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The Rise of China and its Implications for African Countries: Interrogating the Emerging Debate on China's "New Imperialism".

Ashiraf Mugalula

- Research Fellow, Makerere University |Al-Mustafa Islamic College

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Correspondence

Author:

Ashiraf Mugalula

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Abstract

My paper argues that there is need to historicize the hegemonic discourse if we are to better articulate the fate of the supposed "Chinese hegemony". Debates across the vast part of the globe [in the global market sphere and the international political economy space] have vehemently concentrated on China as the next world hegemon/imperial power that has showed potential to overtake the USA. Just like the USA and Britain, China's tactics are said by some schools of thought not to be any different. Despite the differences in approaches, it is alleged that China is operating like these capitalist powers that serve interests of primitive capital accumulation. This school of thought argues that China is introducing a new liberal order to replace the American liberal order which poses a threat for the US. There is another school of thought which argues that China cannot be put on the same scale with the US for the practice is different and cannot be considered imperial. They argue that China seeks to work within the existing liberal order. Is China really a new imperial power? Which promises does it make to African countries? What are the incentives for China to invest in Africa? What does this mean to the western countries especially USA and her liberal order. I want to look at the motivations for Chinas engagement in Africa and the implications of her relations/activities. I will situate this debate in the broader debate on capitalism and its expanding nature beyond borders. Given the level at which China has increasingly and overwhelmingly penetrated into the economies of the world specifically Africa, it has provided reasons for being branded as the new hegemon. This paper therefore seeks to underscore the basis for defining China as an imperial power both in terms of her economic practice and political influence.

Keywords: China–Africa Relations; New Imperialism; Hegemony; Global Political Economy; Capitalism; Chinese Foreign Policy; African Development

Introduction

The Making of Hegemons: Understanding the Debate on the Rise of China as a New Empire/hegemonic power

Giovani Arrighi provides the best starting point for my engagement with the debate on China as a new hegemon and the general debate on hegemon making, collapse and new hegemonic rise. Most people who have defined hegemony give reference to Gramsci. For instance, reading from Galabuzi we can consider hegemony to be both a direct and indirect form of supremacy that comprises of both coercion and consent as principles and practices that govern society and social order. While providing reference to the works of Antonio Gramsci and Ranajit Guha, Arrighi argues that Gramsci perceived hegemony as a specific combination of coercion and consent, which enables the dominant classes “to present their rule as credibly serving not just their interests but those of subordinate groups as well”. However, he adds that “when such credibility is lacking or wanes, hegemony deflates into sheer domination,” and Guha in Arrighi calls this “dominance without hegemony”. When we situate this in an interstate system, we can clearly see that hegemonic states utilise a cocktail of military power and consent thus privileging itself with the potential to lead the interstate system. To draw an example of the US, Arrighi argues that the character and nature of US power altered from hegemony to domination without hegemony. Arrighi tries to link the economic crises and the crises of hegemony of successive world hegemonies through a historical analysis of their signal and terminal crises. In my reading of Adam Smith in Beijing, I find Arrighi to offer a purely structuralist analysis of hegemony and the crisis of hegemony in the world system and not making shallow conjectural analysis based on the failures and mistakes of the leaders of the powerful states. The structuralist analysis that he uses is of great relevancy in trying to explain the rise and fall of hegemonies especially in the world system. However, his analysis witnessed great opposition especially from scholars like Elvin who finds no satisfaction from the structuralist analysis of hegemon making and opts for a more “conjunctural and socio-psychological” perspective. Elvin writes that:

...what should one make of the author’s [Arrighi] important final theme, the incontrovertible decline of American ‘hegemony,’ in the sense that, while crude ‘power’ has been retained, ‘authority’ in terms of moral standing and leadership has been largely squandered? Declining hegemony is the main topic of Arrighi’s sixth chapter, yet he gives little attention to its probable socio-psychological roots. My own view is that, unlike most of the other trends discussed in Adam Smith in Beijing, this loss of accepted leadership status was due to stupidity and largely avoidable.

To give an elaboration to his claim, Elvin avers that the decline of the US hegemony is not unavoidable as he pens down:

If [the U.S.] had adopted a principled and self-restrained role as first among equals in supporting an international rule of law, it could have mobilized an immense depth of enduring support. One might argue that this was impossible, given the nature of the beast; but to some extent it was surely a self-inflicted and unnecessary wound. If so, this role might conceivably be won back, with great care and patience, though I would not be overly optimistic.

There are two things involved here i.e. giving much emphasis to the implication of the distinctive capacities of different US administrations on the hegemonic decline—including the manner and timing—and its reversibility. To ask Elvin a question, are the two assumptions identical/similar? Isn't there a difference between the two? Elvin can be read as if trying to confuse the two as one.

To better understand the debate on China as a hegemonic power, we need to first of all look back at the history of the former hegemonies, how they rose and fell. Let me start by deploying Arrighi's (1999) *The Global Markets treatise*. Arrighi makes an interesting narrative on how the former hegemonies existed, survived and fell. Historically, Britain is said to have been the world's very first hegemonic power followed by the United States after the decline of the British supremacy. He begins with the earlier hegemon of Britain and states that the hegemonic powers of Britain are said to have rested on a combination of numerous circumstances and three of these are relevant to the understanding of the rise and fall of the 19th c global market. The first was the mastery of the European balance of power by Britain, the second the role of Britain in the leadership in the liberalisation of trade in the western world, and the third as the role of Britain in empire building in the non-western world. From these reasons, we can see that Britain was at the centre of the whole imperial project not only in Europe but also in the developing countries of the global south. Despite Britain's first role, I find it more interesting to discuss her second role i.e. in the liberalisation. Arrighi argues that, this role of Britain materialised the unilateral "opening up of Britain's domestic market and culminated in the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1848 and of the Navigation Acts in 1849". Majority of the world's exports went to Britain while cheap imports ensured raw materials for Britain. This was coupled with the availing of the means for exchange and payment that enabled other countries to buy Britain goods. He argues that the rest of the world was limited and caged by the international division of labour that ensured that everyone's interest to participate in Britain's global market system. This global market is said to have become the monopoly of supplying inputs and an outlet for outputs. The role of Britain as an imperial power for the western world in non-western world was very vital in ensuring her hegemonic power and the global market. This kind of leadership and role ensured that Britain moved away with resources that she required to maintain over balance of power and the practice of free trade despite the deficits in balance of trade. The over expenditure of Britain during the second world war weakened her superiority and this led to the rise of USA as a superior power. The author argues that, "when Britain's own credit approached exhaustion, the US threw its economic and military weight in the struggle, tilting the balance to its debtors' advantage. The mastery of the European balance of power, which had belonged to Britain, now belonged to the United States". The emergency of the US as a leading power led to the establishment of a new world order which was based on USA principles and organisation. There was no global market after the establishment of the new world order. This works to explain what is called the geopolitics in the IPE. The author argues that much as the British global market was bottom up based on British, mastery of European balance of power and leadership in empire building in western world—so to call it imperialism, the US rebuilt the global market based on a top down approach through a double suppression of the balance of power politics and western colonialism in the non-

western world through the creation of the world government. Such world governments saw the emergency of supranational governments like the UN and the Bretton wood institutions that extended sovereignty rights to non-western peoples. From this, we can realise that neither Britain nor US global market establishment was intended to benefit non-western countries. The US claimed to be carrying a legitimate role of decolonisation in colonised countries. This later led to nothing but the industrialisation of war between the global powers.

The ever-increasing fight for global capital cannot spare USA to remain the main hegemonic power. The US could not maintain her hegemony over the global market. East Asia posed a very big threat through the interstate competition for mobile capital. The system that weakened British global market never survived since her military capabilities could not stand for her from the geopolitical tensions. America's political power was limited by reduced finances to support her military and political endeavours and such was due to a shift of production, trade and accumulation from US to east Asia. The east Asian economic growth is not comparable to any of the previous world's economic growth. He argues that east Asia has sufficient resources to manage the world pressure and need for finances to meet their development needs even when the USA may not have.

USA's global new deal is said to have enabled the reconstruction of the global market and not just political and economic content. The deal made ambitious promises of prosperous and secure working classes of rich countries and development for the people of the poor countries. These promises are said to have garnered support for the USA project. The USA used the propaganda that all countries and their citizens were to benefit from the neoliberal policies which made her favourable competitor than other states. This promise was never fulfilled as the neoliberal project is said to have ended benefiting the united states and wealthier classes in the world than the poor people. Countries lost support and morale to mobilise for policies which were one sided in terms of benefit i.e. Benefiting only the minority rich at the expense of the majority poor. East Asia for me has continued to pose a threat to the global market—who knows if it will not establish a new global market after fighting for the collapse of the American new deal.

Reading from Leo Panitch's critique of Arrighi's analysis of the US terminal crisis in *Adam Smith in Beijing*, the US hegemony is considered to be a formula for "making the world safer for capital accumulation". For him, provided the world continues to be a capitalist world, US hegemony is under no threat and can be considered to be very safe. He writes that American project has been to make capitalism global but this did not mean it intended to govern the world directly or to "assign that task to international institutions to which it would subject its own sovereignty". Instead, its project of global capitalism intended to make the world safe for capital accumulation with all states of the world being capitalists with "legal, juridical, bureaucratic and coercive institutions and practices". I find Panitch to be inconsiderate of the competition that the united states is going through globally with other powers which are equally formidable. To him, the US needs nothing but to ensure that the capitalist system is safe. He can be read as if trying to ignore if not forget the role played by the Chinese economic ascent in the US hegemonic decline. I am convinced and agree

with Panitch that ensuring the safety of the US interest in the global capital accumulation is necessary for the US but it is not sufficient. This is because, we cannot just ignore the Chinese ascent to the interests of the US. Let's see what Arrighi writes regarding this:

The irony in Sino-American relations is that when China was in the grip of ideological Maoism and displayed such ideological ferocity that Americans believed it to be dangerous and menacing, it was actually a paper tiger, weak and virtually without global influence. Now that China has shed the trappings of Maoism and embarked on a pragmatic course of economic development and global trade, it appears less threatening but is in fact acquiring the wherewithal to back its global ambitions and interests with real power.

Should we say that Arrighi is trying to argue that the China's level of economic and military power in the Mao era was less scaring? Some schools of thought have argued that in trying to understand whether China is a threat to the US and other hegemonies, we need to highlight that the Sino-Soviet antagonism after the early 1960s was to the benefit of the US in her global competition with the Soviet Union. The absence of such an extreme hostility between China and Russia especially in the recent past makes China's rise a significant challenge for the US. For Arrighi, the integration of China in the global market relations ensured the catastrophe of the US hegemony more severe than before. The US can be seen to have been at the forefront of supporting China's transition to capitalism in the 1980s. The upsurge of China as a "low-cost manufacturer" of commodities which was a blue print of the US companies acted as a blessing in disguise for the US capital given her history of low profitability since the period ranging from the 1970s. The investment of China in the US treasury bonds facilitated the US dollar to continue dominating as a global currency which favoured its borrowing at low interest rates globally. Equally though, much as China can be said to have exported products of relatively low quality to the US, the export was helpful in way since low-income earners could access cheap products that could meet their standards of living.

Can the above ensure sustainability of either the United States or China or even both? It is challenging to make such a conclusion but the works of Burak Gürel & Eylem Taylan have shown that:

...the Chinese capital and state are not satisfied with the country's position as a low-end final assembly line of the American capital and therefore they attempt at moving towards higher value added and more profitable lines of production. Although China is clearly far from overtaking the US in terms of research and design capacity, even its early (and limited) successes has led the US policymakers into panic, as manifested by various official declarations and media reports claiming that China is undermining America's technological leadership, industrial espionage allegations against Chinese companies, and the recent arrest of a senior Huawei executive in Canada with the US official request for extradition.

They invite us to look further at the more interventions of China in world affairs. They argue that despite China holding enormous US treasury securities, its Chinese-led initiatives more specifically “the Belt and Road Initiative and the foundation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank” is a clear indicator that China is not soon to rest as far as expanding her investment agenda is concerned. This serves to undermine the US global position as a super power. Citing the works of Chatzky and McBride 2019, Gürel & Taylan state that “US government openly counters both initiatives and tries to establish a counter-coalition with countries such as Japan and India”. They argue that America is trying to re-channel her energies from the 9/11 war on terror to fighting China especially in the south China sea. This is what all parties in US are aiming their efforts towards despite having internal contradictions. This to me shows how China has become a thorn in the foot of the American bureaucrats. Having read from Arrighi, it can be seen that countering the US hegemony can be challenging for a single nation state...not even China in trying to transform itself into the next world hegemony.

In yet another postscript Arrighi informs us that the united states is by far losing its hegemony evidenced by the financial meltdown of 2008 and that a new system is yet to manifest in which he tends to predict an era of disorder. Reading Arrighi in this regard, he opines that the East Asian-centered world market society seems to be a product of the great transformations that are happening today in the global political economy despite him not denying the naked fact that the US reconstituted Western alliance with a “more realistic multilateral imperial project”. He states that China is the largest creditor of the U.S. and the world's leading economic growth powerhouse and this shows the potential of being the leading sheep in the constitution of this new order. To him, we need to look at China as one that has started replacing the US as the main force in the commercial and economic expansion not only in east Asia but also beyond. By this, we witness a different model of development based on race and this is “socially and ecologically sustainable” since it is believed to provide an alternative to western domination to the benefit of countries of the global south equitably. If this happens in such a way, Arrighi is strong enough to argue that China will take a different approach to that of previous hegemony.

Another interesting text by Farrell tries to bring out the debates on hegemony making and China's rise. Citing the works of Paul Kennedy 1988, Farrell argues that “the ability of modern nations to exercise and sustain global hegemony lies in their productive capacity”. To him, the rate at which China is growing shows the potential of doubling the size of the US economy by the year 2025 as the former plus her contemporaries are struggling to revive from the 2008 shocks. There is a group of scholars who argue that the friction between China and other global powers will increase especially in the future. This school of thought Farrell argues contend that China is “a revisionist power that will dramatically alter the dynamic of global affairs as its economic development increases its power to a hegemonic level”. The reasons cited by this debate end-up stressing fears especially from the “great power conflict” that arise due to the behaviour of China following the western financial crisis. This side of the debate can be read as if making their conclusions based on China as a threat and making a threat theory to justify their standpoint. This has been countered by

another side of the debate. Farrell argues that the other side of the debate takes a historical approach and makes a strategic analysis of the relationship of China with the prevailing international system. He clearly states that, “these authors believe China favours the economic benefits of status quo stability and is a power that will support the foundations of the global order constructed by the United States”. This narrative to me points to another debate on whether China is trying to establish a new world order that counters the American liberal order. Let’s see from the next section.

The Changing of Guards: Is China seeking to establish a new world order or to work within the existing American liberal world order?

It has been argued that existing liberal world order which emerged under the leadership of the United States after the second world war has experienced a series of radical transformations in the recent past and this is attributed to the rise of China. The so called normative fabric of the existing liberal world order is facing a strong challenge from China despite the fact that its power and capacity is increasing. The debate that surrounds this issue has been on the implications the rise of China will pose for the liberal world order and the international political system. Farrell argues that there has been no consensus on the future of Sino-American relations despite China’s growth being attributed to its integration into the US-led economic order.

Two schools of thought are identified when talking about the fate of the world order. The first school of thought argues that China is non-compliant to the existing liberal world order and seeks a break from it to establishment of a new world order. China is said to be motivated to deploy all sorts of measures both coercive and peaceful to exert her influence. The second school of thought argues that China still favours the existing world order and does not seek establishment of a new world order but seek integration into it with favourable power and positions. Farrell has stated that according to this school of thought, China favours an “approach of working within the multilateral structure of the international political system”.

Martin Jacques has written that three assumptions frame this western thinking i.e. “that China’s challenge will be primarily economic in nature; that China will in due course become a typical Western nation; and that the international system will remain broadly as it now is, with China acquiescing in the status quo and becoming a compliant member of the international community”. However, to Jacques, these assumptions do not hold water and need to be questioned.

The American liberal order is characterised by western norms, institutions and rules, the use of US global power “to shape the international political system to American values and interests” with rules and institutions rooted in the concept of democracy and capitalism. Those in favour of the American liberal order argue that the system is integrative and expansive, and provides a strategic framework for state security and cooperation under the umbrella of American political, economic, and military influence. The liberal order assumes just one route to modernity and development which is universal. This has not only

perpetuated core liberal assumptions but has also facilitated the materialisation of western interests. The most interesting narrative for me in the above quote is the world order being rooted in the concept of democracy and capitalism. At the core of hegemonic discourses is the attempt by capitalism to consolidate, solidify and expand. This poses a question on whether the Chinese rise is also rooted and motivated by capitalist interests which I will come to later.

Farrell cites scholars like Michael Yahuda who recognise a new aggressiveness in China's foreign policy with its signal of a break from conforming to the status quo and norms championed by the U.S order. However, this does not mean that he is blind to the other side of the debate. He equally identifies those like Ning Liao whose writing can be read to portray China as both a participant and "proactive actor" when it comes to shaping "regional security materialism". For those who identify with a claim that China seeks a break from the American liberal order contend that it has embraced a more "aggressive policy, citing China's actions in the post-2008 period that suggest the Chinese government has abandoned Deng Xiaoping's long-time axiom not to treat the United States as an adversary and to shelve sovereignty disputes in favour of joint development". This can be interpreted as a Chinese challenge to the global liberal order. Those who challenge such claims have come up to argue that China has not radically altered and/or discarded Deng's strategic approach. To them, China still follows a strategy of "peaceful development, working within the framework of multilateralism to avoid disrupting peace and stability in the international political system".

China for Farrell is seen to play three central roles in the future of the global political economy i.e. as a "spoiler, supporter and shirker". This is anchored on the debate on whether China will conform to the order created by the United States or if it will use its increasing power capabilities to shape international order much like the United States did at the end of World War II. He states that for China to consolidate its modernity, it will have to tag itself on the global liberal economy for trade to secure the resources that can support domestic growth. Looking at the so-called supporter scenario, it tries to critique theories of rise and fall of great powers through a historical approach. It states that we should not think of all transitions in terms of wars, catastrophes and overturns in international order just as was the case with British hegemony ceding power to the united states peacefully without fights after the WW2. The supporter scenario states that, "when state actors see an incentive to participate in global order, there is less of a chance for friction between the rising power and the hegemon and more of a chance the rising power will adopt the practices of international society to become a "normal" actor in the system". What this narrative forgets is that the absence of war is not guarantee that China is incapable of changing the world order which ignores the Gramscian notion of consent. Another scholar Tarik Oğuzlu has argued that China is not questioning the establishment of western liberal order by forming anti-western coalitions of states or doing its best to make sure it frustrates the functioning of western international organisations. He states vehemently that China is not pursuing an approach to global hegemony. To him, Chinese leaders have no intentions of being imperial but offer to help other nations develop through the image of their model. Despite believing that their

civilisation is superior, it is attested that their never engaged in “an empire-building project” with a civilising mission. The above narratives to me seem to forget that hegemonies and their establishments involve both coercion and consent and also peace and war. Whether peaceful or not, I argue that we should not ignore the potential of China in trying to alter the world order by under looking the symptoms.

Suisheng Zhao one of the scholars who disagree with claims that China seeks to replace the American world order has argued that China has no capacity to undermine the American liberal order. To him, China lacks distinctive values that can be used to guarantee the world order. China has no capacity to appeal to its neighbour to support a new world order especially given its “Sino-centred hierarchical order or tianxia (all under heaven) system”. To him, it’s wrong to argue that China is not satisfied with the existing order but just with the position it occupies in the order. This means that if the demands of China can be met—by “increase China’s voice and weight in the existing institutions and adjustment to tweaking of some rules”,—then China cannot be a threat to the existing order and wont deploy its revolutionary powers. We can read from the above that China only calls for a reform of the global power structures so as to have some influence but not seeking complete overhaul. To accentuate his claim, he points to the military might of America claiming that China is not near to it so changing the world order is uncalled for. This to me neglects the potential of making hegemonies by just ensuring forming alliances through consent as Gramsci and Arrighi have stated in the earlier parts of this paper. The same view is shared by Ikemberry who seems to praise the “immortality” of the liberal order. To him, the Chinese struggle is a struggle over fundamental principles i.e. seeks to get more authority and leadership in the liberal order but not to challenge it. To him, US world order has no competitors despite the last decade bringing significant tests in the global system. China’s rise is one way in which the international liberal order is being promoted and new constituencies created. To him much as China has the potential to embrace such a future, it is not a full-blown illiberal hegemon and so gives respect to global rules and institutions. However, he states that China seeks to work both within and outside the liberal order but its success will be dependent on the support to such a model by the rest of the world or else can be subjected to pressure to play by the liberal rules. More credulously, he argues that American hegemony is not falling but it’s just a dynamic process in which other states are trying to catch up and get more connected. Those states that claim to be opposing the liberal order and claim to be revisionist can be seen nowhere on the global seen since they were pushed off.

To the contrary, Martin Jacques has argued that the rise of China has the potential to change the world in very strong terms. Citing the works of Sacks, Jacques posits that by the year 2027, China will overtake the united states. To challenge the claim by Ikemberry, Jacques states that “hitherto, the arrival of a new global hegemon has ushered in a major change in the international order, as was the case with both Britain and then the United States. Given that China promises to be so inordinately powerful and different, it is difficult to resist the idea that in time its rise will herald the birth of a new international order”. I find his critique to be considerate of the history of hegemony making thus holding water.

In the making of hegemons as discussed earlier, the key feature of world's leading powers is the ability to organise and create international economic systems. We have seen the British international gold standard which prior to 1914 boomed all over the world but whose decline ushered in the United States as a leading power with the Bretton Wood system in the 1940s. However, this system was never global before China joining the WTO. China's growing economic power which threatens the US global economic prominence for decline is coupled with the aspirations of the Chinese towards the international system. This shows that China has the potential to replace the American liberal order. The nature and form of hegemonies keep changing and we should not expect a single form. Jacques states that in the British era, the form was colonialism using force but this collapsed after 1945. There was a shift to American form which constituted air power, global network of military bases, international economic system dominance and global media. Who knows which form the Chinese form will take. For now, we cannot draw solid conclusions but the threats of Chinese economic dominance should serve as a warning.

Is China a Capitalist Power? Understanding the Capitalist Nature and Character of the Chinese Political Economy.

The understanding of hegemonic order has to do with the great powers. It is the nature of capitalist development that determines who emerges as a great power. IPE emerges as an explanatory framework to determine how hegemonic power is organised. Capitalism uses both coercion and consent to assert its influence. This same logic is what hegemonies are built on and so I will argue that we cannot separate the hegemons from the capitalist logic.

Let me look at Arrighi's exposition in Adam Smith in Beijing to better understand capitalism versus hegemonic power in trying to situate the "Chinese imperialism" debate in a capitalist context. Arrighi's Adam Smith in Beijing tries to offer a historical yet comparative narrative on the ways in which the South African peasantry was dispossessed thus hindering the development of capitalism. This to him served to eliminate the potential of rural labour force to subsidise self-production and capital accumulation. His research in Africa had far reaching implications and among them was his rejection of the proletarianization as a necessary condition of capitalist development. This sensitivity to the historically liable and flexible ways in which the peasantry can be incorporated into and shape development trajectories is reflected here in Arrighi's discussion of China's Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) as an example of "accumulation without dispossession." Arrighi further shows that China in the contemporary era is a non-capitalist market economy and he identifies two reasons to support his narrative. Firstly, he considers the continuing rights of villagers to use small plots of farmland in China coupled with the absence of land privatisation as signs that exhibit absence of capitalism in China today. Secondly, he assumes that the presence of numerous capitalists in China does not guarantee their control of the Chinese apparatus. This is clear when he writes that:

...the reforms created myriad opportunities for the reorientation of entrepreneurial energies from the political to the economic sphere, which party cadres and officials eagerly seized upon to enrich and empower themselves in alliance with government

officials and managers of SOEs-often influential party members themselves. In the process, various forms of accumulation by dispossession-including appropriations of public property, embezzlement of state funds, and sales of land-use rights-became the basis of huge fortunes. It nonetheless remains unclear whether this enrichment and empowerment has led to the formation of a capitalist class and, more important, whether such a class, if it has come into existence, has succeeded in seizing control of the commanding heights of Chinese economy and society.

If we place Arrighi's two assumptions in a larger debate on capitalism, they become inefficient. Firstly, Arrighi's assumption that absence of land commodification shows absence of capitalism is flawed. This is because, based on their control over land, village administrations can transfer large tracts of land to agrarian, industrial and real estate capital relatively easily. Instead of bargaining with each and every rural household holding on to small parcels, companies can deal with village administrations, which are usually able to transfer land in large and consolidated blocks. Isn't there a possibility that when government control over land is strong enough can save the private sector from incurring huge transaction costs and in a way, can facilitate capitalist development? If so, then we can hardly conclude that capitalist development is not developed in China.

Reading from Gürel & Taylan (2019), we witness a complex relationship between capitalist interests and state policies. This is attributed to the serious internal conflicts of the capitalist class. To them, Capitalists have no potential to unswervingly dictate their interests to state officials. They argue that "politicians and bureaucrats make policies that serve the common interests of the capitalists to the extent possible". Gürel & Taylan elaborate a critique to Arrighi's claims:

...even the policies with the broadest capitalist support cannot satisfy all fractions of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, the working class can get (sometimes substantial) concessions from the state depending on its organizational strength. Hence, a complete capitalist control of the state apparatus is impossible. Therefore, using such an impossible yardstick to assess the class nature of the Chinese state is problematic. More importantly, and ironically enough, it is easier to draw the connections between the bourgeoisie and state officials in contemporary China. Through the privatization of the substantial portion of the state-owned enterprises in the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s, a wealth of about 5 trillion US dollars was transferred to top Chinese party-state officials...In 2002, capitalists were allowed to be members of the Chinese Communist Party. In short, Chinese bureaucracy has transformed itself into a bourgeoisie...we argue that Arrighi's characterization of the Chinese state is problematic.

The internationalization of capitalism to the periphery confirms both the material and territorial logics of capitalism with its early attempts to operate within the national capitalist borders and later worldwide. The nature, form, character and intensity of primitive accumulation in the internationalisation of capital depicts how it behaves in its early stages. China has embarked on an agenda to seek markets and resources outside the empire.

Following her reading of Marx, Luxembourgh argues that capitalist accumulation is hinged on finding effective demand for the surplus value. As the capitalist system expanded, numerous goods would be produced. The capitalists would run out of people to buy the growing number of goods for sale unless the increase in demand was proportionate to that of production. As a way of increasing demand, they thought of either an increase in consumption or from investment. The demand is needed not for anything but for reproduction of already existing wealth in capitalist economies. It is very clear that capitalists can hardly provide adequate demand for their commodities and so the need for another source (ibid). This same logic can be traced given the Chinese intervention and influx in Africa and the globe both in form of commodities and human beings. The export of capitalism to the periphery emerged due to the need to dispose-off the surplus output and such vindicated both the material and territorial logics of capitalism operating initially within national borders and later at the global level.

Similarly, yet more interestingly, Luxembourgh presents a critical situation in which capital is created through primitive accumulation under the agency of the state. She argues that, compulsory alienation was enforced by the taxation policies. She illustrates an example of the British laws in India where “*the British passed laws in India that flew in the face of every tradition and justice which was known to community; the compulsory alienation of village land for arrears*”. The British government in trying to formulate policies tried to sugar-coat the very situation that undermined traditional forms of land ownership thus the collapse of the Indian peasant economy was in the interest of the Indians with the need to protect the Hindu peasant economy against exploitation and oppression by the natives. The assertion implies that the land owners had no choice but to lose their land. Secondly, we realise that the alienation was state advanced in form of taxes. This shows that the state [which I call the imperial state] acted as an accelerator of capitalist primitive accumulation. The usurped land, she argues, was ‘illegally brought to the possession of the British capitalists’. The British law operating in the Indian land acts to prove the internationalisation of primitive accumulation beyond the borders of Europe. Therefore, capital’s fight against the natural economy requires an increase in the intensity of violence to enable the fast disintegration of the natural economy. From the foregoing, the centrality of force is noticed as the only solution left for capital to ensure primitive accumulation as those who worked on the land were forced off in what can be termed as ‘land grabbing’. This act did not end in itself but created a landed aristocracy which came at the expense of what Luxembourgh calls ‘the ancient property-rights’ of the peasant communities that ended up putting possession of the illegally usurped land into possession of the British capitalists. Samir Amin tells us that, there has been greater progress in the export industry in advanced/developed countries than in the traditional agriculture in the underdeveloped countries where mechanisation still remains unknown. There has been less progress in agriculture than in industry in the developed countries especially during what Samir Amin calls the classical accumulation process [and what Marx calls classical primitive accumulation]. He further argues that wages are lower in underdeveloped countries and part of the profits attained in such countries is transferred to the developed centre. This is done through ensuring low prices of products using the worldwide equalization of the rate of profit. If we think of China as a

non-capitalist state, then we should question the destination of profits attained by the Chinese firms [both government and private] from the developing countries.

Eric Vanhaute attempts to provide a critique to the Marxist scholars by citing the works of sociologist Teodor Shanin who dismantled the dualist view when he argued that “measuring peasant capitalism lies at the heart of the major concerns of contemporary social science. It has to do with capitalism as a process, it relates the understanding of the origins of our time to the characterization of the essential tenets of the global system we live in”. The narrative poses a critique to both Marxist and classical political economy for the duo explained capitalism “outside peasant economies and societies with the assumption “that capitalism equals de-peasantation”. To him we can only better articulate the role played by peasantries if we consider the rise of historical capitalism as an “integrated societal model”. Citing Wallerstein, he states that peasantries are very critical in ensuring the survival of historical capitalism. “It is the emergence of what he calls semi-proletarian households that guarantees “the lowest possible wage-level threshold”.

Therefore, if we think of the Chinese economy to be capitalist in nature and character, then we can tentatively conclude that just like any other capitalist economy, China seeks to expand to other places to seek markets and resources to increase her hegemonic power. Using the capitalist logic, I can argue that China is not any different from other capitalist states that seek to increase accumulation of profits and influence. That said, Chinese capitalism is largely state capitalism which is not the case with other capitalisms and so we cannot wholesomely equate the two absolutely. The issue of China is not an isolated case. If we look at it in the decolonial way, given the fact that there are various modernities, there are equally different capitalisms including that of China. Jean-Francois Huchet concludes this debate by arguing that the transitions of other former “socialist states in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union” are evidence enough to show that China has already overcome its transition problem. the nature of the economy of China after 1978 signals a silent revolution which can only be equated to that which happened in Europe after the collapse of the berlin wall. Therefore, since hegemony making involves coercion and consent, whichever China chooses to deploy doesn't deny the possibility of domination.

Thinking About China in Africa: Engaging the Debates on China's Presence in Africa and its Implications

Given the level at which China has increasingly and overwhelmingly penetrated into the economies of the world specifically Africa, in terms of foreign direct investments and foreign aid, resource extraction, cultural diffusion among others, it has provided reasons for being branded as the new hegemon. There has been a consensus that the China's rise as a next hegemonic power lies in her relationship with Africa. Africa's relevance to the US and Europe has declined overtime despite having been a darling during the cold war era i.e. prior to the 1990s. this has created room for China to occupy the continent with much ease. Jacques has argued that China needs numerous raw materials from Africa. In the year that preceded 2003, China alone accounted for “7% of the world's consumption of crude oil, 25% of aluminium, 27% of steel products, 30% of iron ore, 31% of coal and 40% of

cement". Campbell (2008) remarked that China's imports of iron ore escalated from 41 million tons to 275 million tons while that of copper shoot from 484,000 tons to 4 million ton. This shows that China is partly driven by the need for natural resources in Africa. If we leave the story to natural resources alone would be a disservice to the readers of the paper. The story is more than that. China is equally establishing infrastructures which are vital in consolidating and securing trade networks and this forms the basis for FDI that flows to African countries. Similarly, Africa has witnessed flow of investments in the extractive industries like oil, timber, copper, and cobalt from China. China has lately become a chief bilateral aid donor.

Despite all this, can we see an implication this has for Africa. I will trace this back to Arrighi's argument that when China shows interest in becoming a hegemon, the conduit it will take will be different. This speaks to some extent to the fact that some of the measures China deploys in Africa are not common to history. To the contrary though, there is a body of literature that argues that China's adventure and activities in Africa have little if any difference from those which were practiced by the former colonialists. Carmody and Owusu, (2007) have come up to strongly state that the investments being made in Africa by China are indicative of those which were made by colonialists with the ultimate desire of having access to raw materials. To sound polemical, the advent of China can be equated to neo-colonialism or neoimperialism just like colonialism and imperialism were. Let's examine more in detail the contemporary emerging debate on the China-Africa relations and the assumption that this relation signifies that of an imperial power.

Three schools of thought are presented when it comes to the role of China in her relations with Africa. The first school of thought advances an argument that China is a development partner in Africa that works to ensure mutual benefits to both stake holders. The second argument posed is that China is an economic competitor that fights to have access to resources in Africa. And the third narrative is that China is just interested in ensuring that it positions itself as a colonising power that is new in the face of those that it wants to colonise.

I remember in a talk offered by two researchers from China getting to hear a claim that the relationship between China and Africa is mutual and so the benefits. Their argument seemed to suggest that China's penetration into Africa should be considered a progressive development partner with incentives for strategic partnership. This narrative is hinged on the assumption that China-Africa relationship is a south-south relationship which will only serve to offer a win-win result. These well-informed researchers seem to me to have ignored the fact that African countries have less if any chances of refusing any offer from China due to social, political and economic reasons that are especially politically shaped and motivated. The fact that China aid is easily accepted prompts them to conclude that it is a mutual relationship. The researchers seem to have focused on defending the Chinese interests of mutual benefits than interrogating the bigger question of exploitation. This therefore makes their narrative less analytical and more descriptive. Even when consultations are made, it is less likely that a common man can make such a claim of win-win as we shall. In fact, Ofodile has stated that China's corporation is considered to be some

kind of altruism based on the history that the two share—the history of colonialism. This acclaimed history is said to attract a narrative of brotherhood and sisterhood.

My critique of the mutual benefits truth claim by the above researchers is not an isolated one, more people have come up to question similar claims by suggesting that Chinese model of aid and foreign investment comes with a price. This takes me to the second narrative that argues that China is a “rapacious competitor” with interests of exploiting Africa. The perspective centres on the fact that China is said to have embraced western model of capitalism with no genuine desire to ensure authentic development, support good governance, rule of law and promote respect for human rights. Instead, China is said to be focused on just exploiting African resources and cheap research to the extent possible that it has no motivation for social, economic and political development. For Edoho, China–Africa relations need to be understood as the “logical outcomes of the marginalization of Africa in the age of globalization”. Further still, there is belief that “pure capitalism” would lead to asymmetrical China-Africa relations which “has the potential to erode embryonic indigenous technical skills, as well as threaten economic development in the region” contrary to the promises of the relationship. Just as I earlier discussed in a section on changing guards, the sheer impression created by China as a resource exploiter attracted more serious studies that sought to critically engage the debate on Chinese dominance in Africa. Scholars like Alden and Edoho have argued that the covert interests of China in Africa seek to replace the western powers so they become the “new coloniser” due to the motivation for profit maximisation which is a capitalist logic. Gaye and Edoho have gone ahead to show us that the Chinese are not in Africa for altruistic reasons, but “another imperial power pursuing its national interest, and it can be an unreliable partner despite its claim to build a true equal partnership with Africa”.

Evidence [statistical and descriptive] has been provided to support the claim against those who raise the mutual truth claim. For Alden, over 800 Chinese firms are operating businesses in African countries by the time of his research of which close to 500 were joint venture with African firms. This speaks to the level of penetrations of the Chinese in Africa. When you read the works of Broadman, you can get a feeling that he considers the influx of Chinese as a gesticulate for colonization of which intellectuals French and Polgreen stressed a similar scenario that millions of Chinese live in Africa. It is said that China is tending to create what is referred to as a “neo-imperialist dynamic” in Africa which is causing undesirable consequences both political, economic, environmental etc. It has been clearly stated that China is displacing domestic manufacturers through imports perhaps intensifying class disparities and corruption. The implication can be thought of in terms of what Escobar has warned that would result into intensified poverty for the many and skyrocketing wealth for the few which can potentially worsen living conditions for the poor. Given the enormous wealth that regime elites acquire from the Chinese firms and individual investors. One can possibly argue from an environmental perspective that the advent of Chinese firms is one way of transferring the environmental impact burdens to new places. A paper by ACODE states that the environmental practices of Chinese firms is habitually poor. In events where Chinese investors seek land to establish investments, ACODE tells us that there are usually

land evictions especially for big projects. Even when evicted people are entitled to compensation, they are delayed and most of the time minimally paid. This can be read as a capitalist logic of “accumulation by dispossession” for Harvey and “primitive accumulation” for Marx. Such evidence points to the fact that China’s presence in Africa serves capitalist interests in a manner not different from that of western capitalism.

The Chinese triple immersion in Africa: Trade, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and Aid.

When we think about China in Africa, my paper will consider the triple roles that are claimed to be the most fundamental. These include involvement in trade within African economies, FDI and Aid. This can be vital in studying the nature and character of the Chinese expedition. To begin with, studies have shown that since the year 2000, China-Africa trade relations have increasingly grown i.e. from 10 billion dollars in 2000 to more than 100 billion recently. Africa's export to China is key to this development. At the heart of exports is natural resources including petroleum and raw materials. Statistically, Broadman shows that “China’s imports from Africa during the same period, 62% of which consisted of oil and natural gas, 17% in ores and metals, and 7% in agricultural raw materials with value-added manufactured exports made up only 8% of Africa’s exports to China”. Resources that fly from some African countries received duty free access to Chinese markets. When we compare this to what comes to Africa, it becomes evident that it’s not a win-win relation. For instance, Shelton and Taylor have highlighted that China’s exports to Africa consist of machinery and manufacture goods say footwear, textiles and household devices, television sets, clothing with noteworthy growth rate. The evidence provided above point to relationship between Africa and China as one identical to “north-south” trade relationships in which “developed western countries” extract natural resource from “less-developed” countries with low cost used to manufacture commodities sold to the south expensively.

China-Africa relations can also be looked at in terms of foreign direct investments. Chinese FDI includes investments in mining, manufacturing, telecommunications and infrastructures. There are signs of an even more diversified investment pattern and services, in particular the financial sector. Can we say that China is doing a service in the interest of Africa? It can be doubted to a certain extent. We can consider a more quantitative analysis of the correlation between FDI and natural resources. Reading Kolstad and Wiig, it is very clear that countries with huge natural resource base attract more Chinese FDI than those with less. Of the 1.3 billion dollars of Chinese FDI in 2005, 50% of it went to Algeria, South Africa, Nigeria, Sudan, and Zambia which were rich in oil and mineral reserves. China’s activity in Sudan to an extent of building a built hydro-electric dam that will double the country’s electricity generating capacity can be tagged to its potential as a base for Chinese oil operation in the rest of Africa that is also facilitated by the hydro-electric dam. Let me situate this debate in a more analytical front on the rise of TNCs in Africa and beyond. Evaristus has argued that Africa has witnessed enormous growth of TNCs with unfettered power and influence. Being profit motivated right from the colonial period up to now, TNCs aim at exploiting labour, raw materials, natural resources in the name of extending development which is a historical process of capitalist accumulation. This provides them room to take advantage of many African countries which are already “poor”, with poor

governance and dependent both politically and economically. The African drive for acquiring mass employment, revenue and high technology has made the continent welcome every sort of TNC. This has made them be unable to regulate TNC given the economic importance they attach to them. My concern here is to check the potential of African states to evaluate TNCs particularly those from China to fit the interests of this paper.

He argues that if managed, regulated and controlled well, TNCs can use their technological and financial strength to facilitate some level of growth and development in Africa. I partially buy into the idea of TNC and specifically FDI contributing to “development” in Africa. However, I argue that despite the alleged benefits that come along with their development, the ultimate purpose of these TNCs is to rid Africa of her resources and wealth. The developments in most cases to me are benefiting the TNCs and their agents—the state. For instance, they construct roads which head to their sources of raw materials and market. Much as the ordinary citizens benefit, isn’t the TNCs the biggest beneficiary? I equally find it problematic to focus on the role of the TNCs ignoring the agency of the modern state in ensuring these enterprises are not fully regulated. If it wasn’t for corruption and selfishness, may be African countries would have the audacity to have a collective voice against the destructive activities of the TNCs. This is not to exonerate the TNCs but to call for indulgency of active state participation. It is the state that accepts the strategies of emission trading which gives the TNCs freedom to pollute and developed countries to export their pollution in form of TNC activities.

Simon Clarke (1991) points to my critique of the state regarding FDI and TNC in the context of globalisation by analysing the state from the point of view of its historical reproduction through class struggle. He argues that, as an abstract social reality, the capitalist mode of production creates an antagonistic relationship with the working class and this gave rise to the historical development of the state, which exists to help regulate labour for the purposes of capital. Clarke’s thesis tries to tease out the role of the state in regulating the capital labour relationships which favours reproduction of capital thus its own reproduction. It espouses a triple relationship between the state, labour and capital which forms the basis for class struggles. He frames his debate by critiquing the basic three assumptions provided to prove the state as autonomous i.e. that the state represents general interests of capital; the state is an abstraction of power; and that the state is an abstraction of commodity form. Through borrowing Marx’s critique of Hegel, Clarke critiques the first assumption by claiming that there is no such a thing as general interest. Clarke considers that the second assumption is false given the fact that the state does not claim any monopoly in the use of violence. He argues that the reproduction of capital is by way of forcefully excluding the working class from the means of production and subsistence and ensuring they work for hours beyond the necessary labour time. He further critiques the third assumption by arguing that it is a confusion of the abstract character of the commodity form i.e. that social relations between people appear as relations between things) and abstract character of the state. Clarke regards the essential feature of the state to be its class character and its apparent autonomy as “a characteristic of the surface forms in which its subordination to capital appears”. China despite claims that does not attempt to interfere into national

sovereignty issues benefits from dormant states that seek to satisfy capitalist interests. I argue that the state which is mandated to regulate the Chinese firms are agents of Chinese capitalisms. It would be naïve if not fallacious to argue that China only avoids interfering existing African state institution. Kolstad and Wiig (2011) have stated clearly that China benefits from the dysfunction of African state. They show a positive relationship between Chinese investment and African state dysfunction i.e. Chinese FDI was not only attracted to natural resource but more so to the worse institutional environments. How about if one concludes that Chinese investments are more because the investors can take advantage of institutional dysfunction?

The third and last role as for this paper is that of aid offered through various mechanisms by the Chinese firms and government. China offers economic and financial support to many African countries such as Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Gabon, Cameroon, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa etc. The most important feature of the Chinese aid is the alleged political un-conditionality i.e. no strings attached loans. It is rhetorically argued that African countries do not have to shape their political institution to meet the donor's requirement and then get the aid from China. This is considered a direct opposite of aid from western countries which called for transformation in political and economic institution (democracy and neo-liberalism respectively) in order for African countries to access aid. This narrative has attracted the attention of many African elite/comprador class to consider going for Chinese aid most. Having it in mind that business is business, China does not seek to offer conditions on its loans. To ask some questions, does institutional un-conditionality imply total un-conditionality? As elaborated earlier, Chinese foreign aid is connected to Chinese trade and investment, and then also reproduces Chinese interest in natural resource. However, I don't sound to state that China is providing an alternative to western aid and resources has since the debate has not born out sufficiently to unmask such claims. I argue here that the Chinese conditionalities are a different set of conditionality from those of the west but it's not that they have no conditionalities. I will further argue that almost all aid packages work to China's advantage with possibility to come with the stipulation that Chinese goods and services should be purchased as part of the infrastructure building. This argument is supported by Taylor who stipulates that 69% of aid from China to Africa is spent on procuring Chinese equipment's. Therefore, the emergency of China and her role can be read as a process of special displacement i.e. displacement of crisis from one place to another; and that it serves interests of capitalism.

Is the narrative above sufficient to conclude that China is an imperial power/empire in Africa as some scholars have argued?

The works of Lenin have stressed that imperialism was “the highest stage of capitalism”. He offers a class-based analysis just like Marx and other Marxist scholars. To him, exploitation and investment of capitalist to underdeveloped countries are perpetrated by capitalist class in developed capitalist countries. However, we should note that not all developed capitalist countries can be imperialist power, because imperialism requires monopolies of labor and nature resource exploitation in their colonies. When it comes to class relationship around

imperialism however, Lenin argued that businessmen often colluded with colonial political elites, who then together suppressed proletariat's revolt. Much as some people have stated that Africa is soon becoming a colony for China, others have not. However, to me, considering the evidence of Chinese dominance through FDI, trade and aid, we can see symptoms of an emerging power/imperial power. However, Lenin could not just go unchallenged for he limits his approach to capitalist class as perpetrators of exploitation. This may offer a limited lens on which to understand the China-Africa relations. This is because, majority of the exploitations of natural and other resources in Africa by the Chinese is done by state-owned enterprises and less of capitalist classes of classical nature. When we read Ofodile, we can get a sense that the strongest corporations from China can be traced from the State Economic and Trade Commission mandated to establish overseas oil exploration and buy operating rights abroad. From this narrative, we can see that Chinese exploitation is instigated more by state power than Lenin's class power. However, I don't mean to say that there exist no capitalists of classical nature in China, that are critical in the relationship with Africa. There are many small enterprises and individual capitalists but on whether their nature, character and influence can support the argument that they can be agents of imperialism requires further research.

Conclusion

Given the nature of my study—preliminary mini textual review—it becomes challenging to draw absolute conclusions on the topic. The paper just attempted to engage the debate surrounding the rise of China as a new “imperial power” and what that could possibly mean for African countries. The narratives are diverse but it's clear that Chinese are engaging in the world because they have a set of interests. Their interest in resource rich places with initial adventure in countries with exclusively mining resources like minerals shows that their interests are not very different from those of western countries especially in their encounter with Africa and other colonies. China embraces both state and market based capitalism with state capitalism being profound. Following the history of hegemon making, my paper shows that China shows utmost potential for becoming the next hegemon if we take hegemony in a Gramscian sense of both coercion and consent. My paper did not clearly stipulate the benefits of China-Africa relations to Africa but it doesn't mean that it disregards them. There are some benefits but at the core are capitalist interests of both China and Africa. The Chinese building of hegemonic power can be articulated differently. If the US and Britain built their hegemony independently, China and if possible the BRICS will be centred on building of blocks and not a single state initiative—a network of nations that emerge at the same time but representing an alternative to the existing hegemon but mature into the new hegemonic centres. Given the rate at which US challenges Chinese rise through strengthening of blocs, it's unlikely that China can emerge singularly as a hegemon. This means that it will have to form some alliances of powers that each one of which is not sufficiently strong to be a hegemony but becoming an alternative power. If we consider the nature of Chinese economic and territorial imperative, there is great

potential of China to become a next hegemon. However, this preliminary yet tentative conclusion is subject to further extensive research.

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