese models of development. We compared countries on the national response across questions asking which country offered the best model for national development, whether China or the US provided the greatest external influence, and perceptions of the efficacy of Chinese development assistance. We then used World Bank and UNDP data to see whether such countries were above or below the continental average regarding the proportion of their economy based on trade and agriculture, and their receipt of foreign direct investment (all as percentages of GDP).^{iv} Consideration was also given to the colonial history of the country, its relative standing in the human development index, and scores evaluating governance.

In combination, the set of indicators provided a holistic view of the economic situation of the countries. This ensured that not only were the selected cases similarly sized economies with similar colonial histories but that they were similarly situated on the global supply chain and shared similar levels of human development. HDI remains important because it speaks to the productive capacity of an economy's labor force, providing an indication of the future prosperity of its people, and its attractiveness for FDI.

The set of countries favoring the United States was headed by South Africa, Madagascar, Ghana, and Algeria. All four were consistent on the three questions considered. South Africa and Algeria were below average Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Ghana and Madagascar were above average FDI. South Africa, Algeria, and Ghana were below average on the size of the agricultural sector, and Madagascar above. The countries were split between British colonial influence and French. Madagascar was in the lowest Gross National Income (GNI) bracket, and the remainder were in the middle bracket. There was also variation in the Human Development Index (HDI) and rule of law and regulatory quality indicators.

Five countries were consistent across the three questions in favoring China: Mali, Cameroon, Zambia, Niger, and Benin. All scored below average on FDI. Benin was the only country with above average trade, but there was variation on the size of the agricultural sector. Cameroon was the only country of the set that did not have French colonial influence. All countries were in the lower-mid GNI bracket, except Niger which is in the lowest. All displayed a low HDI ranking except Zambia. Zambia scored above average for rule of law and regulatory quality indicators, with the scoring below.

The choice of countries for our analysis was primarily based on the Afrobarometer data. Once we had selected a limited number of countries from our analysis of Afrobarometer surveys we used data from the China-Africa Research Initiative (CARI) at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University.^v The data track the number and content of Chinese loans, agricultural and manufacturing investments, FDI, and structural transformation in Africa. We

used data for loans to Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, South Africa, and Zambia from 2013-2016 in the power, communications, transportation, and education sectors.

We analyzed data in the survey to find countries that consistently favored either the US or China as a development aid partner-- we defined “favored” as having a higher percentage response than the average of the 34 countries for three questions of the survey:

- 1) Which country provides the best model for national development?
- 2) Is China’s economic and political influence positive or negative?
- 3) How helpful is China’s economic development assistance?

In the pro-China set Zambia stood out with \$2906 millions in financing, a diversity of financiers, and a mixture of transport, communication, and power sector loans. For the pro-US grouping, Algeria was excluded because of the absence of Chinese loans. Ghana and S. Africa were the most tempting because of the size (\$1959 million and \$5677 million, respectively) and diversity of the financing (both having power and transport projects). The decision to focus on Ghana was made because the amount of financing for Ghana was closer to Zambia’s.

African Voices on South-South Cooperation

Though the Afrobarometer data show Ghana and Zambia having different orientations towards China, quotes in the media from Zambian and Ghanaian politicians, opinion-makers, and business leaders paint similar trends in perception. While both the Zambian and Ghanaian presidents espouse the benefits of partnership with China, using similar positive language to Chinese officials, and

mount common critiques of Western practices, their populations overwhelmingly display skepticism about Chinese loans. Interpreting the comments of political elites and opinion-makers in civil society through the lens of core-periphery relations and Galtung's relations of imperialism, illustrates the expected outcomes: Cooperation between elites (Galtung's relationship A) and division between the elites and the general population (Galtung's relationship B). These results lead us to the conclusion that the rhetoric of south-south cooperation frames, or attempts to hide, a restricted elite-elite relationship that is not seen as beneficial for the general population.

Voices from Ghanaian and Zambian political leaders

Galtung's relationship A is maintained by political leaders in peripheral countries enacting policies that reconstruct core-periphery relations. To enable these policies requires the use of rhetoric that sees investment and trade relations as unquestionably beneficial for the country as a whole, and not a select few. In this sub-section we illuminate how the leaders of Ghana and Zambia refer to the language of developmentalism to deliver messages aimed at the general population to paint a positive picture of their country's ties with China.

Ghana's current president, Nana Akufo-Addo, has been vocal about the future he envisions for his nation, a future that he has coined one of "trade rather than aid" (Asiedu, 2017). He has consistently portrayed his country's burgeoning relationship with China within the tropes of developmentalism, in general, and the apparent uniqueness of China's actions, in particular. For example:

“Today, the former victim of Western Railways imperialism is lending billions to countries throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe to construct not only railroads, but also highways, ports, power plants and other infrastructure, and many businesses” (Taylor, 2017).

Furthermore:

“We believe that the effective co-operation with China will help us attain this goal. Indeed, we want our relations with China to be characterized by an increase in trade and investment cooperation and not the export and import of raw materials.” (Akufo-Addo, 2018).

Akufo-Addo’s attempts to make a clear delineation between the practices of colonial powers and China’s approach, given its own colonial history, has been framed as invoking a new economic relationship: One that is not seen as maintaining a core-periphery relationship through fixing Ghana as possessing the alleged comparative advantage of producing low-value agricultural products, but with the possibility of, using Reikert’s (2007) language, emulation. The belief in emulation as a development strategy enabled by China is clear in the following quote:

“We are witnessing today, how China’s aggressive development of the market economy, on the wheels of industrialization, in this new era of “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,” has lifted some half a billion people out of poverty, creating the world’s largest middle class in the process... [Ghana] is inspired by this model, and are trying to replicate same [sic]” (Akufo-Addo, 2018).

The previous quotes echo China's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which are representations exhorting the creation of mutually beneficial partnerships. As opposed to the Western ethos of aid fueled by moral obligation, China's rhetoric claims that its focus is toward a business partnership where a win-win solution can be created. President Akufo-Addo echoes those business-like sentiments in his statement and highlights that shift in the spirit of aid relationships. The positive tone towards China stands in contrast to that attitude towards past Western aid, famously disparaged by Akufo-Addo as unproductive and exploitative in a joint press conference with French President Emmanuel Macron (Asiedu, 2017).

Akufo-Addo has challenged existing and assumed developmentalist tropes by citing the new and unique form of China's interventions. For example, he said "It is obvious to us that the mode of development trajectory we had been on for many decades is not working" (GhanaWeb, 2018b). Furthermore, the President described the relationship with China as enabling emulation and maneuver in the world-economy, and not the continuation of an established core-periphery relationship; "We want to build a value-added, industrialized economy with a modernized agriculture, which is neither victim nor pawn of the economic world order" (Taylor, 2017).

Akufo-Addo's words represent a criticism of Western aid. They also question whether Western loans encourage real development that would create "value-added, industrialized" economies. His statements are in line with the ideological critiques of Western development, where loan receiving countries must follow conditions laid out to maintain the current economic world order (Peet, 2007).

Moreover, they illustrate the geopolitical representations necessary to justify the inter-elite relationship (A) within Galtung's model. Our structural approach would lead us to expect the same sort of language in other countries.

Similar to the leader of Ghana, Zambian President Edgar Lungu has been a vocal advocate for a strong Zambian-Chinese alliance; it fits into his mission of “not looking east or west (but to) look forward and go with whoever wants to go with us” (Shaban, 2018). While “whoever” wants to invest in Zambia can, President Lungu has lodged many complaints against Western loans and sees China as a welcome break from established Western practices of development. However, Lungu has retained faith in the general idea of development, by believing that relations with China provide a fruitful pathway for maneuver in the world-economy. For example:

“China does not have a record of colonialism, neither does it seek a horse-rider friendship with Zambia... Zambia can choose her own friends on her own terms without being dictated to.” (Newsday Zambia, 2018).

Lungu's rhetoric does not focus on specific sectoral or industrial development, but a general sense that the population will soon see a rising standard of living:

“It is not a waste when we build roads to ease the lives of people and give them opportunities. The people in villages were able to watch television because of the Chinese. Even this building we are in [the government complex] is a witness of the Chinese money.” – Government Spokeswoman Dora Siliya (Chutel, 2018).

The description 'horse-rider friendship' is overtly directed at colonizers; in this case specifically referencing Britain who colonized Zambia from 1890-1953. The phrase originates, however, from the British description of its relationship with the Rhodesian government under British control in the Central African Federation (Franklin, 1963). The phrase can also be extended to modern Western institutions. Though colonialism is a form of "horse-rider" relationship, governments limited to only inflexible loans established by Western International Financial Institutions (IFIs) is another, and contemporary, example. There are branches of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund that specifically loan to countries that no other financial organization will loan to. While this does make funds available where there would not be otherwise, it also means that the only option available to those countries mandate specific local monetary and political policy.

Chinese loans are the first opportunity for countries who do not have many loan opportunities to have the opportunity to negotiate; the first time it is not overtly "dictated to." The following quotes illustrate this more favorable attitude towards Chinese loans:

"It is better to teach a man to fish than giving him a fish, many countries are in the process of getting to know fishing. China always adheres to actively strategize development strategy with Zambia's development plan and always focuses on cultivating Zambia's development capacity and also, China adheres to the principle of mutual benefit, a win-win cooperation" (Nkonde, 2018).

Specifically identifying “Zambia’s development capacity” illustrates a belief rejecting the permanence of core-periphery relations and the belief that the “win-win” nature of south-south cooperation is one that enables Zambia to create a positive trajectory of maneuver in the world-economy. However, the specifics of that path are not elucidated.

Also, President Lungu has focused his geopolitical representations upon the expectations and beliefs of his own people:

“I implore you to ignore the misleading headlines that seek to malign our relationship with China by mischaracterizing our economic cooperation to mean colonialism” (News24, 2018).

And:

“Our friendship with China is mutual and no amount of reckless propaganda will deter us from entrenching this relationship for the common good of our people” (Shaban, 2018).

Whether “reckless propaganda” or not, the representations employed by Presidents Akufo-Addo and Lungu to build national support for their relationships with China were an expected expression of Galtung’s relationship A. not, as we shall see, readily endorsed by opinion-makers within their respective civil societies.

Voices from Ghanaian and Zambian civil society

As expected, the establishment of Galtung’s elite-to-elite relations were justified by the leaders of Ghana and Zambia. However, a structural approach suggests that new ties with China would not be likely to lead to an immediate change in Ghana’s and Zambia’s positions in the world-economy. Instead, their

historically dependent relationship with Western countries and IFIs is likely to be replaced with a similar relationship with China. In this sub-section we bring focus to the voices in civil society within the two countries that seemed to think that the structural relationship of core-periphery will prevail, and used their position to criticize the developmentalist language of their leaders.

While President Akufo-Addo has been trusting and optimistic about Ghana's relationship with China, many members of Ghanaian civil society have advocated for more scrutiny and skepticism in loan negotiations. Such a reaction is expected given Galtung's relationship B. For example, Kofi Benti, Vice-President of the Ghanaian IMANI Think Tank VP said; "Every Chinese gift is a trojan horse. If we don't use it well, it could end up poorly for us" (Adamu, 2018). The specifics of what ending up poorly may mean were elucidated by Ghana's Samuel Gyamfi, Exton Cubic Mining spokesperson:

"Akufo-Addo... is gradually mortgaging the natural resources of the country to Chinese and other foreigners. He now believes in the Chinese and his claim that Ghana would be independent of foreign aid is laughable" (Taylor, 2017). More generally, the relationship with China has been seen as one that follows the imperatives of core-periphery relations and the construction of a generative sector (Bunker and Ciccantell, 2005 and 2007):

"While President Akufo-Addo is eying the next election; the Chinese are gazing at the opportunity to exploit Ghana's resources at the expense of the Ghanaian nation." Columnist Amodani Gariba (Gariba, 2018).

And:

“When the Chinese come to Africa, most of the projects are Chinese-built with Chinese labour and materials.” Kwasi Prempeh, executive director of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (Pilling, 2018).

These quotes from Ghanaian civil society illustrate a cynicism about aid and juxtapose the positive sentiment of President Akufo-Addo. One of the drawbacks to a Chinese “hub and spokes economic system” (Malik, 2018, p.5) is that it is still one of resource extraction, based on an idea of development founded upon the principles of comparative advantage (Reikert, 2007). As resources are finite, their extraction drains Ghana’s comparative advantage, with little value added in the economics of commodity extraction, to boost China’s economy. In other words, the new relationship with China maintains the constant dependent relationship between core and periphery, whatever the representations of the political elite may say. Hence, critical commentary from civil society:

“No one comes here because they love us. They come for what they can get, and we must also know what we want from them and negotiate” - Former Ghanaian President John Kufour (Adamu, 2018).

And:

“We always welcome China’s approach to strengthening the scope of Africa. But Africa needs leaders that will negotiate well. We did not do our homework well.” - Kofi Benti, IMANI Think Tank VP (Adamu, 2018).

These quotes do not show complete antipathy towards China, but instead display a wariness about loan negotiations. Far from ideological, Ghanaians were realistic and desired a fair spot at the negotiating table. They argued that the only

way that loans would help is if they were fairly negotiated. This does not present an overt case for Western loans and against Chinese loans but instead signals the shift in power that comes from negotiating loans with China. Whereas Western loans often have prescriptive, standard conditions, the Ghanaians have favored Chinese loans that boast “creative involvement” as an opportunity to contribute to loan terms that will benefit them. Whereas Western loans are presented as an opportunity for developed countries to impart their wisdom about monetary and fiscal policy, China presents its loans as a partnership with far fewer ideological conditions. Though the quotes illustrate that loans with the Chinese were not yet “win-win”, and Ghanaians awareness of the power differential, it leaves open the possibility for them to become beneficial under the right negotiation conditions. This negotiation opportunity is not as available for Western prescriptive loans, which not only benefit from “mortgaging the natural resources,” but also dictate the economic priorities of Ghana into the future.

Similar to the situation in Ghana, many members of the Zambian general public, including business people, opposition leaders, and opinionmakers, did not share President Lungu’s view of China as a partner, instead of a colonizer. For example Zambian columnist Kalima Nkonde said:

“To many intelligent observers, it is apparent that there is some subtle and informal colonization of the Zambian economy taking place. Unlike the formal colonization... China is doing it informally and deceptively; but the motivation is the same which is: access to raw materials, providing markets for their goods, providing a home for their citizens to settle through

emigration, as well as a long term strategy for achieving geopolitical power and influence which China feels it deserves given its population. This strategy appears not to be so apparent to naive African leaders or if they do, they decide to look the other way for a few pieces of silver and for short term personal gain instead of safeguarding future generations' interests" (Nkonde, 2018).

Nkonde identified many of the conditions of a core-periphery relationship, notably the connected but disparate nature of the Zambian and Chinese economies. He also described the manifestation of Galtung's relationship A, an elite-to-elite connection that is not likely to spread wealth across the Zambian population. The idea of exploitation was echoed by Michael Sata, former President, who referred to the constancy of the core-periphery relation from historic formal imperialism to contemporary informal imperialism:

"We want the Chinese to leave and the old colonial rulers to return. They exploited our natural resources too, but at least they took good care of us. They built schools, taught us their language and brought us the British civilization... at least Western capitalism has a human face; the Chinese are only out to exploit us" (The Economist, 2011).

The previous quotes reflect many of the ideological complaints about the Chinese loan systems and some benefits of the Western system. Whereas China does not seem to have political motives as it allows for loan condition negotiations and presents itself as a business partner, there are geopolitical reasons to develop infrastructure in countries with resources that would benefit the Chinese economy.

Relying on the “win-win” business model can hide ulterior motives, and that may be considered deceptive by some. It can also lessen the obligation to improve social needs in a community. The absence of tangible social improvements, like supporting education or healthcare, makes it more difficult for an average citizen to see and reap the benefits of an economic agreement.

These concerns may be seen in the following quotes that demonstrate acute awareness of both relationships A and B in Galtung’s model. The first quote shows faith in the idea of development but questions the particular nature of Zambian-Chinese elite relations. The second quote is skeptical about the general possibility of development, and uses the specifics of a perceived “debt-trap” to allude to the dependent nature of the Zambian-Chinese relationship:

“Their long-term investment opportunities are good for the nation. However, they believe in getting investment opportunities at all cost. And most of the corruption is now happening with Chinese investors who are easily harassed by political parties because of how they conduct their businesses” - Pamela Chisanga, ActionAid Zambia Country Director (Shalala, 2016).

And:

“The rising phenomenon is that there is a growing debt trap that comes with the Chinese loans under the BRI scheme... African countries are quickly following Sri Lanka that also fell an apparent victim of consistent Chinese investment in infrastructure projects” - Siyabonga Hadebe, media commenter (Hadebe, 2018).

The elite-to-elite relationship is expected to include winners and losers, as some members of the elite capture rewards while others are excluded:

“I am not happy with the dominance of Chinese contractors. In the first place, the money that they get from these contracts is externalized and all that they return here are meager wages” - Edgar Syakachoma, contractor (News24, 2018).

But Syakachoma’s specific concern is just one example of practices of inter-elite cooperation between China and Zambia that will likely maintain a core-periphery relationship:

“China is about to take everything from Zambia. They have taken over our economy through these criminal debts. This government is contracting debts from China even without parliamentary approval.” – James Lukuku, minority political party president (News24, 2018).

The general sense of an exploitive relationship, Galtung’s relationship B, was pervasive in Zambian civil society:

“People all over the world can see what’s happening in Zambia while some Zambians continue burying their heads in the sand until they get colonized.” (Zambian Observer, 2018).

This general picture also translated into immediate and negative impacts for non-elite Zambians. Physical abuse was a very real manifestation of Galtung’s relationship B:

“Zambia is entertaining Chinese nationals which is displacing Zambians through big financial offers... in some instances the Chinese are beating

Zambians in places of work for simply failing to follow instructions.”

(News24, 2018).

The quotes from different voices within Zambian civil society illustrate concerns about the terms of Chinese loans, specifically. Other tangible manifestations of the relationship include corrupt practices and Zambian job displacement. As well, without transparency around loan terms, there is concern that the Zambian government has been taken advantage of; the fear of debt trap drives much of the necessary scrutiny of foreign interest in Zambia.

As expected, the structural relations of imperialism provide a reason and context for opposition voices opposed to the establishment of Galtung’s relationship A and its promises of development. However, politicians can be flexible in their challenge depending on whether they are in power, and maintaining relationship A, or not.

Voices of Ghanaian and Zambian Intra-elite Competition

Intervening between Galtung’s relationships of inter-elite cooperation between core and periphery countries and a repressive relationship within peripheral countries are intra-elite politics within peripheral countries. Though the broad structural pattern of Galtung’s relationships is consistent over time and across countries, it is also the context for political competition that creates a dynamic of winners and losers. In this sub-section we examine the fluidity of the rhetoric employed by politicians in Ghana and Zambia reflects the imperative of core-periphery relations and changes depending on whether the politician is in power or not. A politician in power will follow the developmentalist trope of being

able to affect change; when in opposition politicians are eager to point out the power differentials within the world-economy.

Recent Ghanaian and Zambian elections have provided an arena for politicians to mobilize electoral support by identifying Galtung's relationship A. Politicians challenging for the Presidency in both countries have used rhetoric that claims China's economic goals are exploitive, and not for the benefit of the population as a whole; implying the existence of Galtung's relationship B. However, once in power Ghanaian and Zambian politicians have quickly changed their language to justify their role in maintaining Galtung's relationship A.

For example, when Akufo-Addo was a presidential candidate from the opposition party in 2012, he critiqued Ghana's relations with China and thought that Ghana should be defending its national interests more. He referenced how sixty percent of jobs generated by Chinese loans went to Chinese workers (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012). As we have seen, once in power Akufo-Addo became vocal in his support for economic relations with China, and went out of his way to distinguish it as being different from imperial relations. Criticism of economic connections to China and what they meant for development were absent from Presidential statements and were voiced as critiques from civil society and those members of the political elite seeking to gain power. For example, parliamentary minority leader Haruna Iddrisu wrote to the International Monetary Fund with regard to the Ghana-China bauxite deal and claimed:

“It is our strong belief that this Sinohydro deal is a loan which is coming to add to the debt stock and we are concerned about the burden of additional borrowing cost on the over-burdened taxpayer” (Kpodo, 2018).

The situation in Zambia was similar. When running for the Presidency, Michael Sata was very critical of China’s goals and the implications of its economic aid. He called for Chinese migrant workers to be expelled from Zambia, and referred to Chinese investors as “infestors” (Cheeseman, 2018). Furthermore, his rhetoric spoke directly to an exploitive core-periphery relation, as expected from our structural framework. During the 2006 election campaign Sata said:

“We want to work with the Chinese, but they must change. Their labour relations are very bad. They are not adding any value to what they claim in investment. Instead of creating jobs for the local workforce, they bring in Chinese workers to cut wood and carry water. We don’t want Zambia to be a dumping ground for their human beings” (The Telegraph, 2014).

Such rhetoric led to Sata’s election victory being heralded by the Western press as a sign of anti-Chinese sentiment in Africa (French, 2011; Pavgi, 2011). But once he was elected in 2011, “he became a compliant partner for Beijing once he was in power” (The Telegraph, 2014). Sata died in office in 2014 and was replaced by Edgar Lungu of the same party, the Patriotic Front. As we have seen, Lungu painted a very positive picture of China-Zambia relations. In 2016, Lungu’s opponent was Hakainde Hichilema. True to form, Hichilema’s campaign contained anti-Chinese rhetoric, including allegations that the government had sold the state-owned timber company Zambia Forestry and Forest Industries Corporation

(ZAFFICO) in November 2018. The pendulum swing between opposition anti-Chinese rhetoric and incumbent pro-Chinese language drove the ebb and flow of Zambian politics. As President Lungu cracked down on opposition politics, the roots of Hichilema's criticism were conveniently forgotten: "Ironically, the nationalistic and anti-Chinese sentiment that is now such a challenge for Lungu has its roots in the policies of his own party. Under Michael Sata's leadership, the Patriotic Front used China as a common enemy to mobilise a multi-ethnic and multiclass alliance." (Cheeseman, 2018).

The quotes from Ghanaian and Zambian leaders in and out of power support our expectations that the core-periphery relations of the world-economy provided opportunity for opposition politicians to mobilize across society by highlighting the lack of benefit to the population as a whole offered by aid and economic relations with external powers. Also, as expected, politicians, once in power, changed their rhetoric to represent the self-same relations as beneficial, not just for themselves but for the country as a whole.

Conclusion

Analysis of statements from Ghanaian and Zambian political leaders and opinion-makers reveals not just the short-comings of Chinese loans but the potential opportunity that can grow from them. Political voices were not simply echoing Chinese propaganda but offering an optimistic perspective. Voices in civil-society displayed a pragmatic skepticism. Analyzing agency, in the form of voices from the periphery, provides a more complete picture of the reception and effects of Chinese loans. The presence of China in African countries should not be interpreted through

the hawkish eyes of people like John Bolton, but through the lens of Africans deeply impacted by their post-colonial situation and current position in the world-economy. Hence, one conclusion to be drawn is that the actions of those on the periphery are a driver of geopolitical processes. Peripheral actors are not simply powerless pawns in the geopolitical games of great powers (Hörschelmann, et. al, forthcoming).

However, actors in African countries are making decisions within a certain set of constraints; their agency in negotiating loans and foreign relationships is limited. Identifying a geopolitical context for the actions of actors in the periphery help us understand the nature of such constraints. In addition, by focusing on agency, we can see the ways in which actions largely maintain the structural imperatives that define the context. The geopolitics of development is one in which the everyday actions that construct assemblages are also partially defined by larger structures. The dynamics of the geopolitics of development construct particular local outcomes and national trajectories that, in turn, help maintain the imperatives of the structure, while also driving the dynamics of economic innovation and the rise and decline of hegemonic powers.

Our analysis also contributes to the discussion of geopolitics and development by considering how relations between “great powers” are dependent upon how those powers form relations with other countries, notably in the Global South or the periphery of the world-economy. Instead of separating out the topic of geopolitics, with a traditional emphasis upon inter-core relations, and the topic of development, with an emphasis upon core-periphery relations, we show that

geopolitical competition is driven by economic processes that create and maintain a core-periphery relation. The geopolitics of development is the combination of peripheral countries choosing between different “horse-rider” relationships, and the efforts of elites in core and periphery to make the most of the limited opportunities provided by the geopolitical context.

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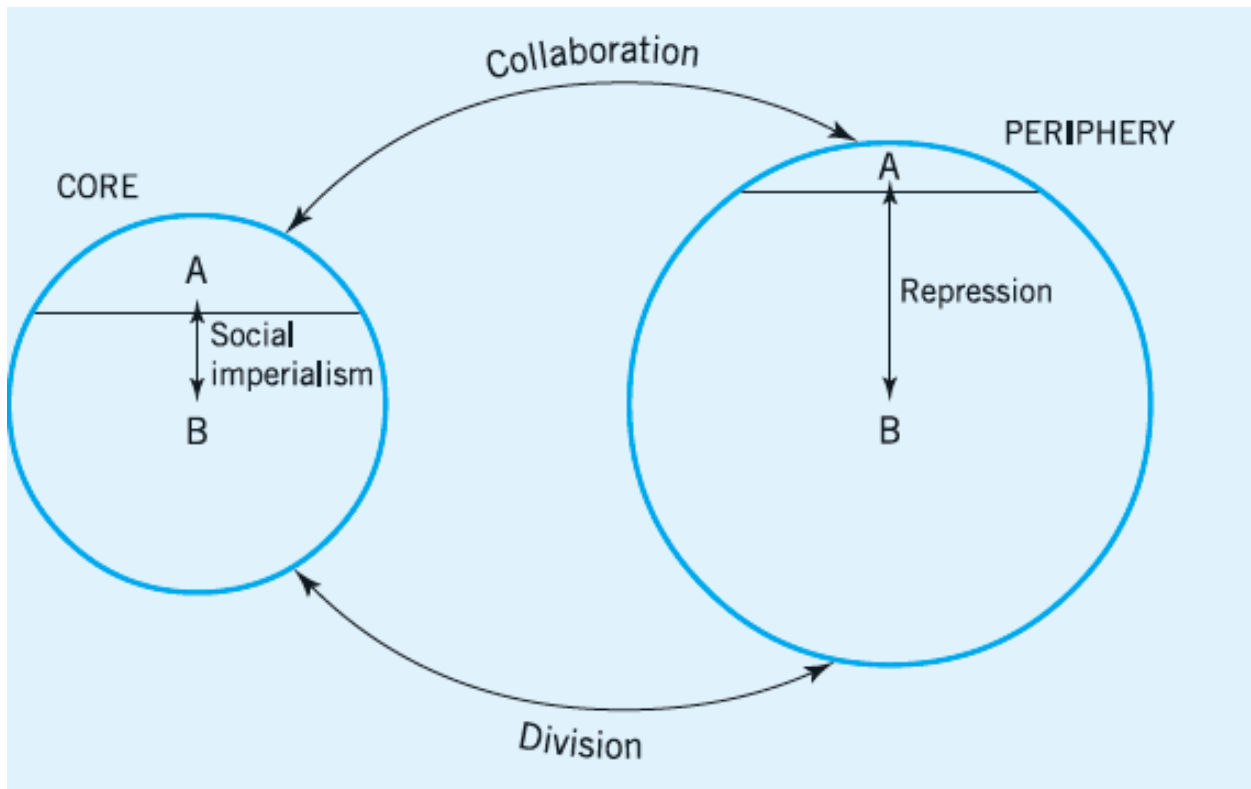


Figure 1: Galtung's structural relations of imperialism (Flint and Taylor, 2018, p. 96).

ⁱ While China's Official Development Assistance does appear to come tied with foreign policy demands other forms of Chinese investment does not (Dreher, et al., 2018), the "lion's share of Chinese officially supported finance is not actually official development assistance" (Bräutigam, 2011).

ⁱⁱ This relationship produces, amongst other things, policies of favoritism in which the regional base of African leaders receive disproportionate aid funding from Chinese sources (Dreher, et al., 2016).

ⁱⁱⁱ Afrobarometer. 2019. Surveys and methods. <http://afrobarometer.org/surveys-and-methods>. Accessed 17 February 2019.

^{iv} The data was taken from the World Bank sites <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/> and <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#home> and, for the HDI index, the UN Development Programme <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>. Both sites accessed on July 17, 2018. World Bank variables collected: Trade as % of GDP; FDI net inflows as % of GDP; Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added as % of GDP; GNI per capita, Atlas method, current US\$; worldwide governance indicators, regulatory quality and rule of law.

^v China Africa Research Initiative. 2019. Data: Chinese Loans to Africa.
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