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**The Dragon's Neocolonial White Elephant  
Development: China's Urban Infrastructure in  
Lusaka, Zambia**

**Kaytlin Ernske**  
**International Studies and Urban Studies Senior Thesis**  
**Supervised by Dr. Garth Myers and Dr. Seth Markle**  
**Spring, 2020**

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## **Abstract**

Presently, China is the largest donor, trading partner, and investor on the African continent. The current success of Sino-African relations can be traced back to global South-South cooperation beginning in the 1960s and 1970s when China assisted in funding independence movements across the African continent. Since then, China established itself as a reliable friend and alternative aid provider. The country has since transitioned from utilizing aid to foreign direct investment. Since 2013, China has continued to bolster its own global economic positioning by pushing a foreign policy agenda (One Belt One Road) that targets developing countries by providing massive loans to fund urban infrastructure projects that promise development. China utilizes debt-trap diplomacy to leverage Africa's development of underdevelopment and resulting infrastructure gap to gain political and economic power by fostering economic dependency. Ultimately, China has used opaque foreign policy to evolve into a neo-colonial force on the African continent.

In this senior honors thesis, I analyze the contemporary relationship between China and Zambia. I argue that the Sino-Zambian relationship is historically rooted beginning in Zambia's decolonization process, largely unequal, and demonstrates China's silent but growing neo-colonial presence on the African continent. Applying an interdisciplinary approach, I utilize historical analysis, media studies, urban studies, international studies and political analysis. I engage with the theoretical framework of neo-colonialism to decipher the complex power imbalance that characterizes Sino-Zambian relations. Highlighting Lusaka as my case study city, I analyze its social fragmentation and growing anti-Chinese sentiment as a result of local perceptions of Chinese hegemony. Anti-Chinese perceptions are exacerbated by local politicians and the media, resulting in violence against Chinese nationals in Lusaka. Employing a research method based in reading secondary sources, policy analysis and a content analysis of media sources, I assert that while China is a neo-colonial force in Lusaka, simultaneously Zambia's preference in China as a primary lender is an exertion of Zambian national sovereignty and decision-making capabilities despite deep debt distress.

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## Introduction

Zambia's sovereign debt is expected to reach an appalling and distressing ninety-six percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020.<sup>1</sup> This news comes at a time when the country is already scrambling to find ways to tackle the "impending breakdown of its power supply, its inability to pay for electricity imports, and is staring down the barrel of further defaults on construction project financing and bond payments."<sup>2</sup> As of now, the government's greatest focus is renegotiating, restructuring, and refinancing its debts to its primary creditor, China. Zambia spent much of the 2000s acquiring massive sums of Chinese debt for infrastructure development, as will be explored in this thesis. It was not until late 2017 that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) officially declared Zambia at high risk of debt distress.<sup>3</sup> Since 2017, the Zambian government has spent a disproportionate amount of its national budget on debt servicing.<sup>4</sup> The Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR) reports that the government spent ZK 9.1 billion on debt servicing in the first half of 2018 alone, which was nearly as much as the entirety of debt servicing in 2017 (previously a record-breaking ZK 9.8 billion.)<sup>5</sup> As for 2019, "debt [servicing] payments have consumed the largest allocation of the national budget amounting to ZK 23.6 billion or twenty-seven percent of the entire budget. The amount allocated to debt servicing in 2019 is equivalent to the total [national] allocation for health, education, and social protection [services]

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<sup>1</sup> Elliot Smith. "Zambia's Spiraling Debt Offers Glimpse into the Future of Chinese Loan Financing in Africa." *CNBC*, 14 Jan. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Smith.

<sup>3</sup> "#DebtConcernsMe: Understanding the Impact of Zambia's Growing Debt on Different Stakeholders." CUTS International, Jan. 2019. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Debt servicing refers to paying back the principal debt (the initial amount of money that is borrowed) and interest.

<sup>5</sup> "#DebtConcernsMe: Understanding the Impact of Zambia's Growing Debt on Different Stakeholders." 8.

combined.”<sup>6</sup> Debt servicing drains the majority of Zambia’s national revenues, at the cost of greatly needed social spending. The distress of Zambia’s national debt crisis is often discussed from a global economic perspective, concerning finding new sources of foreign investment. Less attention is paid to the effects of national debt distress on individuals. With that being said, “Zambians will be the first to pay the real price for the country’s debt, as...social services are underinvested, and [the] economy is weak.”<sup>7</sup> As of now, new taxes are being implemented while old taxes are being raised, the Zambian Kwacha is weakening, imports are becoming more expensive, and the entire country is experiencing debt-fueled inflation.<sup>89</sup>

African governments like Zambia experience a great deal of international public scrutiny for how they have been able to secure an extraordinary amount of national debt. But little attention is given to understanding why African national debt continues to grow, or its geopolitical implications on the continent.<sup>10</sup> Conceivably there is a lack of understanding about the difference between national independence and economic independence. By the start of China’s main wave on investment on the African continent in the 2000s, nearly all African countries had declared national independence, but not economic independence. Many were still and continue to be reliant on the economic assistance of Western institutions and countries, and as will be addressed in this paper, the East. This being the case, I contend that in African countries, establishing economic independence is the same process as eliminating neocolonialism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “#DebtConcernsMe: Understanding the Impact of Zambia's Growing Debt on Different Stakeholders.” 10.

<sup>7</sup> “#DebtConcernsMe: Understanding the Impact of Zambia's Growing Debt on Different Stakeholders.” 6.

<sup>8</sup> “#DebtConcernsMe: Understanding the Impact of Zambia's Growing Debt on Different Stakeholders.” 11.

<sup>9</sup> Kwacha is Zambia’s national currency.

<sup>10</sup> Anzette Were. “Debt-Trap? Chinese Loans and Africa's Development Options.” *The South Africa Institute of International Affairs*, Sept. 2018. 1.

<sup>11</sup> N. I. Vysotskaia and Arlo Schultz. “The Struggle of the African Peoples Against Neocolonialism.” *International Journal of Politics*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1976. 12-13.

More attention needs to be paid to the fact that China's accumulation of Sub-Saharan African debt is not a fluke but an apparatus for the Chinese neo-colonization of African sovereign nations. Since 2000, China has been able to accrue a little above fourteen percent of Sub-Saharan Africa's total debt.<sup>12</sup> China's aid and investment in the continent is driven by its interest in improving its global trade and economic power, while simultaneously fostering economic dependency, eroding African economic growth potential, and undermining connectivity within the African Union (AU).<sup>13</sup> Definitively, the Sino-African relationship is characterized by an asymmetry of power.

In understanding the asymmetrical assertion of power between China and Zambia, it is imperative to be familiar with the discourse that surrounds the subject. *Foreign policy* is the consolidation of strategies implemented by a government to protect its national interests in its interactions and dealings with other countries. Foreign policy is often used to promote and protect national interests in *foreign direct investment (FDI)*. *FDI* is a business investment made into a country, by either a firm or another individual country, after establishing foreign assets and business operations within the country receiving investment. The term *International Financial Institution (IFI)*, typically refers to organizations founded through the collaboration of multiple countries, with the intention of advocating for public and private FDI, to promote social and economic development in developing countries. In the context of this argument, the IFI's most discussed are the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These IFI's tend to implement *Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)* which are a series of policies

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<sup>12</sup> Were, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Tooche Aniche, "Neo-Dependency? A Critical Analysis of Implications of Sino-African Economic Relations for African Integration and Development." *Research Gate*, Nov. 2015. 24.



that debt-stricken countries must follow to receive loans and funding for servicing on older debts. These policies typically emphasize privatization, neo-liberalization, currency devaluation, and a reduction of government spending on social services.<sup>14</sup> *Debt sustainability* is an analysis of a nation-state's current debt and borrowing practices to determine that country's long-term capacity to follow through with its debt servicing obligations.<sup>15</sup> A national *debt crisis* occurs when a country borrows large sums of money at a faster rate than its economy is growing, thus the government is unable to service (read pay back) its national debt owed to lenders, which can be another country or international institutions. The phrase, *debt-trap diplomacy* was created as a phrase to critique the Chinese government's predatory foreign policy scheme of excessively lending to already deeply indebted countries with the intention of repossessing national assets and raw materials once the indebted country becomes unable to service its debts. These debt-trap diplomacy loans typically fund *urban infrastructure projects*, which are the essential physical structures and facilities necessary for a smoothly running society; such as buildings, roads, bridges, power supplies, telecommunications, tunnels, railways, electrical grids, airports, public space, and more. The *Patriotic Front (PF)* is the ruling political in Zambia, which was formed by Michael Sata as "a grassroots movement of revolutionary peasants, workers and intellectuals" with the goal of sustainable and wide-spread development for all, by condemning rapacious international investment.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps most important is understanding the term *neo-colonialism*, which is the economic and political control over another country, particularly a formerly colonized

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<sup>14</sup> Welch, Carol. "Structural Adjustment Programs & Poverty Reduction Strategy." *Institute for Policy Studies*, 12 Oct. 2005.

<sup>15</sup> "Modernizing the Framework for Fiscal Policy and Public Debt Sustainability Analysis." International Monetary Fund, 5 Aug. 2011. 6.

(and still developing) country. At the core of neo-colonialism is economic dependency. A neo-colonial power can be either the original colonizing country or an entirely new country with more economic power, as is the case with China in Zambia. I deploy the notion of neo-colonialism as developed by Kwame Nkrumah, and further explore its ramifications in each chapter.

Today, China is considered a prosperous upper-middle-income developing country.<sup>17</sup> This has not always been the case. Beginning in the 1970s China underwent intense economic reform through FDI and interior socioeconomic restoration. This allowed for “China’s rapid economic growth exceed[ing] the pace of institutional development” and ultimately lifting nearly 850 million people out of poverty.<sup>18</sup> Whereas presently China is a major provider of development loans, nearly fifty years ago when it was an oil-exporting country, China “had its own experience as a borrower of these kinds of credit...in the 1970s, when it received a number of oil-backed loans from Japan”.<sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup> By the end of 1999, Japan had provided China with US \$1.02 billion in development loans, which were mainly used to build urban infrastructure in China’s coastal regions.<sup>21</sup> China’s indebtedness to Japan did not foster economic dependence because while accepting Japanese loans, in the late 1970s China simultaneously underwent “its own program of socioeconomic transformation and reform, *Gai Ge Kai Fang*, meaning ‘change the system, open the door.’” This reform resulted in the privatization of

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<sup>16</sup> Chanda, Sunday Chilufya. “Zambia: Why the Patriotic Front Continues to Be Zambia’s Number One Party of Choice.” *The Lusaka Times*, 3 Aug. 2019.

<sup>17</sup> “The World Bank in China.” *The World Bank*, 13 Dec. 2019.

<sup>18</sup> “The World Bank in China.”

<sup>19</sup> China began exporting crude oil to Japan in 1973. This ended in 1993 when China’s demand for crude oil surpassed its own domestic production rate. Since then China has relied on imported oil.

<sup>20</sup> Ana Alves. “China’s Economic Statecraft in Africa: Continuity and Change.” *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 2014. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Masayuki Masuda. “Japan’s Changing ODA Policy Towards China.” *China Perspectives*, June 2003. 1.

considerable portions of the Chinese economy and the liberalization of investment and trade, not much different than the IMF implemented SAPs in Africa in the 1990s.<sup>22</sup>

Undoubtedly China mirrored its own FDI to Africa after its Japanese development loans; nevertheless, the impact that development loans had on China is starkly different from the current impact of development loans in Africa. This vastly different economic impact is due to the fact that Chinese development loans in Africa are “taking place in some of the poorest and most fragile countries in the world [with] the greatest need for investment [and] the greatest economic and social vulnerability.”<sup>23</sup> China’s self-imposed Gai Ge Kai Fang reform was exactly that, self-imposed. Contrarily, when Africa underwent similar economic reform in the 1980s and 1990s (in conjunction with development loans) to foster development, it was imposed by the exterior force of the IMF, a West-dominated institution with a history of fostering the development of underdevelopment in formerly colonized, thus economically vulnerable, countries. China’s economic reform policies did not include the most detrimental conditions that the IMF imposed on African economic reform, which are a reduction in government spending on social services and currency devaluation, which both cultivated extreme poverty before China’s massive wave of investment beginning in the 2000s.<sup>24</sup> Evidently, when China received Japanese development loans, the country was in a much better economic circumstance than many Africa countries to begin with. Conclusively, China utilized its own experience with FDI in the form of development loans to model its foreign policy in Africa, yet with a dark, predatory, neo-colonial twist, therefore enabling China to economically benefit in ways that the Japanese government had not intended.

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<sup>22</sup> Henning Melber. “China in Africa: A New Partner of Another Imperialist Power?” *Africa Spectrum*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2008. 399.

The existing literature on China-in-Africa and the Sino-Zambian relationship tend to adhere to one of three prevailing schools of thought. One approach that scholars take is to perceive and promote China as a violent neo-colonial force within Africa. This approach is done by using antagonistic language associated with colonization and uncovering China's neo-colonial practices on the continent. This existing literature tends to answer the question: How is China a neo-colonial force within Africa? A salient feature of this school of thought is to focus on the fact that China is driven by its economic agenda, which is bolstering its own global economic positioning. These scholars argue that China has no genuine interest in collaborating with the African continent as equal partners. Instead, China is responsible for pushing developing countries that are already in the global economic periphery even further out, to gain power and place itself at the center of the global economic order. Another salient feature is that scholars target China's extraction of natural resources as an eternally colonial operation. These scholars utilize Africa's history of colonization to argue that the elicitation of raw materials from developing countries will always be colonial, no matter the intentions. A scholar that follows this school of thought is Rudolf du Plessi.

Generally, there is extensive scholarship on China as an African ally and an agent of development. A salient feature of this school of thought is that it promotes China as a better alternative of FDI than the United States, Europe, and IFIs. These scholars fixate on China's offering of lower interest rates, the power of Global South cooperation, and China's foreign policy anti-political intervention approach. Another salient feature of this school of thought is to emphasize how China's economic engagement with Zambia (and

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<sup>23</sup> Aniche, 17.

<sup>24</sup> William Easterly. *Reinventing Foreign Aid*. MIT Press, 2008. 351.

other African countries) has already elevated their political standing. Overall, the approach of China as an agent of development in Africa tends to answer the question: What can happen when China works with African countries? The focus is on the perceived gains already experienced and the positive future to come of the Sino-African relationship. The main theorists of this approach are Hong Yu and Ana Alves.

Lastly, there is extensive scholarship that conceptualizes Africa's current economic dependency on China as a result of the culmination of its economic history. For instance, these scholars centralize their arguments around contextualizing Zambia's political, economic, and cultural history, to understand how Zambia's economic dependency on China came to be. A key feature of this approach is to analyze Zambia as China's perfect storm through its national history, going as far back as its independence, taking into consideration rises and drops in commodity prices, the SAPs implemented by the World Bank and IMF in the 1980s and 1990s, and Zambia's infrastructure gap to explain how China was able to penetrate Zambia's economy through a small need-based gap in which China's blew open. Another key feature of this scholarly approach is to compare the Sino-Zambian relationship to United States-Zambian and European-Zambian relations. These scholars assert that Zambia has neo-colonial ties with both the East and West; the only difference seems to be the methods and approaches taken by the neo-colonial powers. With that being said, the consequences persist and manifest in the same manner. This school of thought tends to feel more grounded and less agenda-pushing. The main theorists of this approach are Deborah Brautigam, Chris Alden, Anzette Were, Pdraig Carmody, and policy research institutions.

Recognizing the significance of contextualizing Zambia's political and economic history to understand the Sino-Zambian relationship, the arguments of this thesis follow this third school of thought. Nonetheless, what sets my research apart from the literature currently available on the Sino-Zambian subject is my interest in the human component of urban infrastructure investments. In this thesis, I explore how the recent rise in investment has been perceived by local Lusaka residents through a media analysis, which I have not seen much of in other research. Overall, this thesis makes connections between the academic and economic research on the subject and the on-the-ground reactions of local actors and its political implications.

The driving questions for this research are broken down into two categories: macro-level and micro-level. The main macro-level leading questions are: is Chinese urban infrastructure investment in Lusaka a form of neo-colonization? What are China's motives in Zambia, and greater Africa? And what attracts African leaders to be economically engaged with China through infrastructure loans? And how is China's interest in global trade and economic power influencing the urban transformation of Zambia? An additional macro-level driving question that I didn't anticipate would drive my research was: How does the West impact the Sino-Zambian relationship? The leading questions on the micro-level tend to focus on the urban component of the Sino-Zambian relationship as it is experienced in Lusaka. These questions ask: How is China's presence in Lusaka perceived by Zambians? And how are loan-driven investments altering local politics and civil society in Lusaka?

The methodology for addressing my research questions is an approach based largely around the careful reading of secondary sources, alongside policy analysis and

content analysis of media sources. In order to answer the macro-level driving questions, which focus on international affairs I inspect the political and economic engagement between China and African countries, particularly Zambia. These questions about the neo-colonial nature of the Sino-Zambian relationship (and the greater Sino-African relationship) are investigated by delving deep into the origins of China in Africa and contextualizing the evolving nature of the Sino-African relationship over time. In addition, I use Kwame Nkrumah's book *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, published in the early stages of African independence movements in 1965, to determine my own frame of reference for neo-colonization. In regard to analyzing the neo-colonial aspect of Chinese built urban infrastructure projects in Lusaka, I examine China's foreign policy strategies, such as the One Belt One Road initiative, which allows China to enter African markets. By closely analyzing One Belt One Road I am able to uncover what attracts African leaders, as well as understand the motives behind China's massive international investments, determining whether or not China is truly devoted to its claims of mutually beneficial economic engagement.

Furthermore, I examine the infrastructure that has been built by looking at the impact the projects have on the local community and analyzing the discourse that local Lusaka residents and Zambian politicians use when discussing the Chinese funded projects and the repayment of loans (or more so the inability to do so). As for these micro-level questions which focus on local perceptions of the Sino-Zambian relationship, I focus on collecting information from local news source websites; primarily *The Lusaka Times*, *Zambia Daily Mail*, *Zambian Watchdog*, and *Times of Zambia*. By reading through op-eds and letters to the editors I was able to uncover local attitudes, which in the

end reinforced my own hypothesis of China being a neo-colonial force in Zambia. As for the judgment and influence of local politicians to determine how loan-driven investment alters local politics, I looked at how the Patriotic Front's former leader, Michael Sata, catapulted to national attention by highlighting the matter of China's neo-colonial presence to national attention, making it a contentious political issue for the first time ever starting in 2006. By examining local perceptions and completing the media and political analysis, I am able to contextualize and expose the origins of the growing anti-Chinese sentiment and violence within Lusaka. Finally, in the interest of investigating how Lusaka's urban landscape changes because of Chinese infrastructure loans, I explore the displacement of informal settlements in Lusaka's urban peripheries as a result of Chinese companies building gated communities for growing presence of Chinese migrants, thus creating more urban and social fragmentation within the capital.

Comprehensively, Chinese neo-colonialism in Zambia is historically rooted. During Zambia's early postcolonial process in the 1960s and 1970s, China established itself as an African ally through south-south cooperation and aid. In the wake of the destructive SAPs implemented by IFIs in the 1980s and 1990s, the Sino-Zambian relationship evolved as China utilized the neo-colonial process of Flexigemony to leverage Zambia's desire for development through urban infrastructure in order to fulfill its own economic agenda. By the early 2000s, China established itself as an alternative provider of foreign direct investment to Zambia. As a result, Zambia finds itself a victim of China's debt-trap diplomacy, which has fostered deep economic dependency. Being that China is not the only neo-colonial force in Zambia and that economic independence in the near future looks bleak, Zambia's preference in China as a primary loan provider is



the exertion of Zambian national sovereignty and decision-making capabilities; ultimately attempting to make the best of its no-win economic circumstance. Whereas there is cohesive macro-level engagement, on the micro-level the Sino-Zambian relationship produces urban fragmentation; particularly through a growing xenophobic sentiment in Lusaka, which is heightened by the media and the Patriotic Front thus resulting in violence against the Chinese expatriate community in Lusaka.

This thesis is broken down into three chapters, each tackling a different layer of the process and nature of neo-colonialism in the Sino-Zambian relationship. Chapter one, titled, *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?: Contextualizing the Historical and Contemporary Sino-African Relationship* contextualizes the historic and contemporary Sino-African relationship. This chapter addresses China's motives for increased investment in Africa, along with uncovering the African appeal. In addition, this chapter highlights the Chinese government's use of the neo-colonial method of what scholars refer to as Flexigemony to penetrate African markets through strategies tailored to particular African geographies and histories. Particular attention is paid to the One Belt One Road initiative, which is China's current aggressive foreign policy around the world. This initiative targets developing countries, in which China gives massive development loans to pay for urban infrastructure backed by either natural resources or the asset itself. Ultimately, this chapter conceptualizes the Sino-African relationship as unequal because of China's debt-traps, the exertion of Chinese soft power, and China's undermining of African democracy, in conjunction with the limited bargaining power of African governments.

Chapter two, titled, *From "Win-Win" to No-Win: Sino-Zambian Relations, Underdevelopment, and African Agency* illuminates the Sino-Zambian relationship as

deeply rooted, yet very unequal. This chapter uncovers the origins of the Sino-Zambian relationship in the funding of independence movements and projects in the 1960s and 1970s, following through to the disastrous effects of SAPs implemented by the IMF and World Bank in the 1990s, and China's growing FDI in the 2000s. It is exposed that China's current presence in Zambia has been made possible by Zambia's complex economic history. In addition, chapter two officially introduces Lusaka as the case study city for investigating Chinese funded urban infrastructure projects. The history of Lusaka's urban development highlights Zambia's infrastructure gap, of which China recognizes and uses to leverage economic dependency. This chapter officially recognizes China as a predatory neo-colonial force in Zambia.

Chapter three, titled, *Investors of "Infesters"?: Social Fragmentation and the Rise of Anti-Chinese Sentiment in Lusaka*, diverges from the economic implications of China's neo-colonization of Zambia, and focuses on the on-the-ground implications for local residents in Lusaka. This chapter addresses the local perception of China as a neo-colonial force in Zambia, which has led to the growing anti-Chinese sentiment within Lusaka. Lusaka's growing anti-Chinese sentiment is conceptualized as local frustrations with the Zambian and Chinese government that being taken out on Chinese nationals living in Lusaka. Additionally, this chapter takes a look at the rhetoric in op-eds and letters to the editor from local newspapers about the Sino-Zambian relationship. Furthermore, a political analysis is conducted of Michael Sata's 2006, 2008, and 2011 presidential campaigns, in which the Patriotic Front took a clear anti-foreign investment, particularly anti-Chinese platform. In the end, it is conceptualized that politics and the

media heighten local frustrations with the Sino-Zambian relationship, resulting in violent protests and riots targeting Chinese nationals within the Lusaka.

## **A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Contextualizing the Historic and Contemporary Sino-African Relationship**

As a result of political reconstruction that pushed for economic liberalization, China has been able to rise dramatically in the global economic order.<sup>25</sup> Whereas China once found itself at the periphery, it now sits powerfully in the very center of the global economic system. China's continued economic success can be attributed to its ability to leverage its own economic prosperity to push a foreign policy agenda that provides massive loans for fund urban infrastructure projects that promise to bring development. This agenda, called One Belt One Road, targets underdeveloped countries in which the government is deeply concerned with development through infrastructure, yet is not able to finance such. With that, Africa stands out to China as a strategic location because of its large infrastructure gap as a result of its history which fostered extensive underdevelopment, along with other factors. The current success of the Sino-African relationship can be traced back to global south-solidarity beginning in the decolonization process in Africa. China funded many decolonization movements across the continent by providing aid (and weapons), often when others refused, basically making China a longtime alternative funder to African governments. Over time the Chinese aid model has transitioned from giving aid to what is currently used, foreign direct investment (FDI) with opaque policies through the deceiving process of Flexigemony.

China's current economic engagement on the African continent can be described as utilizing the process of Flexigemony.<sup>26</sup> Flexigemony is a neo-colonial method in which the Chinese government contextualizes the particular histories, politics, and geographies of the African nation-states it wishes to engage with, and adapts and alters its

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<sup>25</sup> Carmody Pádraig R. *The New Scramble for Africa*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Polity Press, 2011. 66.

approaches to correspond with its spatial context.<sup>27</sup> The core of this strategy is maintaining flexibility in engagement strategy in order to cultivate the most economically beneficial relationships between China and individual African countries. With that being said, each country that China engages with, particularly through the One Belt One Road initiative, manages a distinct relationship with the Chinese government. For instance, China administers aid and investment in the form of loans to both democratic and non-democratic governments, which significantly alters the ways in which it engages with both types of political regimes. In countries in which African elites hold restrictive control over the country's natural resources, China requires external factors and agents to develop personal relationships with the elites. Contrarily, in democratic African countries, China's approach to economic engagement places strategic importance on adhering to the law.<sup>28</sup> For instance, in historically politically unstable Sudan, the Chinese government has focused on negotiating peace treaties. On the other hand, in more stable Zambia, the Chinese government has focused on improving its public image within Lusaka (and other major urban centers) due to increased civil unrest in response to dissatisfaction with the rapidly growing Chinese presence.<sup>29</sup>

Flexigemony is a part of China's neo-colonial intervention in Africa. The neo-colonial method relies on China's amicable historical relationships to justify its present engagement on the continent. It is China's friendly engagement with African countries beginning in the 1960s, and stretching through the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, that laid the groundwork for current Sino-African relations. Through the implementation of

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<sup>26</sup> Carmody, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Pádraig Carmody and Ian Taylor. "Flexigemony and Force in China's Resource Diplomacy in Africa: Sudan and Zambia Compared." *Geopolitics*, vol. 15, no. 3, 25 Aug. 2010. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Chris Alden. *China in Africa*. Zed Books, 2007. 90.

<sup>29</sup> Carmody and Taylor, 2.

Flexigemony it becomes clear that Chinese neo-colonialism in Africa is historically rooted.

By utilizing Flexigemony, the Chinese government has been able to slowly emerge as one of the most significant forces in the African continent's economy, nearly unnoticeable. China's slow and seemingly silent emergence in the African economy was made possible by its ability to create personalized, substantive, and very private relationships with different heads of state, in which information is virtually sealed from outside actors. At the core of China's Flexigemony strategy is its value of economic power over anything else. China claims to have little interest in political and military engagement and therefore opts to contextualize interactions to forge an economic relationship avoiding political conflict. This corresponds with China's philosophy of *heping juequi*, translated as China's "peaceful rise," to global economic and therefore political dominance by maintaining positive relationships with its global economic partners.<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately, Flexigemony is indeed a deceiving process. It promotes mutual benefits for China and Africa through marketing tactics such as "win-win cooperation" when in reality it is simply a way to push Chinese initiatives into Africa that allow for China to exert soft power and ultimately undermine African democracy.<sup>31</sup> With that being said, despite the Sino-African relationship being historically rooted, the relationship is very much unequal. African nation-states have limited bargaining chips, and yet have more to lose because of their positioning in the global economic periphery. And yet, despite the inequality in the Sino-African relationship, African governments

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<sup>30</sup> Carmody, 78.

<sup>31</sup> Carmody, 73.

continue to pursue deep economic engagement and integration with China because the very little they get in return is better than the limited opportunities they have previously endured.

### **The Historical Sino-African Relationship**

For the past thirty years, many African countries have endured economic stagnation despite being in the post-independence era, due to accruing substantial debt, limited gains from exports, and the implementation of damaging structural adjustment programs by international financial institutions. Simultaneously, China implemented a political reconstruction, enabling substantial economic improvement.<sup>32</sup> China's economic rise is characterized by its economy growing an average of ten percent per year for the last thirty years as a result of economic liberalization.<sup>33</sup> This systematic reconstruction has permitted for China to rise from a developing country to the second-largest economy in the world, trailing close behind the United States. Recognizing the African continent's struggles with the "paradox of plenty" - that is, being resource-rich, and yet economically poor - China has historically perceived itself as being in a position to help boost the African continent's economy through aid.<sup>34</sup> As foreign aid is an instrument of foreign policy, China's aid to African leaders is shaped by policies it established in the 1950s, at the beginning of the Cold War. Beijing opted to pledge non-interference in the governing of African nations and used aid to leverage support in competing against the Soviet Union and the United States.<sup>35</sup> From the 1960s to the 1980s, China's foreign aid to Africa became intermittent, and at the same time underwent a major evolution. Nonetheless,

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8. <sup>32</sup> Deborah Bräutigam. *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Carmody, 66.

<sup>34</sup> Carmody, 2.

there is little known about China's foreign aid practices. Despite becoming increasingly transparent about its foreign aid policy, very little information has been released in terms of the official figures, such as how much aid is given, and to which particular regions. Out of the little that is known, it has been established that China has a long history of giving vast amounts of foreign aid to mainly Zambia, South Africa, Ghana, Egypt, Sudan, and Zimbabwe, among a few others.<sup>36</sup> With that being said, it is known that China's foreign aid in Africa has historically supported a multitude of African industries, such as the health, communications, agriculture, education, and infrastructure sectors.

In the 1960s, Sino-African foreign aid was quite intense; China helped fund independence movements across the continent. This aid model remained strong throughout the 1970s, in which China spent close to seven percent of its gross domestic product on aid assistance in Africa during the Chinese cultural revolution, despite a brief episode of economic difficulty.<sup>37</sup> In the early 1970s, despite being relatively poor, China loaned over US \$400 million to Zambia to build the Tanzanian-Zambian Railway.<sup>38</sup> Zambia gained independence from Britain in 1964. However, it remained vulnerable to white minority regimes due to its endorsement of black liberation movements in nearby areas.<sup>39</sup> This caused economic destabilization because Zambia remained dependent on trade routes that passed through neighboring regions occupied by colonial forces. In an attempt to secure sovereignty, Zambian officials requested financial assistance from international financial institutions to build new trade routes, but to no avail. When

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<sup>35</sup> Yun Sun. "China's Aid to Africa: Monster or Messiah?" *Brookings*, Brookings, 7 Feb. 2014, [www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinas-aid-to-africa-monster-or-messiah/](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinas-aid-to-africa-monster-or-messiah/).

<sup>36</sup> Canfei He and Shengjun Zhu. "China's Foreign Direct Investment into Africa." *The State of African Cities 2018: The Geography of African Investment*, 2018. 115.

<sup>37</sup> Carmody, 160.

<sup>38</sup> Jamie Monson. *Africa's Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Development Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania*. Indiana University Press, 2009. 2.



traditional donors turned Zambian officials down, China recognized this as a chance to bolster Sino-African relations and volunteered to help construct and finance a 2,000 kilometer-long heavy railway line from the Zambia Copperbelt through Tanzania to the seaport at Dar es Salaam.<sup>40</sup> Packaged as a form of foreign aid, the Tazara railway was financed by a zero-interest loan for RMB ¥980 million (roughly US \$140 million).<sup>41</sup> This foreign aid infrastructure project was successfully able to stabilize both Zambia's national sovereignty and economy. To this day, it remains the most iconic example of positive Sino-African relations and the success of China's foreign aid on the African continent. Unbeknownst to many, the construction of the Tazara railway kickstarted the evolution of Chinese foreign aid to take the form of concessional loans for infrastructure projects.

By the end of the 1980s, China's foreign aid to Africa drastically slowed. This did not harm Sino-African relations because of the copious amounts of aid that were previously given. By then, China had gained the diplomatic recognition and respect of forty-four African nations, except Swaziland, which has vowed to maintain its allegiance with Taiwan.<sup>42</sup> In 1984, nearly ten years after the construction of the Tazara railway, Chinese leaders established an official transition of the Chinese foreign aid model, directly linking aid to investment in the form of concessional loans.<sup>43</sup> This new official form of foreign aid was incredibly appealing to African leaders that were interested in economically advancing their country's through development. Chinese foreign aid programs accentuated the importance of infrastructure as a necessary tool of

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<sup>39</sup> Fantu Cheru and Cyril I. Obi. *The Rise of China and India in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities and Critical Interventions*. Zed Books Ltd., 2010. 167.

<sup>40</sup> Cheru and Obi, 167.

<sup>41</sup> Cheru and Obi, 167.

<sup>42</sup> Bräutigam, 2.

development, “at a time when the traditional donors downplayed” it.<sup>44</sup> Unlike other foreign aid suppliers, Beijing identified a lack of infrastructure as a tremendous hindrance in development, and therefore prioritized foreign aid in the infrastructure sector, while also expanding and diversifying its aid model by combining pure aid with investment projects.<sup>45</sup> The prioritization of urban infrastructure lending continued and then strengthened in 2000, when China implemented the “Going Global Strategy,” to encourage even more outward FDI through the construction of infrastructure projects.<sup>46</sup> This was a global venture that intended to take advantage of the booming globalized economy by financing (and constructing) of infrastructure projects at reduced production costs.

### **The Contemporary Sino-African Relationship**

Due to its global embeddedness in development, China is often portrayed as “ruthlessly developmental.”<sup>47</sup> This reputation has gained more notoriety with the implementation of the One Belt One Road initiative, which is essentially an expansion of Beijing’s Going Global Strategy. The One Belt One Road is China’s most aggressive foreign policy and economic initiative. The initiative was created by President Xi Jinping’s new administration upon taking office in 2013. It is an expansive global trade initiative that is designed to encourage outward Chinese investment through the construction of infrastructure, investment, and trade between China and its neighbors in designated regions.<sup>48</sup> With the One Belt One Road initiative, the Jinping administration

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<sup>43</sup> Bräutigam, 62.

<sup>44</sup> Bräutigam, 11.

<sup>45</sup> Rudolf du Plessi. “China’s African Infrastructure Projects: A Tool in Reshaping Global Norms.” *SAIIA*. 3 Oct. 2016. [saiia.org.za/research/chinas-african-infrastructure-projects-a-tool-in-reshaping-global-norms/](http://saiia.org.za/research/chinas-african-infrastructure-projects-a-tool-in-reshaping-global-norms/). 3.

<sup>46</sup> Huiping Chen. “China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ Initiative and Its Implications for Sino-African Investment Relations.” *Transnational Corporations Review*, vol. 8, no. 3, 26 Sept. 2016. 178.

<sup>47</sup> Carmody and Taylor, 18.

<sup>48</sup> H. Chen, 178.

has created an alternative global development strategy in which China invest in global infrastructure development (most commonly in less developed countries than itself) through massive loans, and creates an abundance of economic interdependencies with China as the central node of global connectivity.

One Belt One Road arose from an understanding that China's nearby countries have a strategic value in strengthening economic cooperation to catapult China into a global economic powerhouse. Nonetheless, the initiative's roots are in its historic Silk Road and maritime routes that were discontinued in the 1600s. Essentially, Beijing has reawakened its former trade, cultural exchange, and communication routes that once connected Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. In One Belt One Road, "One Belt" refers to six central land routes of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" that connects interior China to Central Asia and Europe, mainly through railways. The "One Road" refers to the "Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road" which relies on three main ocean routes that connect China with Southeast Asia, Europe, and Africa at strategic seaports.<sup>49</sup> In a very short amount of time, the One Belt One Road initiative has fostered global economic dominance for China because of its central role and main trade beneficiary. The initiative stretches to nearly seventy countries across three continents, incorporating nearly sixty percent of the world's population and accounting for approximately thirty percent of the global GDP.<sup>50</sup>

The One Belt One Road initiative's main objective is to limit trade barriers to increase connectivity. In the age of globalization, connectivity is a direct line to economic prosperity. In that regard, China recognizes poor infrastructure as a major obstacle to

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<sup>49</sup> H. Chen, 178.

economic development because of its ability to impede living standards, local industrialization, and foreign investment.<sup>51</sup> To further integrate into the global economy through trade and investment, China has placed improving inadequate infrastructure in developing countries at the center of the One Belt One Road initiative. This infrastructure development is focused on the energy and power, public utilities, and transportation sectors.<sup>52</sup> Around the globe, Beijing is implementing approximately 1,700 infrastructure projects, worth a total of US \$900 billion.<sup>53</sup> By all means, One Belt One Road is the largest development plan in contemporary history.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the initiative has very troubling implications for debt-sustainability in developing countries. Around two-thirds of countries participating in One Belt One Road have national credit ratings below investable grade.<sup>55</sup> Chinese lending to countries with poor credit is largely controversial as it seems that China is more interested in acquiring assets, rather than debt repayment.

The One Belt One Road initiative is an official framework for China's increased investment in Africa, particularly through infrastructure investments. Sino-African connectivity is fostered through the Maritime Silk Road, linking China to nearly twenty African countries. China's reach extends through East Africa to Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya, up to North Africa reaching Egypt and Morocco, inland to Central Africa including the Democratic Republic of Congo, and finally down into Southern Africa, reaching Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa, to name a few countries.<sup>56</sup> Overall,

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Nantulya. "Implications for Africa from China's One Belt One Road Strategy." *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 22 Mar. 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Hong Yu. "Motivation Behind China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiatives and Establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank." *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 26, no. 105, 2017. 359.

<sup>52</sup> Carolyn Dong, et al. "China's One Belt One Road: Opportunities in Africa." *DLA Piper*, 5 Nov. 2018. 5.

<sup>53</sup> Nantulya.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Cai. "Understanding China's Belt and Road Initiative." *Think Asia*, Lowy Institute for International Policy, 27 Apr. 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Cai.

<sup>56</sup> Carolyn Dong, et al. 4.

China's presence in Africa has ballooned since the implementation of One Belt One Road. Whereas previously Chinese investment came directly from the government, One Belt One Road has allowed for the diversification of Chinese FDI to Africa. Currently, investment (read infrastructure loans) comes from Chinese private and state-owned companies, commercial and policy banks, and individuals.<sup>57</sup> The transition to Chinese banks has increased connectivity and strengthened the Sino-African relationship.

The One Belt One Road initiative extends through three continents, incorporating nearly sixty-five countries. Africa holds a strategic value to China, which drives its presence of the continent. According to geographer Pádraig Carmody, there have been several main objectives in China's intensified economic connectivity with the African continent. These ambitions range from the creation of an expanded market for Chinese services and manufactured goods, to provide an alternative to the global Western aid development model, to procure land for agriculture as it becomes scarcer in China, and to provide new channels of migration to Chinese citizens.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, the principle motives behind China's increased economic connectivity in Africa have historically been to increase diplomatic support from African countries to gain global dominance through allyship and to secure new sources of natural resources.

A crucial dimension of the Sino-African relationship is China's use of African diplomatic support for block voting. This can be seen when China attempted to diplomatically isolate Taiwan. The fight for diplomatic recognition between China and Taiwan has "been a cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy since the declaration of the People's Republic of China...and has guided China's Africa policy" since revolution first

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<sup>57</sup> Carolyn Dong, et al. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Carmody, 67-68.

broke throughout the African continent.<sup>59</sup> Beijing recognized its political strength as a long-time supporter of anti-colonial movements across the continent and leveraged it in return for getting African leaders to vote to remove Taiwan from its seat in the United Nations Security Council.<sup>60</sup> Whereas Taipei attempted to fight back against China by conducting what is referred to as “dollar diplomacy,” by making small investments in Africa to preserve diplomatic support, its investments were greatly overshadowed by Beijing’s expansive investment power on the African continent.<sup>61</sup> For the most part, Taipei held on to international support until 1997, when China increased aid investments across the continent, and support for Taipei slowly diminished.<sup>62</sup> Any remaining support that Taiwan had from African countries slowly diminished as China began further leveraging in economic power by pulling funding for infrastructure projects from countries that continued to support Taiwan.<sup>63</sup> The most prominent example is in the case of Malawi. From 1966 to 2007 Malawi and Taiwan had strong diplomatic relations. This came to a halt in 2008 when China offered Malawi billions in exchange for severing ties with Taiwan and build an economic and diplomatic relationship with China.<sup>64</sup> China strategically offering money in exchange for severed political ties is an early example of China exerting its soft power by leveraging Africa’s infrastructure gap and desire for development opportunities as a tool of Beijing’s global political agenda.

Furthermore, it was African support that pushed for Beijing to host the 2008 summer Olympics and African support that successfully blocked resolutions at the United

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<sup>59</sup> Alden, 20-21.

<sup>60</sup> Alden, 17.

<sup>61</sup> Alden, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Alden, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Alden, 21.

<sup>64</sup> “Malawi Severs Links with Taiwan.” *BBC News*, 14 Jan. 2008.

Nations Commission of Human Rights condemning Chinese human rights abuses.<sup>65</sup> African block voting has been of such value to China that Chairman Mao Zedong, the was frequently quoted saying, “it is our African brothers who carried us into the United Nations.”<sup>66 67</sup> More contemporarily, Africa plays a critical role as an “ideological battleground” for China to economically surpass the United States without military confrontation.<sup>68</sup> Peacefully surpassing the United States as having the world’s largest economy is a major pillar for China’s One Belt One Road initiative. Comprehensively, by building a strong relationship through the financing of urban infrastructure projects, China essentially buys loyalty and global diplomatic support from African governments.

The other crucial dimension of the Sino-African relationship is Africa’s strategic location as a resource-rich continent. Africa as resource-rich is particularly attractive for Chinese officials that have an excess of infrastructure development capabilities and a need for new sources of natural resources for its colossal population. Since 1948, China has chosen to rely on a model of self-sufficiency. However, with its accelerated population growth, the country is no longer able to sustain itself on its own supply of raw materials.<sup>69</sup> In response, China has resorted to collecting raw materials from the African continent. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, China is pursuing not only easy access to Africa’s raw materials, but also the ability to control their management and distribution. The council claims that China may be ensuring its access to natural resources as they become scarcer.<sup>70</sup> A raw material that motivates China’s presence in

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<sup>65</sup> Alden, 22.

<sup>66</sup> Chairman Mao Zedong led China’s communist revolution, eventually becoming the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1935. From 1949 to 1959 he was the chairman of the People’s Republic of China.

<sup>67</sup> Qing Cao. “From Revolution to Business: China’s Changing Discourse on Africa.” *The Morality of China in Africa: The Middle Kingdom and the Dark Continent*, Zed Books, 2013. 67.

<sup>68</sup> Carmody, 72.

<sup>69</sup> Alden, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Carmody, 68.

Africa is oil. It has been reported that Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, Sudan, Angola, and Nigeria account for roughly ninety percent of China's oil imports from Africa.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, South Africa supplies iron, and Zimbabwe also supplies iron, along with steel. The Democratic Republic of Congo also supplies China with copper, but Zambia remains China's largest copper supplier. China's seemingly insatiable desire for natural resources is used for urban development and manufacturing.<sup>72</sup>

Following the Japanese model of resource-backed loans that was utilized in China in the 1970s, China provides low-interest concessional loans to resource-rich African countries, in which loans are backed by the natural resources available in that particular African country.<sup>73</sup> Chinese leaders have traded African raw materials for an abundance of infrastructure projects financed by China. These projects range from sports stadiums, presidential palaces, housing developments, roads, railways, parliament buildings, and special economic trading zones. Trading natural resources for infrastructure is deliberately used for countries that do not have the cash-power to pay back their concessional loans. Between 2005 and 2012 Beijing's investment in resource-rich countries nearly doubled, while its investment in non-resource-rich countries grew by a factor of seven.<sup>74</sup> This implies that whereas securing natural resources is a strategic value of Sino-African relations, it is not the core basis of the relationship. Rather infrastructure investment capability drives Sino-African cooperation.

China has also taken a particular interest in Africa because of its growing middle class, urbanization, the idle infrastructure development market, and desire for

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<sup>71</sup> Eleanor Albert. "China in Africa." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 12 July 2017.

<sup>72</sup> Lauren Gamache, et al. "China's Trade and Investment Relationship with Africa." *United States International Trade Commission*, Apr. 2013. 1-2.

<sup>73</sup> "China and Africa: Between Extremes." *Africa Research Institute*, Oct. 2012. 2.



development as well as a more competitive position in the global economy. China's recent presence in Africa has completely reworked the continent's position in the global economy. Since the early 2000s, the Sino-African relationship has strengthened beyond expectations. This relationship is characterized by China's ability to help foster rapid economic growth. Currently, China is Africa's largest capital donor, trading partner, and investor.<sup>75</sup> As of the latest available figures in 2017, China invested over US \$72 million in the African continent, "more than twice the dollar amount of France or the U.S," which are Africa's second and third largest donors.<sup>76</sup> China being the African continent's largest donor has fostered the development of two distinct perceptions of China in Africa.

The first perception is China as a development partner and investor. Many identify China's current involvement in Africa as a strategic long-term commitment to the continent driven by a mutually beneficial pledge to economic interconnectivity. From 2000 to 2010 China's trade with Africa increased 700 percent; two-way trade ballooned from US \$10.6 billion in 2000 to a whopping US \$166 billion in 2011.<sup>77</sup> <sup>78</sup> Foreign aid figures follow a very similar path. In 2001, China's foreign aid was US \$1.8 billion to a massive US \$20 billion more recently. The main beneficiaries of this foreign aid are in Africa.<sup>79</sup> As for commercial investment, estimates say that there are at least approximately ten thousand Chinese businesses operating within forty-nine African countries.<sup>80</sup> With that, China has transitioned from investment to economic integration with the African continent. The second perception is China as a colonizer. This

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<sup>74</sup> du Plessi, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Garth Myers. "China and Sub-Saharan Africa's Urban Expansion." *Asia Dialogue*, 11 Dec. 2015. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Payce Madden. "Figure of the Week: Foreign Direct Investment in Africa." *Brookings*, 9 Oct. 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Xiangming Chen and Garth Myers, 90.

<sup>78</sup> Africa Research Institute, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Chen and Myers, 89.

<sup>80</sup> Alden, 14.

perception will be further explored in chapter two, where China's infrastructure investment in Africa is analyzed through the lens of economic dependency as a form of neo-colonialism.

Africa finds itself in the difficult position of being the least urbanized, yet most rapidly urbanizing region in the globe. Deborah Brautigam, an American political scientist specializing in Chinese projects in Africa, describes the continent's infrastructure gap by saying, "if you could travel by satellite directly across the African continent on a clear night, the vastness of African underdevelopment would hit you with stunning effect."<sup>81</sup> <sup>82</sup> This view corresponds with the World Bank's assessment that over the next ten years the African continent requires up to US \$170 billion in investment per year to achieve its infrastructure needs.<sup>83</sup> As previously exposed, China has utilized Africa's infrastructure gap as way to economically engage with the continent. The infrastructure projects China tends to focus on are building roads, railways, electricity and major construction projects, aimed to improve the physical infrastructure of cities. In exchange for funding Africa's infrastructure projects, China requires the construction of the projects to be completed by Chinese construction companies, many of which are state-owned, or local construction firms that are joint ventures with Chinese construction companies.<sup>84</sup> This stipulation creates big business for Chinese companies through employment and the gaining of a foothold in the local markets. However, there are many reports of complaints that Chinese-sponsored infrastructure projects are of low-quality.

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<sup>81</sup> Brautigam focuses on foreign aid and international development policies. In recent years she has focused her work on Chinese projects in Africa.

<sup>82</sup> Brautigam, 7.

<sup>83</sup> Nantulya.

<sup>84</sup> Sun.

Historically, China's financing of urban infrastructure projects in Africa has come from a variety of financial institutions and funds established by the Chinese government. Despite the People's Republic of China being founded in 1948, it was only in 1984 that the Chinese government established the People's Bank of China as the country's central bank. In this new role, the bank was mainly held responsible for implementing monetary policy, regulating all of mainland China's financial institutions, and foreign exchange.<sup>85</sup> Strategically, the first People's Bank of China in Africa was founded in Zambia in 1997, at the very start of efforts to more deeply economically integrate the two nation-states.<sup>86</sup> In 1994, closely following the establishment of The People's Bank of China, The China Export-Import Bank, more popularly known as The Chinese Exim Bank, was founded, along with the China Development Bank.<sup>87</sup> These banks continue to play a fundamental part in Beijing's outreach to the African government. The Chinese Exim Bank and the China Development Bank are government owned institutions that promote government interest by maintaining the expansion of Chinese businesses in Africa by providing non-concessional international loans and credit for construction and investment opportunities.<sup>88</sup>

The Chinese Exim Bank is most known for its flexible lending and risk averse policies, discounted rates, long-repayment periods and interest payment "holidays," which particularly appeal to African leaders.<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, the China Development Bank has become a more popular choice for Chinese companies to finance urban infrastructure projects in Africa because of its visible prominence on the continent.

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<sup>85</sup> Carmody, 71.

<sup>86</sup> Carmody, 71.

<sup>87</sup> Alden, 24.

<sup>88</sup> Alden, 24.

<sup>89</sup> Africa Research Institute, 2.

Before establishing its government-backed private equity fund, the China-Africa Development Fund in 2007, the China Development Bank had already set up temporary offices in African capitals to build governmental relationships on the continent. At that time, they explored investment project opportunities mainly in urban infrastructure, but also in agriculture, manufacturing, telecommunications, and resource extraction industries.<sup>90</sup>

The China-Africa Development Fund was founded on US \$3 billion, with the intention to invest between US \$5 and \$50 million for each urban infrastructure project. The objective of the fund was to partner with European nation-states that maintain close ties with their former colonies to finance urban development projects. A spokesperson of the fund declared that European countries “may have developed a plan to invest in infrastructure [in former colonies in Africa], but they haven’t raised the money. We can use these plans. We would like to join their efforts. We would like to have joint projects.”<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, these plans never materialized due to economic competition between China and Europe. Instead, the China-Africa Development Fund opted to get into the business of helping Chinese companies invest in long-term ventures with high returns in Africa’s urban centers.<sup>92</sup>

Comprehensively, the People’s Bank of China, the Chinese Exim Bank, and the China-Africa Development Fund (through the funding of The China Development Bank), favor lending for infrastructure projects that are backed by Africa’s natural resources.<sup>93</sup> Between 2009 and 2012, Chinese financial institutions financed nearly US \$10 billion to African governments in the form of concessional loans. In March of 2013, while on his

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<sup>90</sup> Bräutigam, 94.

<sup>91</sup> Bräutigam, 94.

first tour of Africa, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that the Chinese government would double China's commitment to urban infrastructure development in Africa, ultimately promising that its financial institutions would loan African governments US \$20 billion between 2013 and 2015.<sup>94</sup> Shortly after, following through with President Xi Jinping's commitment to economic engagement in Africa, more loans were promised to African governments. In November of 2013, the head sovereign risk analyst of the Chinese Exim Bank assured that by 2025, China will provide African governments with US \$1 trillion in urban infrastructure financing through direct investment, soft loans, concessional loans, and commercial loans.<sup>95</sup> These promised loans would be funded as a part of China's new One Belt One Road Initiative, ultimately guaranteeing further economic integration between China and the African continent. The multi-billion-dollar low-interest loans funded through the One Belt One Road initiative are also backed by the resources available in the particular African countries they are given to, most popularly oil or minerals. Most frequently, these loans are usually given to African nation-states with awfully low credit ratings, which impedes their ability to access loan funding from the international financial market.<sup>96</sup> China's ability to give poor credit countries access to low-interest loans continues to appeal to African leaders, incentivizing them to completely overlook and ignore China's lack of transparency and hidden conditions in loan funding.

Despite asserting that its foreign policy approach is based in noninterference, over time, Beijing has developed the ability to push its own political agendas on the African

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<sup>92</sup> Africa Research Institute, 2.

<sup>93</sup> Sun.

<sup>94</sup> Sun.

<sup>95</sup> Sun.

<sup>96</sup> Sun.

countries it supports through foreign aid investment, particularly infrastructure investment. This strategy is the exertion of Beijing's soft power, in which it can influence the decision-making and behavior of its African partners, without military force.<sup>97</sup> Beijing's soft (and sometimes hard) power approach is characterized by pulling funding for infrastructure projects and emphasizing to African leaders the massive investments that Beijing has made in their urban centers in the past and present. By utilizing infrastructure (read development), as a pressure point, Beijing is able to instill fear in African leaders to cooperate with Beijing's global agendas. This soft power strategy has been implemented since 1978.<sup>98</sup> By employing infrastructure projects as statecraft Beijing is able to continue to assert that the political and economic rise of China will "not come at the cost of any other country, will not stand in the way of any other country, nor pose a threat to any other country," because of its use of desperation as a bargaining chip.<sup>99</sup> Nonetheless, this desperation is packaged as the power of choice. In its barest essence, the African leaders are making the choice. However, this does not take into consideration the nuance of choice. Despite maintaining its peaceful nature, when taking into account that African leaders are being forced to choose development through infrastructure over making sovereign decisions, the uneven nature of Sino-African partnerships is exposed. By exerting its soft power, it is clear that Beijing is much more powerful than its African counterparts and is by no means afraid to use its power. It has become clear that Beijing's "own impressive development trajectory has provided it with the credibility to challenge the development paths, rules, and norms advocated by the

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<sup>97</sup> Carmody and Taylor, 16.

<sup>98</sup> du Plessi, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Carmody and Taylor, 4.

multilateral institutions shaping the global order.”<sup>100</sup> For instance, the Chinese Exim Bank is currently Africa’s largest supplier of infrastructure loans, an advantage that China is able to hold over African leaders. However, African leaders have limited pressure points of equal value to hold over China. The scant bargaining power that African leaders do have, such as control over raw materials, is delegitimized by China’s ability to get resources from elsewhere. For instance, despite being China’s largest supplier of copper, the Zambian government has limited bargaining power over its copper. If the Zambian government ever tried to use its copper exports to China as leverage, the Chinese government could easily pull investment and replace Zambian copper exports with copper from its second-largest supplier, Chile (followed by Peru).<sup>101</sup>

<sup>102</sup> It becomes clear that by non-interference Beijing was referring specifically to Western techniques of establishing power, like the military and conflict. On the other hand, China leverages development to exert soft power which undermines African democracy by forcing certain outcomes that African leaders have either previously rejected or expressed little interest. Despite the difference in approach, China and the West equally undermine African democracy. The idea that China is better for Africa than the West stems from Beijing’s marketing playing on African apprehension of Western intervention due to their colonial history. By positioning itself as a more reliable and less aggressive economic partner Beijing is able to remain, for lack of a better term, a wolf in sheep’s clothing within Africa.

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<sup>100</sup> du Plessi, 2.

<sup>101</sup> Maria Elena Vizcaino. “Virus Hits Copper Trade as China Asks Chile to Defer Cargoes.” *Bloomberg*, 5 Feb. 2020.

<sup>102</sup> Alexander Hammer and Lin Jones. “China’s Dominance as a Global Consumer and Producer of Copper.” United States International Trade Commission Executive Briefings on Trade, Aug. 2012. 2.

China's core philosophy of avoiding political conflict by focusing exclusively on mutually beneficial economic engagement is packaged as "win-win cooperation."<sup>103</sup> China's policy of non-interference is guided by four main principles, also described as the "four no's": no hegemony, no power politics, no military alliances, and no arms racing."<sup>104</sup> By focusing only on economic cooperation, China's approach could not be more different than the dominant Western aid programs implemented in Africa, which strongly rely on interventionism to create power politics for Western countries, and in fact, do very little for the development of African countries. Shortly after the announcement of the expansion of China's economic connectivity through the One Belt One Road initiative, it was reported that at the heart of the initiative was the desire to come together to achieve "The Chinese Dream' and 'The African Dream,' through "sincerity, equality and mutual benefit; solidarity and common development."<sup>105106</sup> Internationally China's non-interference approach has been criticized as a blatant disregard for human rights for their refusal to intervene in the affairs of African states. However, many times before, representatives of the One Belt One Road initiative have spoken out to clarify that nonintervention policy is based on their rejection of externally imposed solutions.<sup>107</sup> By basing the initiative in non-interference the Chinese government was able to successfully entice African leaders by validating the autonomy of African states to govern as they chose while also increasing development. And yet, despite claims of being mutually beneficial, China's relationship with African countries is still perceived

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<sup>103</sup> Bräutigam, 1.

<sup>104</sup> Carmody, 73.

<sup>105</sup> X. Chen and Myers, 92.

<sup>106</sup> Alden, 15.

<sup>107</sup> Africa Research Institute, 4.



as uneven by many international forces because of the creation of an enormous foothold on the African continent.

Despite having surmounted its own development challenges to achieve economic prosperity, Chinese officials conceptualize the country as still developing, and therefore a leader of the Global South.<sup>108</sup> Beijing's foreign policy, particularly the One Belt One Road initiative, is China "leveraging uneven development, using Africa and other global peripheries, as raw material springboards... This ascent is cloaked in the rhetoric of... 'South-South' cooperation."<sup>109</sup> South-South cooperation, also known as 'Bandung Spirit,' first emerged as powerful rhetoric in 2000, at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.<sup>110</sup> Since then, China has utilized its position as a member of the global south, having also been previously exploited by colonial powers, and as historically supporting anti-colonial movements in Africa to strategically align itself with African leaders that fiercely want to replace colonial-era infrastructure that is not only outdated but also a constant reminder of a dark history.

There are many motivations for African leaders to economically engage more deeply with China. Since its outset, the South solidarity sentiment, which can also be described as China as an alternative funder, has been a major motivation factor for African leaders to increase economic connectivity through infrastructure development. African leaders tend to have a deep distaste for the Western aid model that seemingly cannot depart from its colonial tendencies in implementing foreign policy, particularly foreign aid. In having a common experience as other less developed nations, China asserts that the Western powers are "out of touch with the needs of contemporary

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<sup>108</sup> Alden, 9-10.

<sup>109</sup> Carmody and Taylor, 17.

Africa.”<sup>111</sup> Many African leaders believe that the Chinese model of development is better suited for their own countries because of their shared historical experiences. This belief is strengthened by the fact that China refuses to propose its own model of development, and instead prefers to support African leaders in determining their own development paths, with the help of Chinese funding through loans. Despite China not choosing a development model for its African counterparts, many African leaders would like to replicate China’s development model due to its rapid success (as defined by development and a large and continuously growing economy). These governments recognize that the gap between the developed and the underdeveloped only grows, and therefore would like to follow in China’s footsteps of building wealth through infrastructure development. Furthermore, a motivation for African governments is that economic integration with China provides them with political recognition and legitimacy. African players recognize China’s use of Africa as a strategic location and recognize the strength African block voting has in global diplomacy. Overall, the main reason for African cooperation in the Sino-African relationship is because of the ability to utilize aid, investment, and trade to further develop beyond the possibility of what their own funding can provide.

China has utilized its own economic success to further upgrade its global economic positioning by pushing foreign policy agendas that promise development. China pursues colossal debt from underdeveloped African countries in return for toying with their desperation for development through infrastructure, to accommodate Africa’s exploding urban population. This pursuit, on China’s account, is deeply problematic because the Sino-African relationship is marketed as a partnership when in reality it is

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<sup>110</sup> du Plessi, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Africa Research Institute, 2.

anything but that. Despite being historically rooted in the empowerment of African nations, contemporarily the Sino-African relationship is top-down and blatantly unequal. African governments are giving up their raw materials and decision-making capabilities in return for infrastructure that they are unable to pay back sustainably and that will most likely be repossessed by China. In the end, Africa gains very little and China exceedingly benefits through the accumulation of raw materials, state-assets, block voting benefits, more economic legitimacy, and more geopolitical control over the region. Ultimately, claims of Sino-African relations being “win-win” is outright misinformation. The unequal nature of Sino-African relations can be most easily observed in the Sino-Zambian relationship. To look more deeply at the integrity of the Sino-Zambian relationship, this thesis will utilize China’s presence in Lusaka as a case study.

## **“Win-Win” to No-Win: Sino-Zambian Relations, Underdevelopment, and African Agency**

Zambia is considered a Southern African country due to its extensive social and economic connectivity with other countries in the Southern African region. As one of the most urbanized countries in Africa, it has an urbanization rate of over fifty percent.<sup>112</sup> Zambia’s major urban center, Lusaka, was first developed when the territory was taken from the original indigenous people, the majority of which were the Soli and Lenje people, and colonized by the British South African Company in the 1890s.<sup>113 114</sup> Under British colonial rule Zambia was called Northern Rhodesia; initially, the territory did not have any major urban centers, but this is not to say that Zambia’s urban history begins with its European colonization.<sup>115</sup> Lusaka was officially declared a city in 1913, but records show that settlers had already established their presence in towns further north in Zambia’s Copperbelt at least a decade before.<sup>116117</sup> Many of Zambia’s other major cities developed in the 1930s as a result of the growing copper mining industry that began in the 1920s.<sup>118 119</sup>

Lusaka was named by the British after the previous Chief Lusaka of the Soli people. In 1905, Lusaka was established as a five kilometer long and 1.5-kilometer wide railway siding for a railway line that was primarily used to ship copper from the Katanga Province (in present-day the Democratic Republic of Congo) to ports in South Africa.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Vivien Foster and Carolina Dominguez. “Zambia's Infrastructure.” *Open Knowledge Repository*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 1 Mar. 2010. 4.

<sup>113</sup> Garth Myers. “*Urban Environments in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Environmental Politics.*” Bristol University Press, 2016. 68.

<sup>114</sup> Chileshe L. Mulenga. *Urban Slums Report: The Case of Lusaka, Zambia*. University of Zambia, 2003. 1.

<sup>115</sup> Myers. “*Urban Environments in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Environmental Politics.*” 60.

<sup>116</sup> Myers. “*Urban Environments in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Environmental Politics.*” 68.

<sup>117</sup> Myers. “*Urban Environments in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Environmental Politics.*” 65.

<sup>118</sup> Mulenga, 2.

<sup>119</sup> Myers. “*Urban Environments in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Environmental Politics.*” 66.

<sup>120</sup> Mulenga, 2.

However, noticing Lusaka's potential as a new and strategic point in Southern Africa, the city grew because it appealed to white farmer settlers mostly from South Africa. As the city grew, the British South African Company attained a charter from the British government to grant white settlers in Lusaka that right to maintain and govern their local affairs.<sup>121</sup> Lusaka continued to grow and expand and in 1931 it was established as the capital of Northern Rhodesia because of its strategic location on the main north-to-south African railway line, which was expected to become a critical urban development hub. Additionally, Lusaka was the most domestically interconnected urban center in Zambia, was within close reach of the Copperbelt, and contained significant underground water resources located within limestone/dolomite aquifers. Initial plans for Lusaka conceived it as Northern Rhodesia's administration center, which resulted in the city as a mostly white space with limited possibility of alternative economic activity besides government administration.<sup>122</sup> It was not until after 1948 that Lusaka's black population swelled due to an ordinance that granted black African families the right to live in the city. Previously black African men were permitted only temporary urban residence permits dependent upon their employment contracts; their wives and children were not allowed to the right to reside in Lusaka with them.<sup>123</sup> Despite Zambia gaining its independence in 1964, Lusaka maintained its position as the country's economic and governmental hub as it transitioned into a majority black space.

Contemporarily Lusaka remains Zambia's most crucial economic, governmental, and commercial hub. Despite being a rather small city in comparison to the populations of other African capitals, Lusaka is one of the fastest developing cities in Southern

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<sup>121</sup> Mulenga, 2.

<sup>122</sup> Mulenga, 2.

Africa. Today, Zambia finds itself in a rather difficult economic position due to the decline and stagnation of its copper mining industry in the 1970s and 1980s which has resulted in dramatically decreased economic production and growing national debt.<sup>124</sup> Since then, Lusaka has battled increasing rates of urban poverty despite being one of the least impoverished urban centers in Zambia. The bulk of Lusaka's urban poor resides in large informal peri-urban settlements with limited public services.<sup>125</sup> These populations tend to go unaccounted for, which is reflected in Lusaka's reported population; whereas it is officially reported that the city has a population of roughly 1.7 million, many sources estimate the population is closer to over two million, with the uncounted population living in the unauthorized peri-urban slums.<sup>126</sup> Lusaka's current lack of housing affordability and a social safety net is a reflection of the city's colonial roots and the inability of the post-independence government to provide the city with adequate infrastructure for the rapidly growing urban population. The national and local governments have long battled with overcrowding and a lack of satisfactory infrastructure and public services, which ultimately cripples economic productivity and makes vulnerable city-dwellers susceptible to both extreme poverty and disease.

Since the start of Zambia's economic decline in the 1980s, the government has attempted economic development through support from international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, as well as aggressively trying to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) through the privatization of state assets such as the copper mines. Recognizing its lack of infrastructure, the Zambian government has strategically placed its efforts in building infrastructure in the country's

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<sup>123</sup> Mulenga, 3.

<sup>124</sup> Mulenga, 2.

urban centers. Due to corresponding interests, overtime Zambia has forged a strong relationship with China in which the infrastructure loans previously discussed in chapter one are implemented in Zambian cities, particularly Lusaka, because of its high level of connectivity due to road integration.<sup>127</sup> China currently holds the most loan contracts in Zambia's infrastructure building sector; China finances a massive eighty-three percent of the industry.<sup>128</sup> Whereas China sometimes receives praise for supposedly alleviating Zambia's economic and technological gaps, it is important to remain critical of any exterior forces and influences within the African continent, especially from advanced and economically developed nation-states such as China. China's enlarging influence in Zambia (as well as the rest of Africa) through resource- and asset-based loans for infrastructure has raised concern as to whether or not China is a neo-colonial force within Zambia. The question becomes, is China utilizing its foreign aid assistance programs (which incorporates FDI) to produce economic dependency through "debt-trap diplomacy" to assert institutional change and alter economic development in Zambia?

Kwame Nkrumah was the first President of Ghana from 1957, when he led the nation to independence from British colonial rule until 1966 when he was ousted from political power after Ghana's military organized a coup against him.<sup>129</sup> It's fitting that as the first president of sub-Saharan Africa's first sovereign nation, Nkrumah was also one of the earliest African scholars to address neo-colonialism. In his seminal book, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, published in 1965, he conceptualized that the "essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory,

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<sup>125</sup> Mulenga, 9-10.

<sup>126</sup> Myers. "Urban Environments in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Environmental Politics." 67-68.

<sup>127</sup> He and Zhu, 121.

<sup>128</sup> "83 Percent of Projects Are Done by Chinese Companies – Mulusa." *Lusaka Times*, 8 Sept. 2017.

independent and has all of the outward trappings of international sovereignty [when] in reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.”<sup>130</sup>

Nkrumah emphasizes that investment acts as a “revolving credit” that is paid by the neo-colonial force to the neo-colonized country, and then returned to the neo-colonial force with increased profits.<sup>131</sup> According to Nkrumah, governing African elites serve as facilitators of the process by receiving investment as direct payments for running the neo-colonized state, resulting in exploitation, increased gaps between developed (read rich) and developing (read poor) countries, and the domestic inability of neo-colonized countries to support industrialization thus making development nearly impossible.

Nkrumah addresses the deceptiveness of neo-colonialism by explaining that its attractiveness is the possibility of improving local quality of life, but its objective is to reduce local living standards for the sake of the economic gain of the neo-colonial country.<sup>132</sup> He supposes that “it is only when this contradiction is understood that the failure of innumerable ‘aid’ programs, many of them well-intentioned, can be explained.”<sup>133</sup> In general, Nkrumah considered neo-colonialism as “the worst form of imperialism [explaining that] for those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress.”<sup>134</sup>

Referencing China’s supposed non-interventionist policy approach to financing urban infrastructure projects in Lusaka, China maintains the economic dependency of Zambia.

Zambian economic dependence is contingent on its increasing desire and need for

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<sup>129</sup> Fischer, Hilke. “Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah: Visionary, Authoritarian Ruler and National Hero.” *DW*, 24 Feb. 2016.

<sup>130</sup> Kwame Nkrumah. *Neo-Colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965. 1.

<sup>131</sup> Nkrumah, 11.

<sup>132</sup> Nkrumah, 11.

<sup>133</sup> Nkrumah, 11.

<sup>134</sup> Nkrumah, 5.



infrastructure to build-up debt without China having to claim responsibility for Zambia's dwindling economy, ultimately taking advantage of the fact that Zambia was never able to build a prosperous independent economy post-independence. Whereas neo-colonialism is sometimes described as an imperial force penetrating its former colonies through economic power, this specific analysis assumes otherwise. In the case of Sino-Zambian relations, this analysis conceptualizes that neo-colonialism can be experienced when a developed, imperial, and economic powerhouse, like China, can economically penetrate (with the assistance of the African state and its ruling elites) and create a dependency from a lesser developed (and formerly colonized) country, like Zambia. China can be a neo-colonial force regardless of whether or not Beijing has previously colonized Zambia. What is more important than whether or not China previously colonized Zambia is China's capability of assuming a neo-colonial position of power due to its long-standing position as an imperial force that has a history of using its foreign policy to extend its power and influence. Zambia's neo-dependency upon China has replaced its old Western model of economic dependency and has gradually shifted upwards China's position as a global economic powerhouse. There are a multitude of reasons in which the Sino-Zambian relationship is perceived as neo-colonial. These reasons span from the Chinese use of debt-traps, the extraction of raw materials with limited support of local industrialization, the inherent power imbalance in the relationship, the predatory nature of purposefully seeking out politically weak countries and the Chinese economy benefiting more than the Zambian economy. Through this lens, it becomes obvious that Chinese foreign policy like the One Belt One Road Initiative is a tool to advance neo-dependency under the guise of aid and solidarity.

Ultimately, whereas the Sino-Zambian relationship has previously been praised, over time it has become clear that power is inherently unequally distributed and that despite promising positive results, Chinese loan-funded urban infrastructure projects in Lusaka are a tool to deepen Zambia's crisis of economic development and foster neo-colonialism.

### **Analyzing the Sino-Zambian “All-Weather Friendship” as Neo-colonial**

The relationship between China and Zambia has been described as “one of the richest historical records on China’s cooperation with the [African] continent.”<sup>135</sup> Allegiances between China and Zambia first formed when China supported Zambia during its fight for independence. After achieving independence from Britain in 1964, the following three presidents fondly declared an “all-weather’ friendship,” between the two countries.<sup>136</sup> China first demonstrated its comradery to Zambia when it provided the country with an alternative to relying on its former colonial power, Britain, for imports when it funded the construction of the Tazara railway in the 1970s, connecting Zambia to Tanzania through heavy rail. Since then, Zambia and China have mostly maintained a positive economic relationship, as China has continuously supplied Zambia with assistance in its agriculture, healthcare, education, and most relevant, infrastructure sectors.<sup>137</sup> In return, Zambia has remained a close diplomatic ally to China. Zambia closely supported China in its struggle to reclaim its seat on the United Nations Security Council in 1971.<sup>138</sup> In this regard, the relationship between the two countries can be

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<sup>135</sup> Ana Cristina Alves. *The Zambia-China Cooperation Zone at a Crossroads: What Now?* The South African Institute of International Affairs, 2011. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Cheru and Obi, 167.

<sup>137</sup> Alves, *The Zambia-China Cooperation Zone at a Crossroads: What Now?*. 1.

<sup>138</sup> Cheru and Obi, 167.

described as symbiotic. They hold a strategic partnership in which they often trade political backing, natural resources, development potential, and global economic power.

Zambia is often described as “China’s Perfect Storm,” because of its struggles with democratic consolidation and its commodity-based economy.<sup>139</sup> Convincingly highlighting Beijing’s calculated approach to foreign policy. The Sino-Zambian relationship was perceived as forward-looking up until 2006, when Zambian politician, Michael Sata, publicly exposed the discontent Zambian citizens had with the country’s close relationship with China by campaigning on a platform to rid Zambia of its Chinese presence. Comprehensively, there are “three phases of the Sino-Zambian relationship, driven by solidarity, geopolitics, and geo-economics.”<sup>140</sup> This expansive partnership has managed to entwine the trade, aid, and investment domains into a path for economic growth and development, which has been made possible through the extraction of raw materials and the construction of urban infrastructure projects in Zambia’s urban centers.

China’s infrastructure loans to Zambia have been used for building projects such as roads, railways, sports arena and airports. China is now, “the primary source of new direct investment in Zambia and has over 140 officially recorded [infrastructure] projects covering various sectors.”<sup>141</sup> Nonetheless, financing urban infrastructure has been a founding principle of the Sino-Zambian relationship since 1967. In fact, between 1967 (only three years after Zambia declared its independence) and 2006, Chinese loans to Zambia amounted to roughly ¥1,413 million renminbi.<sup>142</sup> However, it was not until the 2000s that the Sino-Zambian relationship through economic engagement gained even more momentum when “bilateral trade grew from \$108 million in 2000 to \$1.39 billion

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<sup>139</sup> X. Chen and Myers, 89.

<sup>140</sup> Carmody, 160.

in 2009 and further to \$2.85 billion in 2010, greatly boosted by the dramatic swelling of China's copper imports in recent years. By the end of 2010, China was the second-largest destination for Zambian copper exports."<sup>143</sup> The success of Sino-Zambian economic engagement in the early 2000s laid the groundwork for the establishment of The Zambia-China Cooperation Zone (ZCCZ) in Lusaka, which was the first Sino-African trade and economic cooperation zone set up in Africa. Comprehensively, the ZCCZ was built in Lusaka to further the interests of both China and Zambia. Whereas Beijing wanted to expand its control over Zambia's copper reservoirs, Lusaka desperately wanted to form and develop a manufacturing industry around its mining industry to boost economic development.<sup>144</sup>

Zambia's abundance of natural resources is China's greatest motive for investing in Zambia because of the ability to exchange raw materials for the financing of desired urban infrastructure. China's "pace of development and rapid depletion of its natural resources has been a driving force in its international diplomatic relations. Accounting for the largest population in the world and 5.26% GDP growth in 2011, China's hunger for [natural resources] is prevailing in the international market as they demand 17% of the world's global consumption. With its demand expected to expand by 75% by 2035, China is positioning itself to compete aggressively and diplomatically for" the security of raw materials.<sup>145</sup> Zambia finds itself as the primary focus of China's foreign policy initiatives in Africa because of the ability to consensually exchange the invigoration the Zambian economy through manufacturing (through infrastructure) with natural resources

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<sup>141</sup> Carmody, 159.

<sup>142</sup> Cheru and Obi, 168.

<sup>143</sup> Alves, "The Zambia-China Cooperation Zone at a Crossroads: What Now?" 1.

<sup>144</sup> Alves, "The Zambia-China Cooperation Zone at a Crossroads: What Now." 1.

<sup>145</sup> Aniche, 9.

(backed by the loans). Zambia's primary raw exports to China are sugar, tobacco, coffee, and copper.<sup>146</sup> Copper has long been the leading motive of China's interest in Zambia. Whereas Chinese loan investments in Zambia have gone to a multitude of sectors, the majority of Chinese companies invest and operate within the mining sector.<sup>147</sup> It is anticipated that soon Lusaka will be China's "metal hub."<sup>148</sup>

China can be perceived as a neo-colonial force in Zambia because of the manner in which natural resources are extracted, which cultivates the development of underdevelopment. As previously addressed, China's appeal to Zambia is its abundance of natural resources, which has been referred to as the "new scramble for Africa."<sup>149</sup> This is a clear reference to the original scramble for Africa in which the entire continent was essentially divided by colonial powers for colonial powers in an effort to extract as many resources as possible to manufacture within Europe and advance industrialization, feeding European development. Upon default of One Belt One Road urban infrastructure loans, as anticipated by the debt-traps, China uses its resource-backed loans to extract raw materials like copper from Zambia. Manufacturing happens within China, in which products are brought back into Zambia through the same infrastructure China built for Zambia. Essentially, "China is swapping its value-added manufactured goods for low-value-added and raw commodities from" Zambia.<sup>150</sup> With limited manufacturing happening in Zambia, it is unable to industrialize. The lack of industrialization (and therefore development) in Zambia is further pursued by China's interest in building urban infrastructure that facilitates the importation of Chinese goods into Zambian cities, instead

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<sup>146</sup> Cheru and Obi, 170.

<sup>147</sup> Carmody, 73.

<sup>148</sup> Alves, "The Zambia-China Cooperation Zone at a Crossroads:" What Now. 2.

<sup>149</sup> Melber, 393.

<sup>150</sup> Peter Sichinsambwe. "Africa-China Trade: Economic Colonization?" *Zambia Daily Mail*, 17 Dec. 2018.

of the much-needed manufacturing infrastructure. If this process continues Zambia will be cursed by underdevelopment for a long time. Ultimately, the extraction of raw materials always feels colonial, especially when it is purposefully disrupting the development of industrialization. The unequal value in the exchanged materials between China and Zambia creates an inherently unequal power dynamic that “indicates that Sino-African economic relationship is not relations of equals or interdependence, rather it is relations of unequal or dependence.”<sup>151</sup> Zambia is forced into a trade deficit which further promotes underdevelopment.<sup>152</sup> With that being said, despite China’s claim of mutual benefits, in reality, Zambia has limited bargaining power; it is reliant on China for both infrastructure development and manufactured goods. This imbalance of power has been noted by the president of the African Development Bank, Akinwumi Adesina, who stated, “the issue that I have seen is the asymmetry of power in the negotiations of the [Sino-Zambian] transactions, where you are actually giving your mining rights away just because you want to build a superhighway.”<sup>153</sup> The fact of the matter is that China’s neo-colonial power in Zambia has not gone unnoticed by other African powers, but nothing can be done without the initiative of the Zambian government.

The Sino-Zambian relationship is quite controversial both domestically and internationally. Whereas some people believe that China’s investment in Zambia is positive because of its ability to provide local people with employment opportunities and economic development potential, others argue that the Zambian government is giving too much attention to building grand infrastructure and chooses to ignore the daily struggles of ordinary Zambians. In an effort to placate domestic and international agents against

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<sup>151</sup> Aniche, 1.

<sup>152</sup>Aniche, 23.

China's economic integration with Zambia, Chinese President Xi Jinping has previously offered Zambia US \$800 million in soft loans while simultaneously eliminating US \$350 million in bilateral debt.<sup>154</sup> Unfortunately, since then Zambia has obtained even more debt, finding itself in somewhat of a debt crisis. As the Zambian government continues to take out massive loans from Beijing to build urban infrastructure in Lusaka (and other urban centers throughout Zambia) it struggles to maintain its national debt and balance debt servicing with the cost of running the state. Zambia has become dependent upon China to finance infrastructure to generate more economic development to be able to both operate the country and repay China, but to generate the capital to do so, Zambia feels the need to build more, which results in becoming even more indebted to China.

This cycle is illustrative of China's setting of debt-traps; in which it is aware the Zambian government will undoubtedly struggle to release itself. A debt-trap is the strategic leveraging of national debt to create dependency by purposefully giving economically vulnerable countries large loans, knowing that they will not be able to service those debts. This tactic always results in the indebted countries forcibly giving up valuable state-assets upon default.<sup>155</sup> Globally China's use of giving excessive credit to vulnerable countries is so well known that the term "debt-trap diplomacy" has been constructed to critique its foreign policy strategy. Zambia is no stranger to China's debt-trap diplomacy, in fact, the One Belt One Road Initiative is the main apparatus in which China was temporarily able to enter the Zambian economy. Debt-trap diplomacy through One Belt One Road can be seen in the way in which China's continuously provides Zambia with excessive lines of debt to build urban infrastructure, despite not

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<sup>153</sup> Nkonde.

<sup>154</sup> Carmody and Taylor, 12.

having “proper feasibility studies to determine their viability by way of acceptable internal rate of return thereby saddling the country with excessive debt, resulting in the country being at risk of debt distress according to IMF.”<sup>156</sup> This process renders Zambia economically dependent on China because it means excessive debt servicing costs that take away from Zambia’s ability to effectively manage its national budget, inevitably resulting in taking out more unsustainable lines of credit, further exacerbating the debt crisis. With that being said, China is very well aware of Zambia’s debt distress and even offers itself as an alternative source of funding when other world powers shy away from loaning to Zambia because of its unsustainable borrowing. Conclusively, economic dependency is the core of neo-colonialism. Nonetheless, to understand Zambia’s current economic position in relation to its debts to China one must first understand the root of Zambia’s vulnerability to China, which is directly linked with Zambia’s previous nearly fifty years of underdevelopment.

Since declaring independence from the British on October 24, 1964, Zambia has experienced nearly fifty years of underdevelopment. This has resulted in Zambia’s economic and political vulnerability and willingness to undertake more debt from China for the sake of development. Most importantly, Zambia’s underdevelopment can be attributed to Western institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, which have historically forced the Zambian government to adopt and implement particular neo-liberal policies that have been extremely detrimental to the country’s economic development and independence in the past. From the 1970s to the 1980s Zambia was considered a middle-income African country. The country’s per capita income was estimated to be around US

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<sup>155</sup> Ibrahim Anoba. “China Is Taking Over Zambia’s National Assets, but the Nightmare Is Just Starting for Africa.” *African Liberty*, 10 Sept. 2018.



\$500 in the early 1970s, however by the beginning of the 1980s the per capita income declined to US \$300 as a reflection of a declining economy due to increasing international debts to Western donors. The continuously declining per capita income corresponded with a decline in living standards, social services, and a lack of ability to finance and maintain urban infrastructure for the growing population.<sup>157</sup> By the 1990s Zambia's positioning in the global financial system declined even further. In response, the World Bank and IMF externally implemented Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which was "a painful and immiserating [experience for Zambia] marked by deindustrialization."<sup>158</sup> During this time, SAPs were implemented around the African continent in efforts to supposedly kickstart economic growth, however in reality, SAPs assisted in fostering the widespread underdevelopment of many African nation-states that can be seen today.

Zambia's SAPs in the 1990s, "reversed the development successes of the 1960s and 1970s, with millions sliding into poverty every year. Even the World Bank had to accept the SAPs failed the poor, with a special burden falling on women and children."<sup>159</sup> Zambia's SAP policies were based on financial and trade liberalization, monetarism, currency devaluation, a dramatic decrease in social spending (particularly in the education and poverty reduction sector), the privatization of state assets (such as the copper mining industry), and the elimination of government subsidies and price controls.<sup>160</sup> Comprehensively, these policies created more underdevelopment within Zambia. It is possible the country would have been better off managing its post-

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<sup>156</sup> Kalima Nkonde. "What the PF Government and China Have to Do to Silence Critics of Chinese 'Predatory' Loans?" *Lusaka Times*, 18 Sept. 2018.

<sup>157</sup> Mulenga, 9.

<sup>158</sup> Carmody, 85.

<sup>159</sup> Were, 5.

independence public debts independently, rather than with the help of global financial institutions. The West-imposed SAPs were held responsible for increased inequality within Zambia, rising unemployment rates, and declining living standards. The Zambian public responded with civil unrest, which further impeded growth and delegitimized the Zambian state.<sup>161</sup> By the end of the 1990s and into the early 2000s, there was complete distrust of Western development solutions by both the government and the people of Zambia. In response, the Zambian government decided to abandon the externally imposed SAPs and refused to continue debt servicing to the IMF. In return, nearly every Western donor temporarily pulled aid from Zambia, which “learned the hard way not to resist” the World Bank and IMF policies.<sup>162</sup> Despite distrusting Western development solutions, intermittently throughout the 2000s and 2010s Zambia requested development funding assistance from the IMF because of a need for external funding. In total, Zambia was issued Eurobonds for nearly US \$3 billion. As Zambia took out more loans that it was unable to repay due to economic crisis and underdevelopment, its creditworthiness deteriorated resulting in Western institutions becoming reluctant to finance any more debt for Zambia.<sup>163</sup> In the past few years, the IMF has rejected Zambian requests for loans amounting to approximately US \$1.3 billion because “the borrowing plans provided by the [Zambian] authorities continue to compromise the country’s debt sustainability and risk undermining its macroeconomic stability.”<sup>164</sup> From the Western perspective, Zambian borrowing for development is risky due to the possibility that the Zambian

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<sup>160</sup> Were, 5.

<sup>161</sup> Were, 5.

<sup>162</sup> Peter Kragelund. “Knocking on a Wide-Open Door: Chinese Investments in Africa.” *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 36, no. 122, 1 Dec. 2009. 489.

<sup>163</sup> Jevans Nyabiage. “Is a Split Coming for Zambia and Long-Time Business Partner, China?” *South China Morning Post*, 6 Oct. 2019.

<sup>164</sup> Jean-Christophe Servant. “China Steps in as Zambia Runs Out of Loan Options.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 11 Dec. 2019.

government took out too many loans and is on the brink of debt default and economic collapse.

Zambia's chosen and forceful deviation from Western-imposed development solutions have created rather agreeable circumstances for Sino-Zambian relations to flourish. Whereas overtime the West has become less likely to give to Zambia due to debt sustainability, China is more than willing to continuously loan without regard to Zambia's debt sustainability. To begin, China offers Zambia an alternative development model based on non-interference. This policy is appealing to Zambia because it means no more invasive and destructive externally imposed economic and political policies like those imposed by the previous SAPs. This means that Zambia can maintain international funding and investment for development, without having to sacrifice its national sovereignty and decision-making capabilities. Additionally, loans from China have much more favorable terms. Chinese loans offer interest rates of about two to three percent, with nearly fifteen to twenty years given to pay them off, in addition to a five- to seven-year grace period.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, unlike SAPs, the use of Chinese loans has produced positive and effective change within Zambia's urban centers such as improving infrastructure which boosts productivity and economic growth.<sup>166</sup> Another reason why alternative Chinese loan funding is preferential in Zambia is that it provides targeted funding based on Zambian interests. China is tapping into Zambia's desire for improved infrastructure, of which Western funding did not. Whereas "debt was once a symptom of western capitalist domination, it is now also a sign of China's grip on countries desperately in need of infrastructure and procuring funds through non-concessional loans.

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<sup>165</sup> Aniche, 12.

<sup>166</sup> He and Zhu, 109.

These are now thought to account for 77% of Zambia's total debt."<sup>167</sup> Lastly, Chinese loans currently act as a preferred alternative to Western aid as a result of Western implemented development solutions because they offer more debt relief. Since 2000, Beijing has taken massive steps to alleviate Zambian debts, in which it "wrote off \$1.2 billion in African debt [from thirty-one countries and] in 2003, it forgave another \$750 million"<sup>168</sup> Overall, by bypassing a colonial legacy and the implementation of SAPs in Africa, continuing to give infrastructural loans when others refuse, providing better debt financing, and targeting specific Zambian development interests China has been able to establish itself as a standout alternative partner to Zambia. The outcome tends to be a lack of criticism of China, despite the opaque nature of Chinese lending, particularly in terms of debt sustainability.

### **Contextualizing Zambia's Interest in Chinese Infrastructure Investment and its Urban Implications**

The fundamental reason in which Zambia (and the rest of Africa) is willing to overlook questionable Chinese lending terms is due to the mutual significance China and Zambia have placed on the improvement of urban infrastructure as a tool of fostering development and economic stability. Many African countries, Zambia particularly, struggle with urban infrastructure insufficiency, which generally reduces economic productivity by nearly forty percent.<sup>169</sup> A seemingly simple solution to boosting productivity and escaping the grip of underdevelopment is building more infrastructure; nonetheless, "the cost of addressing Africa's infrastructure shortfalls is estimated at around US \$93 billion annually."<sup>170</sup> Domestically filling Africa's infrastructure gap is

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<sup>167</sup> Servant.

<sup>168</sup> Aniche, 13.

<sup>169</sup> He and Zhu, 121.

<sup>170</sup> He and Zhu, 121.

financially impractical, and very concerning for Zambia because it already trails behind most of its African counterparts in adequate infrastructure and further burdens the county.<sup>171</sup> Studies show that inadequate infrastructure hinders economic productivity in Zambia by nearly fifty percent and causes the loss of about US \$500 million a year; but, if the government achieved adequate infrastructure development to the level of middle-income countries, its economic performance could grow by nearly three percent per capita per year.<sup>172</sup> <sup>173</sup> Zambia has an infrastructure funding gap of roughly US \$500 million a year, which would be a major problem if wasn't for Beijing's intervention through infrastructure loans.<sup>174</sup> However, now that Zambia can receive funding from Beijing, debt sustainability becomes a main concern.

Zambia was one of the earliest African countries to accept infrastructural investment through loans from Beijing, which has remained a “testimony to the unbreakable bond shared between Zambia and China.”<sup>175</sup> This bond is based on the mutual value of infrastructure being “an important driver of development for any country. By improving infrastructure, [Zambia] will not only have economic growth but also attract [more] investors [because] better and improved infrastructure promotes sustainable and socially inclusive economic growth,” as described by the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Ronald Chitotela.<sup>176</sup> This perspective has driven the core objective of Zambia's current ruling party, the Patriotic Front (PF). The need for outside funding for infrastructure development explains the rise of Chinese lending in Zambia

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<sup>171</sup> Doreen Nawa. “Zambia Ups Infrastructure Development.” *Zambia Daily Mail*. 31 Dec. 2017.

<sup>172</sup> Foster and Dominguez, 2.

<sup>173</sup> Foster and Dominguez, 1.

<sup>174</sup> Foster and Dominguez, 1.

<sup>175</sup> “President Lungu Thanks China for the Conference Facility Gift and Wants Local Contractors to Participate in the Construction.” *Lusaka Times*, 28 Feb. 2020.

<sup>176</sup> Nawa.

since the party was elected in 2011.<sup>177</sup> With the help of China, in virtually a decade the PF has been able to completely transform the urban infrastructural fabric of Zambia, this can be easily observed within Lusaka. Nevertheless, research shows that despite China's massive lending to build new and improved infrastructure within Zambian cities like Lusaka, the developments only contributes a mere 0.6 percentage point to the yearly per capita growth of Zambia's gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>178</sup> With that being said, the Zambian government borrows more than is sustainable based on development potential, overlooking the actual data on the real impact of development assistance. The Zambian government is undoubtedly digging itself into deeper and unbearable debt. Newer urban infrastructure projects are doing more to beautify Lusaka (and attract international attention) than they are for the development of the city and the economic well-being of the country.

Since the beginning of China's investment in Zambia in the 1960s, the nature of Chinese lending has changed. The evolving nature of Chinese lending to Zambia can be observed through the shift in the types (and magnitude) of loans over time, which alludes to China's growing self-interest in economically engaging with Zambia. From the late 1960s to 2006, the majority of China's engagement in Zambia went towards grants on much-needed relief for Zambia and Sino-Zambian economic and technical cooperation; the majority of Sino-Zambian engagement during this time was not through loans. Between 1967 and 2006 China spent a massive amount on technical and economic cooperation between the two countries, amounting to nearly ¥471 million renminbi.<sup>179</sup> In the same period of time, China gave grants targeting economic relief for Zambia, giving

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<sup>177</sup> "Chinese-Supported Infrastructure Projects Change Zambia's Landscape." *Xin Huanet*, 24 Aug. 2017.

<sup>178</sup> Foster and Dominguez, 1.

nearly ¥20 million renminbi for causes ranging from relief food, cash, equipment, medicine, and general goods.<sup>180</sup> By comparing the sums that China spent on economic and technical cooperation and relief packages, it becomes clear that Sino-Zambian economic engagement has always been at the forefront of China's motivation to engage with Zambia. Chinese infrastructural loans make up a very small percentage of Sino-Zambian economic engagement from 1967 to 2006. In those nearly forty years, Beijing gave Zambia loans for four urban infrastructure projects. The first being the Tazara railway in 1967 for ¥484 million renminbi, followed by a ¥50 million renminbi loan for road rehabilitation in 1987, a US \$8 million loan for a new government complex in Lusaka in 1995, and a ¥120.9 million renminbi loan for a new government complex (and unidentified "special loan") in 2002.<sup>181</sup> These early infrastructure loans represent China's realization of the amount of profits that could be made through such lending practices, signifying a change in China's investment after the privatization of Zambia's copper mines which increased Chinese investment in the 2000s. Such infrastructure development lending practices can be described as white elephant development, in which China realized it could foster increased profits through Zambian economic dependence. White elephant development is urban infrastructure projects in which the initial cost, maintenance, and debt servicing of the project end up being greater than its local profits. Perhaps the most illustrative of white elephant development is the Tazara railway. As previously mentioned, in 1967 China lent ¥484 million renminbi to Zambia to build the Tazara railway, however, lending didn't stop there. The maintenance of the Tazara railway ended up being much more than expected, in which Zambia couldn't afford and

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<sup>179</sup> Cheru and Obi, 169.

<sup>180</sup> Cheru and Obi, 169.

needed to continuously request Chinese loans to fund. Only two years after the initial loan for the construction of the Tazara railway, Zambia received a ¥5.58 million renminbi loan for twelve locomotives. This is followed by a ¥5 million renminbi loan for spare parts in 1986, a ¥52 million renminbi loan given to Zambia for Tazara locomotives and technical training in 1999, and two unspecified loans regarding Tazara amounting to ¥21 million renminbi in 2004 and 2006<sup>182</sup> Comprehensively, the Tazara railway cost Zambian officials nearly ¥83 million renminbi more than initially expected, on top of the original ¥484 million renminbi that the Zambian government couldn't afford in the first place. By requiring massive initial investment and continuous borrowing overtime, white elephant development became Beijing's primary mechanism to build Zambian debt.

China's current neo-colonial engagement in Zambia through One Belt One Road is centered on white elephant development. China's One Belt One Road projects in Zambia cost massive initial investment, followed by continuous borrowing for maintenance and debt servicing, which is greater than Zambian profits made through the project. Since the inception and implementation of One Belt One Road in 2013, China's white elephant development has taken over Lusaka's urban landscape. In 2013, Zambian officials borrowed US \$300 million for Lusaka's L400 roads, and in 2014 they borrowed US \$360 million for the renovation of Zambia's national airport in Lusaka, the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport.<sup>183</sup> The year 2015 was a heavy borrowing year for Zambian officials as they borrowed US \$130 million for the Lusaka sanitation project, US \$90 million for the renovation of the Levy Mwanawasa Hospital (Zambia's national hospital), US \$275 million for a housing project for employees of Zambia's national security

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<sup>181</sup> Cheru and Obi, 169.

<sup>182</sup> Cheru and Obi, 169.



department, and US \$1.7 billion for the Kafue Gorge Lower Power Plant (90 km outside of Lusaka).<sup>184</sup> Two years later, 2017 was also a heavy borrowing year for Lusaka. Officials borrowed US \$286 million for the Lusaka de-congestion project, US \$157 million for the construction of 2,000 military homes, and US \$280 million for the construction of communication towers in Lusaka and around Zambia.<sup>185</sup> Honorable mention of a white elephant infrastructure project funded by Chinese lending slightly before One Belt One Road is the renovation of Lusaka's National Heroes Stadium, which cost US \$94 million in 2011. Between 2006 and 2011, Zambia's previous ruling political party borrowed extensively, amounting to US \$3.5 billion, but little information is given on where these funds were utilized.<sup>186</sup> Since 2017, Zambia's borrowing through One Belt One Road has not slowed down, some might argue that it has picked up.

The construction of these One Belt One Road development projects is done by Chinese construction companies, which signifies yet another reason in which China is a neo-colonial force in Zambia. The Chinese economy benefits significantly more than the Zambian economy, which promotes even more underdevelopment. Considerable "evidence suggests that a substantial part of concessional loans have been used by China as a tool to open the gates for Chinese construction" companies in Lusaka.<sup>187</sup> As previously stated in chapter one, the majority of One Belt One Road infrastructure projects are funded by the China Exim Bank. The bank requires that at least fifty percent of contractors for the funded project to be Chinese.<sup>188</sup> Whereas this could have a positive impact on Zambian companies by establishing a transfer in skills and technology, it is not

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<sup>183</sup> "These Are the Loans Acquired by PF Regime so Far." *Zambian Watchdog*, 27 Feb. 2018.

<sup>184</sup> "These Are the Loans Acquired by PF Regime so Far."

<sup>185</sup> "These Are the Loans Acquired by PF Regime so Far."

<sup>186</sup> "These Are the Loans Acquired by PF Regime so Far."

<sup>187</sup> Alves, 6.

because “Chinese [companies tend to claim] that they find it very difficult to identify appropriate African sources and partners for their needs and that project completion and quality could be compromised in such compliance.”<sup>189</sup> Chinese construction companies import their equipment and labor from China, allowing them to elude the responsibility of hiring Zambians and working with Zambian companies. Therefore, working-class Zambians are gaining very little from the actual building of the infrastructure; they are neither gaining capital which would stimulate the economy from within, nor receiving any sort of information, skills, or technology transfer in which they could replicate. Yet again, this fosters the development of underdevelopment in Zambia at the hands of China. China is not only setting debt-traps to ensure dependency in which it will benefit in the long-term based on interest payments but also building quick wealth by paying itself through contracting.<sup>190</sup>

Conclusively, these projects have visually changed Lusaka’s urban landscape, but the real concern is if they have fulfilled Zambia’s goals and intentions for the projects. With these projects, Zambian officials intended to boost development by increasing local services, quality of life within Lusaka, and global economic connectivity. In reviewing these intentions, it becomes unfortunately clear that One Belt One Road projects in Zambia have only improved services and quality of life for middle-class Zambians with the privilege to live within Lusaka’s formal housing sector, afford vehicles, air travel and up-to-date technology. These projects do little for ordinary, working-class Zambians that cannot afford these luxuries because they do not have access. As for increasing Zambia’s global economic connectivity, since 2016 Lusaka has been ranked a gamma city by the

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<sup>188</sup> Aniche, 11.

<sup>189</sup> Aniche, 18.

Globalization and World Cities Research Network after years of honorable mentions as sufficiency and high sufficiency.<sup>191</sup> However, it is not clear as to whether or not it was specifically Chinese investment that made this possible, or rather the increased FDI from all of Zambia's neo-colonial forces (being the West and IFIs). Nevertheless, in choosing to continue to borrow from China for these One Belt One Road projects, Zambia is choosing to pursue global economic connectivity and national development over the improved lives of ordinary Zambians. In focusing on large-scale development made possible by outside sources of investment, Zambian officials are relying on a trickle-down development structure, in which positive effects never actually trickle down to those at the very bottom.

China's presence in Lusaka has transformed its urban landscape not only through the construction of urban infrastructure but also through the construction of suburban communities in Lusaka's periphery where the informal settlements mentioned previously are located. Chinese immigrants tend to reside in Lusaka's middle- and upper-class neighborhoods around the city, as well as in gated communities in the city's suburbs, such as Lusaka's Millennium Village.<sup>192</sup> The Henan-Guoji Development Company, (the company that built Millennium Village) has also developed Silverest Gardens, another gated community only 10 kilometers from Lusaka's airport. For a grand US \$200,000 Silverest Gardens offers its residents its own shopping mall, gym, police station, landscaping services, home servicing, and waste collection services. The majority of those that bought homes in Silverest Gardens are international investors, sometimes

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<sup>190</sup> Were, 6.

<sup>191</sup> "The World According to GaWC." *Globalization and World Cities Research Network*, 2018.

<sup>192</sup> X. Chen and Myers, 91.

buying nearly a dozen at once.<sup>193</sup> Even if Zambian families were wealthy enough to purchase homes, they were frequently still excluded for their lack of buying power. In regard to the services provided within the gated community, life in Silverest Gardens appears to be completely self-sufficient. Those that live within the community are rarely ever required to leave, therefore fostering deeper isolation and separation between residents of Lusaka and Chinese expatriates.

Furthermore, despite claiming community ties in its brochure, Silverest Gardens will not provide housing for the presumably Zambian blue-collar workers that will be servicing the homes in the community. The lack of provided housing for these Zambian service workers will most likely lead to the formation of an informal settlement nearby because of the need for workers to be able to easily access their places of employment. However, this will further expose the clear economic inequality because Zambians and Chinese expatriates, which will most likely cause more tension between the two groups. The establishment of peri-urban gated communities such as Silverest Gardens does not only lead to the formation of informal settlements nearby but also has a tendency to displace established informal settlements. For instance, in June of 2013, the Kampasa settlement was forcibly removed, with violence, when the land it resided on was sold without notification to a Chinese development firm.<sup>194</sup> Moreover, the growing presence of gated communities as a result of Chinese investment in Lusaka is raising real estate prices well beyond the financial capabilities of the ordinary Zambian.<sup>195</sup> Through the destruction of Lusaka's informal communities at the hands of Chinese development and construction companies, it becomes clear that mass displacement is a new feature to

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<sup>193</sup> Myers, 1-2.

<sup>194</sup> X. Chen and Myers, 91.

modern neo-colonialism. Conclusively, Chinese investment in peri-urban gated communities for Chinese expatriates is further dividing Lusaka, which explains the violent outbursts across the city between Zambians and Chinese residents to be addressed in chapter three.

### **Recognizing Zambia's Agency and its Resulting Economic Isolation**

It has been established that China's expansive lending presence in Lusaka legitimizes China as a neo-colonial force in Zambia. The Zambian government's reluctance to do anything about China's neo-colonial presence is a reflection of China's strategic use of choosing to economically engage with politically weak countries, as well as the personal agency of Zambian ruling elites, and the Zambian government's national agency. Whereas usually African countries that rank highly in political stability attract high levels of FDI, China takes the opposite approach. Beijing seeks to give the majority of its FDI to politically weak countries that are underinvested in order to increase government enthusiasm to comply.<sup>196</sup> With that, the bargaining power of Beijing instantaneously increases due to its leveraging of the Zambian government's desire for FDI. In consideration of the foregoing, China's practice of seeking out politically weak countries like Zambia is predatory and suggests that China is not choosing its partners based on positive diplomatic relationships; instead, it is based upon the ability to take advantage of the local government due to having little bargaining power. Some of Zambia's political weakness can be attributed to corruption within the government, in which "corruption chips away at democracy to produce a vicious cycle, where corruption undermines democratic institutions and, in turn, weak institutions are less able to control

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<sup>195</sup> X. Chen and Myers, 91.

<sup>196</sup> He and Zhu, 117.

corruption.”<sup>197</sup> Contemporarily the matter of corruption within the Zambian government has emerged in the context of FDI because of the exposure of Zambian public officials and senior cabinet members urging for more FDI “as a resource for private accumulation at the expense of the public.”<sup>198</sup> Zambian ruling elites’ self-interest in FDI is not specific to Zambia, as post-colonial African states became one of the very few areas in which African elites can profit. Corrupt Zambian officials’ self-interest suggests their agency of personal profit makes them less critical of Chinese FDI. Despite a lack of definite figures on how much corrupt politicians are able to financially benefit from Chinese FDI, it does not change the fact that they are motivated by their own personal agency. These corrupt politicians continue to borrow from China, knowingly placing their own agency above what is best for the country. Because it is their own interest that assists in advancing Chinese FDI, these Zambian officials are not passive victims of China’s foreign policy. This goes to say that China’s interest in and engagement with Zambia is not a reflection of historically rooted positive diplomatic relations (as has been falsely advertised), but instead by China’s ability to build economic dependency and impose neo-colonial policies partially because of the financial greed of corrupt Zambian elites to independently profit from China’s investment.

Aside from the personal agency of Zambian governing elites, China’s neo-colonial presence is to a certain extent, the exertion of the Zambian government’s national power. Currently, Zambia finds itself in a no-win situation based on the excessive and seemingly uncontrollable debts the country owes to Western powers, global financial institutions and China (along with other BRICS countries that have

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<sup>197</sup> “How Corruption Weakens Democracy.” *Transparency*, Transparency International, 29 Jan. 2019.

provided FDI). Despite the mass construction of urban infrastructure, the country is still unable to achieve the development it so desperately desires and needs for economic independence because it is borrowing at greater rates than the economy is able to grow. Zambia's excessive national debt renders the country to inevitably be economically dependent, with the prospect of economic independence anytime soon being low. Having said that, from the Zambian perspective, there are enough external powers that are willing to give much more funding to Zambia than the country is able to repay, therefore by *choosing* who to economically engage with, the Zambian government is exerting its decision-making power. This is not to be confused with the idea that Zambia is choosing to be economically colonized, as that is not the case. Zambia's economic dependency has long been determined by exterior forces reaching as far back into its colonization. However, if a neo-colonial presence is inevitable because economic independence is not feasible, then choosing *which* neo-colonial force Zambia prefers becomes an empowering bargaining tool of the Zambian government. Whereas it is unfortunate that economic dependency is the reality of the Zambian economy, it is critical to comprehend that by presenting China as a monstrous neo-colonial force in Zambia, in which the Zambian government has limited control over, one is feeding into the oversimplified narrative that Zambia (and more generally speaking, Africa) is the timeless victim of globalization. In reality, the Zambian government is voluntarily seeking out more debt from China, despite redundant warnings that the country is on the brink of a debt crisis, to fulfill its political and economic objectives. Asserting that China is taking advantage of the alleged naïveté of Zambian officials neglects to take into account the Zambian government's agency.

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<sup>198</sup> Bornwell C. Chikulo. "Corruption and Accumulation in Zambia." *Corruption and Development in Africa: Lessons from Country Case-Studies*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. 162.

Under that oversimplified assumption, the Zambian government is unaware of the debt obligations it has agreed to undertake, which is not true. The argument that Zambia's neo-colonialism is contingent upon its own agency does not relieve China of responsibility for the predatory nature of its foreign economic policy in the way that it takes advantage of underdevelopment and falsely claims mutual benefit. However, it acknowledges that the neo-colonial relationship between China and Zambia requires voluntary commitment on both sides. Just as the Chinese government should be held liable to rein in its predatory neo-colonial foreign policy, the Zambian government should be held responsible for asserting its agency in a manner that continuously negatively affects ordinary Zambians for the sake of development, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Sino-African relationship, particularly when referencing foreign aid, cannot be discussed without mentioning the Western (European and American) influence and perspective. This is because China's first economic engagement in Africa stemmed from an African "aid war" between China, the United States Peace Corps, and the Soviet Union.<sup>199</sup> The competition between China and the West over Africa through debt financing continues contemporarily. China currently leads the way after having replaced "traditional Western lenders as the region's largest creditor, accounting for 14% of sub-Saharan Africa's total debt stock. This shift was informed by both a focus on infrastructure development by African governments and China's [over] willingness to lend on the continent."<sup>200</sup> As the Sino-African relationship becomes more deeply

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<sup>199</sup> Aniche, 12.

<sup>200</sup> Were, 3.



entrenched through debt financing and bilateral trade, Western, particularly United States-African, bilateral trade, and debt financing steeply declines.<sup>201</sup>

Furthermore, when conceptualizing Western and Chinese presence on the African continent as neo-colonial, the rivalry between China and the West increases. Despite the fact that “the West has never been a friend of Africa and has never been interested in its development but rather wanted to perpetuate dependency,” it is highly critical of the Sino-African relationship.<sup>202</sup> Western critiques of China in Africa tend to be Sino-phobic, relying on long-standing rhetoric that China is a predatory force that neither cares about the economic development of African state nor cares about the human rights of Africans. Nevertheless, these critiques of China in Africa are hypocritical because the Western presence in Africa has long been driven by its national economic interests, not by its supposed noble pursuit of improving human rights on the continent. It is not just Western nation-states that are critical of Sino-African relations. The IMF and World Bank hold similar hypocritical beliefs.<sup>203</sup> It is nonsensical for the IMF and World Bank to critique China in Africa for doing the same thing that they have done for decades in Africa, which is, “providing unsustainable loans to countries in need to further plunge them into debt, weaken state capacity and open up national economies to international investors.”<sup>204</sup> However, it is important to note that both institutions, despite being global entities, are Western-led. Seemingly Western powers have forgotten the detrimental influences they have had on the African continent, the most obvious being enslavement and colonization. It was the implementation of these catastrophic forces that originally fostered the

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<sup>201</sup> Were, 3.

<sup>202</sup> Nkonde.

<sup>203</sup> Aniche, 14.

<sup>204</sup> Vito Laterza and Patience Mususa. “Is China Really to Blame for Zambia's Debt Problems?” *Al Jazeera*, 11 Oct. 2018.

underdevelopment of Africa, which still haunts the continent today. The long-endured underdevelopment of Africa is what makes the continent vulnerable to Chinese economic influence in the first place. In reality, Western critiques of Sino-African relations are a reflection of China being a threat to the United States hegemony and the fear that China will enable African nations, such as Zambia, to free themselves from Western debt and political influence. Comprehensively, the West (both nation-states and institutions) is afraid of losing its grip on Zambia in what has been described as the new scramble for Africa. The Eastern and Western rivalry for Zambia's economic dependence further propels China's embeddedness in Zambia. China relies on increasing Chinese hegemony in Zambia to slowly but surely push other forces out of Zambia. China's presence in Zambia doesn't just isolate it from the West, but also the rest of Africa. Zambia's curated dependence on China through the One Belt One Road Initiative interrupts intra-African trade because Zambia trades more with China than its African counterparts. Whereas intra-regional trade percentages in the European Union, Asia, and North America are above thirty percent, intra-African trade remains a low ten percent.<sup>205</sup> China's presence in Africa, mainly possible through One Belt One Road, externally disrupts African economic and political integration by placing itself in the center of the African economy. It seems fair to say that China's presence in Zambia's urban centers does more undermining of the economy than it does to boost.

China's presence in Lusaka is indeed neo-colonial because of how it utilizes foreign policy to promote its economic agenda in the wake of Zambia's economic dependency by fostering debt-traps and underdevelopment. Economic dependency for Zambia anytime soon is a bleak prospect. With that being said, it is critical that the

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<sup>205</sup> Aniche, 24-25.

analysis of Zambia's neo-colonization takes into account that China's presence is the exertion of the Zambian government's power. Out of all of the external forces that are interested in taking advantage of its economic vulnerability, Zambia is choosing to cooperate with China because of mutual interests. This is important because it allows space to recognize Zambia's agency, instead of perpetuating African countries as permanent victims in the global order. In that regard, it is clear that China has a distinct strategy for Zambia, but Zambia lacks a finite strategy for China. I propose that it is only when Zambia defines a specific approach for its Chinese affairs that there will be a chance to level out the unequal nature of the Sino-Zambian relationship. Zambia's lack of strategy is what allows Western narratives of Zambia as a victim to drown out Zambia's agency. Especially when in reality these Western powers are spreading Sino phobic narratives, despite also using foreign policy to foster neo-colonialism in Zambia. Presently, aid operates as "merely a revolving credit, paid by the neo-colonial master, passing through the neo-colonial State and returning to the neo-colonial master in the form of increased profits."<sup>206</sup> At the forefront of the Zambian government's agenda should be two main objectives. The first being to find a way to achieve debt sustainability. It is predicted by the end of 2020 Zambia's sovereign debt will reach ninety-six percent of its GDP, despite defaulting on a multitude of loans in 2019.<sup>207</sup> There desperately needs to be a way to breakdown Zambia's debt to find a sustainable way to repay, however, this would require not taking out any more debt, which does not seem to be an alluring option to the government. Secondly, the Zambian government needs to find a way to effectively communicate how Chinese loan-funded urban infrastructural

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<sup>206</sup> Nkrumah, 11.

<sup>207</sup> Smith.

projects will benefit the ordinary Zambian because as of now, there is great fragmentation between the Zambian government and its people. A large part of making things right with the Zambian public would require altering the clauses in Sino-Zambian agreements to ensure that productivity for the Zambian economy is written into dealings. All in all, there is potential for an evening of the power dynamics of Sino-Zambian relations, particularly for the building of infrastructure in Lusaka. However, the Zambian government needs to be more proactive in making sure its own needs are being met.

## Investors or “Infesters”?: Social Fragmentation and the Rise of Anti-Chinese Sentiment in Lusaka

“We've had bad people here before. The whites were bad, the Indians worse, but the Chinese are worst of all.”<sup>208</sup>

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After independence in 1964, Zambia’s first President, Kenneth Kaunda, referred to Sino-Zambian relations as an “all-weather friendship”.<sup>209</sup> This enthusiastic sentiment has been repeated by proceeding presidents in efforts to defend deeper economic engagement with China. The positive political and civil portrayal of China became a point of friction in 2006 when the “national elections marked a clear point of departure and introduced a new element to the picture: political and popular opposition to China.”<sup>210</sup> Political representation came as a response to the widespread dissatisfaction of the Sino-Zambian relationship by Zambian residents. Despite cohesive macro-level engagement, on the micro-level, China’s presence in Zambia, particularly in urban centers like Lusaka, was and continues to be, a point of friction and discontent. It became clear that the Zambian public does not value China’s longstanding presence as highly as the previous governments. The reason is, whereas Zambia was able to capitalize on China’s engagement by strengthening its political status, very little has been done to improve the lives of ordinary Zambians. The failure of Chinese investment to benefit residents highlights an oversight on the research of the Sino-Zambian relationship. Whereas much research focuses on international economic implications, very little attention is given to the local implications and perceptions.

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<sup>208</sup> These are the words of Guy Scott, a Zambian politician belonging to the Patriotic Front. Scott was the Vice-President of Zambia from 2011 to 2014 and acting president of Zambia from October 2014 to January 2015 after the death of President Michael Sata. This quote comes from: Rohit Negi. “Beyond the ‘Chinese Scramble’: The Political Economy of Anti-Chinese Sentiment in Zambia.” *African Geographical Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2008. 44.

<sup>209</sup> Negi, 48.

In this regard, it has become clear that Lusaka's growing Chinese presence has begun to agitate locals resulting in xenophobia and national political tension.<sup>211</sup> Local tensions within Lusaka have become increasingly intense. Since 2006, the Zambian capital has become one of the most contentious points of Chinese opposition in Africa, with increasing instances of anti-Chinese looting, rioting, protesting.<sup>212</sup> This xenophobic violence targets the Chinese nationals that have immigrated to Zambia by the thousands in the wake of increasing Chinese investment. In support of my analysis, Zambians in Lusaka tend to perceive China as a dominant force which results in great friction between the Zambian and Chinese populations. This friction is further exacerbated by the media and the Patriotic Front, a political party that used anti-Chinese frustrations as a "central rallying" issue in the 2006, 2008, and 2011 presidential elections. The combination of agitation from the media and Patriotic Front results in anger being misdirected at Chinese nationals in Lusaka, instead of the origins of anti-Chinese frustrations, which are the Chinese and Zambian governments. Whereas Zambians are frustrated with China's perceived "take over" of their country, they are equally upset at Zambian officials for allowing China to do so.<sup>213</sup>

### **Zambian Perceptions of China as a Neo-colonial Force in Lusaka**

The Zambian government "finds itself as a crossroads in its development path. For years Zambians have grown more and more frustrated with how their government has conducted its relationship with Beijing, with many believing that [Zambian government has] allowed Chinese companies to flaunt national legislation to the detriment of the local

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<sup>210</sup> Negi, 48.

<sup>211</sup> Negi, 42.

<sup>212</sup> Negi, 43.

populations development.”<sup>214</sup> Chinese investment in Zambia facilitated increased copper prices and the revival of the mining industry, the backbone of the Zambian economy.<sup>215</sup> This shift to favorable economic conditions *should* translate into increased quality of life for Zambians, but it does not. Ordinary Zambian citizens do not receive quality redistributive effects. In 2019, Zambia ranked 143 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index, bringing into question whether or not China’s FDI has any positive impact on Zambian quality of life.<sup>216</sup>

Drawing on a three-month field study from December 2011 to February 2012 in Zambia, researchers asked the questions: “What positive impact does the presence of Chinese people in Zambia have on Zambia?” and “What negative impacts do Chinese people in Zambia have on Zambia?”<sup>217</sup> The results showed that although there is no definite benchmark to determine fixed levels of prejudice, there is a general anti-Chinese sentiment. Slightly over fifty percent of the participants expected to dislike Chinese migrants; “this implies that even though there is no real dislike for Chinese people among respondents, it cannot be argued that there is not a general fondness of them either.”<sup>218</sup> Zambians’ issues with Chinese people stems from an antipathy of the Chinese government’s power over the Zambian government, which results in negative implications of the lives of ordinary Zambians.

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<sup>213</sup> Agnes Ngoma Leslie. “Zambia and China: Workers’ Protest, Civil Society and the Role of Opposition Politics in Elevating State Engagement.” *African Studies Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 3-4, Dec. 2016. 96.

<sup>214</sup> Laura Spilsbury. “Can Michael Sata Tame the Dragon and Channel Chinese Investment Towards Development for Zambians?” *Journal of Politics & International Studies*, vol. 8, 2012. 249.

<sup>215</sup> Negi, 53.

<sup>216</sup> “Human Development Reports.” *2019 Human Development Index Ranking | Human Development Reports*, 2019.

<sup>217</sup> Gérard Van Bracht. “A Survey of Zambian Views on Chinese People and Their Involvement in Zambia.” *African East-Asian Affairs*, vol. 1, Aug. 2012. 58-60.

<sup>218</sup> Van Bracht, 72.

As previously mentioned, in support of my analysis, many Zambians in Lusaka tend to perceive China as a dominating and predatory force in Zambia, which manifests in animosity between Zambians and Chinese nationals. Although many Zambians do not have the scholarly vocabulary to directly label China as neo-colonial, they acknowledge China as employing cultural, political, and economic hegemony over Zambia, in which Zambia is being taken over by China. Essentially, many Zambians acknowledge China as fitting a neo-colonial definition, without actually explicitly calling China neo-colonial. With that being said, the sentiment of neo-colonialism is just as important as directly identifying China as neo-colonial.

One of the primary reasons ordinary Zambians feel that China is taking over Zambia is the increasing visual signs of China's presence and economic integration and dependency. For instance, as a result of an asset-backed loan, the Zambian government is very close to being forced to hand over ZESCO, the nation's electricity company, because of an inability to service the debt that paid for ZESCO's national infrastructure. Regardless of whether or not the Chinese government repossesses ZESCO, many Zambians in Lusaka suffer from 20-hour per day power cuts due to the inability to financially sustain the company.<sup>219</sup> Similar fears plague the future of Zambia's national airport, the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport in Lusaka, because of an inability to service the Chinese debt that paid for the airport.<sup>220</sup> China taking over Zambia's national assets would mean that ordinary Zambians would be putting their money into the pockets of the Chinese government - as is already the case with Zambia's broadcasting system,

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<sup>219</sup> Smith.

<sup>220</sup> Anoba.



ZNBC, which was repossessed by China because of an asset-backed loan.<sup>221</sup>

Additionally, as of mid-2018, Zambians were reliably informed that nearly half of all property taxes paid from selling a house goes to the Chinese government for national debt servicing.<sup>222</sup> The increasing visual of Zambians putting their money into the pockets of the Chinese government enforces Zambian beliefs that China is taking over the country's economy.

Furthermore, Zambians growing frustration with China's ever-increasing visual presence in Zambia is also fueled by an increase in Chinese people in traditionally exclusively Zambian spaces. In December of 2017, the Zambian police force employed eight Chinese nationals as police officers in Lusaka. This came as a great indignity to Zambians; there was so much protest in the following twenty-four hours that the Chinese officers were fired before their first day on duty.<sup>223</sup> Zambians in Lusaka were insulted by the appointed Chinese police officers because they felt China was taking over Zambian sovereignty. One Lusaka resident explained, "when we see a uniform of the police, it signifies our identity. It signifies our sovereignty. How would we be feeling to see a police officer and be saluting a Chinese [national] in our own country?"<sup>224</sup> The belief is that only Zambians should police Zambians, not outsiders. In fact, "not even Zambians with dual-nationality are allowed to join the police,"<sup>225</sup> because they are still an agent of an outside country. The visual that China is taking over Zambia can also be seen in the Chinese-built special economic zone in Lusaka in which banks use the Chinese renminbi

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<sup>221</sup> Anoba.

<sup>222</sup> "Chinese Police Unit in Zambia Was the Initial Signs of Chinese Government Taking Over Zambia." *Zambian Observer*, 16 Sept. 2018.

<sup>223</sup> "Zambia's New Chinese Police Officers Removed After Outcry."

<sup>224</sup> "Zambia's New Chinese Police Officers Removed After Outcry."

<sup>225</sup> "Zambia's New Chinese Police Officers Removed After Outcry."

instead of Zambia's national currency, the kwacha.<sup>226</sup> Similarly to the police uniform, the national currency is a representation of sovereignty. To Zambians, the visual of the Chinese renminbi at a bank in Zambia alludes to diminishing sovereignty and a clear reminder of Chinese hegemony in Lusaka. Another traditionally exclusively Zambian space in Lusaka that Zambians feel the increasing Chinese presence is the Soweto Market, the backbone of the informal economy in Lusaka. Chinese sellers import Chinese products that can be sold at lower prices than African products, therefore "local traders... find themselves undercut and displaced by Chinese imported products."<sup>227</sup> One Lusaka resident explained "that 'the recent arrival of Chinese traders in the grimy alleys of Soweto market in Lusaka [has] halved the cost of chicken. Cabbage prices dropped by 65%... 'How dare the Chinese disturb our market.'"<sup>228</sup> This results in "disputes and threat[s] that are often seen as a cause for prejudice and ethnic conflict."<sup>229</sup> Xenophobia becomes an outlet for expressing disgruntlement of China's perceived takeover of Lusaka.

The second reason ordinary Zambians feel that China is a neo-colonial force in Zambia is the abominable working conditions for Zambian miners, which has been compared to slavery. Previously a job in the copper mines ensured better living standards for Zambian families; workers used to be able to support their family in Lusaka and extended family in rural Zambia.<sup>230</sup> With the rise of Chinese-owned mines, this is no longer the case. Zambian miners work long hours in atrocious conditions without personal protection equipment, leaving them exposed to harsh gases and chemicals.

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<sup>226</sup> Howard W. French. "IN Africa, an Election Reveals Skepticism of Chinese Involvement." *The Atlantic*, 29 Sept. 2011.

<sup>227</sup> Spilsbury, 257.

<sup>228</sup> Van Bracht, 57.

<sup>229</sup> Van Bracht, 88.

Additionally, the majority of Zambian mine employees are not given permanent contracts, instead they work on rolling and fixed-term contracts, ultimately making employment volatile and inconsistent.<sup>231</sup> Lastly, violence against Zambians by Chinese employers and the lack of action taken by the Chinese government fuels Zambian anti-Chinese notions that the Chinese are a neo-colonial force in Zambia. Anti-Chinese tensions “are a reaction to [the] Chinese scramble for Africa’s resources and the exploitative work conditions instituted by its firms. A few have gone to call China a new colonial power in Africa.”<sup>232</sup> Aside from the notes of colonialism as expressed by Zambian miners, Zambian frustrations come from feeling as though China is changing aspects of Zambian life. Mining, which was once a reliable source of sufficient income has evolved into an unnecessarily dangerous and unstable job, leaving many Zambian families stranded with limited options.

As resentment of China’s predatory presence in Zambia becomes more outwardly expressed, Zambians that are not “directly affected by the Chinese, may become predisposed against Chinese people.”<sup>233</sup> Legitimate conflicts over the exploitative nature of the Sino-Zambian relationship mix with cultural differences to create negative “perceptions of Chinese people that have become embedded in the Zambian mind.”<sup>234</sup> Ultimately, the xenophobic anti-Chinese sentiment in Lusaka does not stem from racism, but governmental frustrations. Xenophobia is simply an easily accessible tool to take out Zambian frustrations with the Chinese government; Chinese nationals in Lusaka become scapegoats for the Chinese government.

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<sup>230</sup> Negi, 54.

<sup>231</sup> Spilsbury, 256.

<sup>232</sup> Negi, 42.

<sup>233</sup> Van Bracht, 88.

<sup>234</sup> Van Bracht, 88.

## **“Zambia for Zambians”: Local Politics and the Media’s Influence on Rising Anti-Chinese Sentiments in Lusaka**

As previously stated, Zambia was one of the earliest African countries in which Chinese presence became a robust political issue.<sup>235</sup> Michael Sata and his party, the Patriotic Front (PF) escalated in profile during Zambia’s 2006 presidential election. Sata had a long-standing political career in Zambia after starting as the District Governor of Lusaka from 1985 to 1988.<sup>236</sup> He developed a reputation as a combative problem-solver, unafraid of any opponent; and his 2006 campaign for presidency stayed true to his character. Sata’s campaign “reflected on popular urban frustrations in the run-up to the election. Such frustrations were dominated by a feeling of neglect, with many Zambians believing that they had obtained little benefits from the post-2000 commodities boom and blamed the Chinese for worsening labor conditions and political corruption.”<sup>237</sup> Ultimately, Sata exploited wide-spread Zambian dissatisfaction with China’s neo-colonial presence, while also inflaming them for his political power gain. He became the harshest critic of Chinese investment in Zambia, resulting in his party winning “every single urban parliamentary seat in the Copperbelt Province where the impacts of privatization were most intensely felt.”<sup>238</sup> Truth be told, Sata was against all FDI into Zambia; however the Chinese were the largest targets of his verbal attacks because their deep economic engagement and presence in Zambia cited them as *the* foreign investor of the country. The association with foreign investment and China has to do with Beijing investing “heavily in copper mining, which is central to the Zambian economy and

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<sup>235</sup> French.

<sup>236</sup> Miles Larmer and Alastair Fraser. “Of Cabbages and King Cobra: Populist Politics and Zambia's 2006 Election.” *African Affairs*, vol. 106, no. 425, 2007. 624.

<sup>237</sup> Spilsbury, 260.

<sup>238</sup> Negi, 53.

identity...[as well as] particularly terrible accidents and publicized instances of worker unrest...have taken place in Chinese-owned mines.”<sup>239</sup> In Sata’s 2006 campaign “he emphasized his opposition to China’s investments because of their negative labor rights record, poor conditions of service, lack of adherence to environmental standards, and the fact that Chinese investors engaged in petty trade which eliminated the market for Zambian small businessmen.”<sup>240</sup> However, he also relied on depicting racist stereotypes of Chinese migrants in Africa, playing on the fact that cultural differences and xenophobia were easy tools of Zambian citizens to take out their frustrations with the Chinese government. He publicly commented on “Chinese people’s dirty hygiene and eating habits to their alleged plans to conquer the world and even allegations of Satanism.”<sup>241</sup> The PF appropriated the Zambian employment concerns raised earlier to gain votes and further push an aggressive narrative that China was a neo-colonial force in Zambia that needed to be stopped as soon as possible. He referred to the Chinese in Zambia as “infesters” instead of investors and denounced them for infesting Zambia by “bringing in their people to push wheelbarrows instead of hiring local people.”<sup>242</sup><sup>243</sup> <sup>244</sup>  
<sup>245</sup> With that being said, promised the large-scale deportation of Chinese nationals residing in Zambia, vowing that “this country [Zambia] belongs to Zambians.”<sup>246</sup> <sup>247</sup>  
All in all, Sata ran on the platform that “Zambia [had] become a province of China” and

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<sup>239</sup> Negi, 54.

<sup>240</sup> Leslie, 96.

<sup>241</sup> Negi, 58.

<sup>242</sup> Alexis Okeowo. “China, Zambia, and a Clash in a Coal Mine.” *The New Yorker*, 9 Oct. 2013.

<sup>243</sup> French.

<sup>244</sup> Abu-Bakarr Jalloh and Fang Wan. “Resistance Growing to Chinese Presence in Zambia.” *DW News*, 4 Sept. 2019.

<sup>245</sup> Leslie, 89.

<sup>246</sup> Van Bracht, 55.

<sup>247</sup> Leslie, 97.

publicly pushed that the only way the problem could be solved was by voting him into office.<sup>248</sup>

Zambia's urban centers, including Lusaka, were moved by Sata's PF presidential campaign, as explained by their high Chinese presence. Despite this, Michael Sata lost the 2006 presidential election to Levy Mwanawasa of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD); Sata only received 29.37 percent of the national vote, which was counted as 804,748 total votes.<sup>249</sup> Nevertheless, the 2006 presidential election "marked a high watermark for the expression of democratic opinion in Zambia. A new electoral roll significantly increased the number of registered voters to 3,941,229. There was also a particularly high turnout of seventy-one percent."<sup>250</sup> Sata found one of the most contentious issues in Zambian politics, exploited urban Zambian frustrations of the neo-colonization of their cities, and "created an unprecedented situation in Zambia: the party that lost the electoral battle is winning the political war."<sup>251</sup> Combative rhetoric and violent protests of China as an unwanted neo-colonial presence in Zambia soared.

The 2006 presidential campaign was not the last of Michael Sata and the PF's anti-Chinese campaign platform. Two years later in 2008, Michael Sata campaigned for Zambian presidency after the death of President Mwanawasa. Sata ran on the same platform as his 2006 presidency, only in 2008 he took it even further. Sata vowed to recognize Taiwan if elected and even referring to the state as a sovereign state. Breaking its longstanding and deeply rooted policy of non-interference, the Chinese ambassador to Zambia, Li Baodong, responded saying, "We shall have nothing to do with Zambia if

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<sup>248</sup> French.

<sup>249</sup> Larmer Fraser, 621.

<sup>250</sup> Larmer and Fraser, 620.

<sup>251</sup> Larmer and Fraser, 612.

Sata wins the elections and goes ahead to recognize Taiwan,” a clear exertion of Chinese power over Zambia.<sup>252</sup>

Sata lost the 2008 election and ran again in 2011, again under the same anti-Chinese investment platform. By 2011 the anti-Chinese sentiment had soared throughout Zambia with increased Chinese investment and economic dependency, and Sata won the Zambian presidency. For the first time in decades, China was unsure of the future of the Sino-Zambian relationship.<sup>253</sup> It soon became clear, however, that China had nothing to worry about. After being sworn in, Sata became disloyal to his supporters, drastically going back on his pledge to rid Zambia of its Chinese neo-colonial power. Sata publicly declared, “don’t blame the Chinese, blame yourself because the Chinese are willing to work.”<sup>254</sup> With Sata as president, the Sino-Zambian relationship strengthened despite the public’s opposition, as people were negatively impacted by the increase in Chinese FDI and expatriate presence. In the end, despite strengthening the Sino-Zambian economic dependency relationship, Sata’s exploitation of urban Zambia’s frustrations with China profoundly deteriorated the relationship between Chinese investors and Zambian workers.<sup>255</sup> Overall, by accentuating the exploitative and neo-colonial nature of the Sino-Zambian relationship and exacerbating urban Zambian resentments towards China, Michael Sata was able to nationalize the issue of China’s presence in Zambia. Sata played on nationalism and elevated Zambian residents’ fear and uncertainty about their

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<sup>252</sup> Leslie, 97.

<sup>253</sup> Leslie, 97.

<sup>254</sup> Bryan Winter. “Anti-Chinese Protests Turn Social Movements?: Recent Developments in Asia and Africa.” *Afro Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1 Jan. 2015. 17.

<sup>255</sup> Leslie, 100.

future into a full-fledged anti-Chinese attitude, in which he was often criticized for inciting violent anti-Chinese protests.<sup>256</sup>

Sata's campaign planted the seeds of Zambian xenophobia against the Chinese, and the Zambian media has kept it alive. The position that China represents a neo-colonial presence in Zambia is shared and developed within the Zambian media. Taking into account that many news and media outlets are government-owned, to acquire the uncensored opinions of the neo-colonial nature of the Sino-Zambian relationship, this chapter analyzes opinion pieces by Zambian writers from multiple Zambian news agencies from between 2016 and 2020. Generally, op-eds in Zambian news sources directly address the country's debt distress and economic dependency on China. Zambian writers tend to address the lack of debt transparency as the failure of the Zambian government. One writer explains, "there is a severe lack of transparency over many key questions, including repayment, contracting obligations, project feasibility, value for money and loan security. This lack of transparency makes it impossible to have a clear account of the implications of this borrowing for the public finances".<sup>257</sup> Zambian Op-ed writers make up for the lack of the Chinese and Zambian transparency on the predatory debt-distress Zambia is under. One writer clearly explains, "the ambitious infrastructure program has contributed to the budget deficit, huge public debt, kwacha depreciation, high inflation, high-interest rates, economic corruption and the loss of investor confidence."<sup>258</sup> The author gives his reader significantly more transparent information than the Zambian government provides its people. Ultimately, by doing so such writers

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<sup>256</sup> "Zambia Blames Opposition for Anti-China Attacks." *The Jakarta Post*, 9 Nov. 2018.

<sup>257</sup> Sara Longwe. "Why Is the Zambian Government Selling Our Country to China?" *Lusaka Times*, 8 Sept. 2018.

<sup>258</sup> Kalima Nkonde. "PF Infrastructure Programme: The Poisoned Well of Zambian Economy." *Lusaka Times*, 25 Jan. 2016.



contextualize the experiences of their readers for them, giving formal explanations for the dire situations ordinary Zambians have recently found themselves in and did not know why because of opaque information from the government. Zambian op-ed writers are well aware of their responsibility to properly educate Zambians on the country's economic position. One writer in particular, acknowledges the widespread lack of accurate information, beginning their article by saying, "most Zambians do not understand the main reason why our economic situation has deteriorated astronomically in the last four years and are unable to put a finger on one major cause," and then goes on to contextualize Zambia's current neo-colonization.<sup>259</sup> The writers of these op-eds make a point to hold Zambia accountable for lack of transparency and deepening its economic dependence on China. Besides protests and op-eds, there are no other ways that Zambians speak out against the Zambian government for its culpability in worsening its economic situation. Whereas violence against Chinese nationals represents frustrations with the Chinese government, it would be nonsensical for Zambians to be violent against other Zambians to release frustrations against the Zambian government. This would foster even more urban fragmentation in a time when Zambians are working within a nationalist framework to expel an outsider (China) from its country.

Additionally, op-ed writers take an aggressive approach to framing China as a neo-colonial power in Zambia; they use contentious, bold, and politically charged vocabulary to uphold China as a neo-colonial power. One writer blatantly states that "the Zambian debt is like a cancer."<sup>260</sup> Another writer vigorously warns Zambians that "our future generations will be economic slaves of the Chinese. The Chinese debt is a full trap,

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<sup>259</sup> Nkonde. "PF Infrastructure Programme: The Poisoned Well of Zambian Economy."

<sup>260</sup> Longwe.

that's why it's easy to get. [President] Lungo and [his administration] should realize that power is limited but bad decisions can last forever and affect many."<sup>261</sup> Another approach that Zambian op-ed writers take to further push the notion of China as a neo-colonial power is to promote Chinese projects as anti-Zambian in the way that they assert power over the Zambian people in Lusaka. For instance, when the eight Chinese officers were appointed to the Lusaka police force, one writer wrote that "Chinese police...in Zambia was the initial signs of the Chinese government taking over Zambia."<sup>262</sup> Another writer addressed the increased surveillance presence as a result of Chinese road construction in their op-ed. They explain that when a Chinese construction company builds a road they always include surveillance cameras at intersections, of which the footage is kept and controlled by the Chinese government. The author uses the increased surveillance in Lusaka to frame Chinese road projects as anti-Zambian. The writer explains, "these spy cameras are visible all over Lusaka and billions [have] been spent on this anti-people project. Not only is this place barbaric, it's wasteful and more importantly, it gives the security of Zambia in the hands of China. These cameras are controlled by Chinese agencies."<sup>263</sup> Ultimately, this writer's approach frames road construction, a major driver in China's One Belt One Road initiative in Zambia, as a tool of neo-colonialism.

Comprehensively, these approaches by Zambian writers support their analysis of China as a neo-colonial force in Zambia through economic engagement and promote China as the enemy of Zambians. Some writers explain the fact that Zambian animosity should go towards the Chinese government. One in particular ends his argument by writing, "Please note that, we the people of Zambia [should] love the Chinese people. But

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<sup>261</sup> Longwe.

<sup>262</sup> "Chinese Police Unit in Zambia Was the Initial Signs of Chinese Government Taking Over Zambia."

we do not want to be ruled by the Chinese government.”<sup>264</sup> Unfortunately, more times than not this sentiment is lost in translation, and the anger Zambians have for the Chinese government is taken out on Chinese residents in Lusaka. With its aggressive rhetoric, the media exacerbates the frustrations of Zambian residents, which then become full-fledged anti-Chinese attitudes to perpetuate violence both online and in the streets. In one op-ed the writer addressed President Lungo’s comment on the Chinese being cockroaches therefore the Zambian people should give up on protesting their presence. In response, the author disagreed with Lungo and insisted the Zambian people fight on. The comments section of the said article was filled with an abundance of comments calling the Chinese cockroaches that need to be exterminated. One comment states, “In other words [President] Lungo is saying it’s okay for Zambians to live with cockroaches...but my late grandmother and father taught me to kill them, If I see one, I step on it, if see many I use insect killer, cockroaches are never partners in development.”<sup>265</sup> This commenter’s aggressive rhetoric is very dangerous. Rhetoric that associates a particular group to undesirable creatures and animals has historically been used to perpetuate violence against that group. Equating Chinese nationals to cockroaches is dehumanizing and suggests that there is violence is brewing with an outbreak on the horizon.

The consensus seems to be that looting and attacking Chinese nationals and their businesses “is a reflection of growing anti-China sentiment in Zambia, much of it fanned by a polarized media. Local tabloids carry headlines such as: "China has controlled our economic lifeline." Or "Chinese have deprived us of our jobs and livelihood." Or "They

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<sup>263</sup> “PF Regime Working with China to Spy on Citizens.” *Zambian Watchdog*, 16 Jan. 2020.

<sup>264</sup> “Chinese Police Unit in Zambia Was the Initial Signs of Chinese Government Taking Over Zambia.”

<sup>265</sup> “Fighting the Influx of Chinese Is Futile - President Lungu.” *Lusaka Times*, 13 Dec. 2018.

do not respect us. They only want to make money."<sup>266</sup> This statement is supported by the fact that Zambian media plays an important "role in distorting views of the Chinese, because...Zambian journalists 'emotionally attach themselves to the cause of the [Zambian] people'. For the respondents in [a] survey sample, newspapers and television ranked second (27.2%) as [Zambians] most important source of information on Chinese people and their activities in Zambia, behind personal experience or personal observation (46%)."<sup>267</sup> Through this media analysis it is clear that the anti-Chinese sentiment in Lusaka is aggravated by the Zambian media in op-eds, which results in prejudiced and xenophobic attacks. Fear-induced nationalism sparks these anti-Chinese attacks. Essentially, Zambians channel their frustrations with the Chinese government into violence against Chinese nationals in Lusaka.

In conclusion, local tensions in Lusaka and other urban Zambian centers have become increasingly intense as China's neo-colonial power over Zambia dramatically increases with Zambia's continuous borrowing and deepening debt distress. These neo-colonial frustrations have been exacerbated by the Zambian media (through opinion pieces) and political parties to a boiling point, in which a general anti-Chinese sentiment has emerged. This anti-Chinese sentiment has manifested into bursts of violence, civil unrest, and protest. It is important to consider xenophobic anti-Chinese attacks as grounded in decades of growing anger and resistance towards China's neo-colonial presence in Zambia, with Chinese nationals acting as scapegoats for Zambians. As Zambia continues to unsustainably borrow from China in the wake of widespread disapproval from its people, it is inevitable that there will be ever-increasing social

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<sup>266</sup> Jalloh and Wan.

<sup>267</sup> Van Bracht, 86.

fragmentation of Lusaka and other Zambian urban centers. Nevertheless, by exercising their right to protest Zambian residents are challenging the narrative that the urban poor is powerless. While there has never been an organized anti-Chinese movement in Zambia (with the exception of the rise of Michael Sata and the PF) increasing Zambian opposition to its government's choices begs the questions whether or not a massive anti-Chinese movement will take place across the country, or if the Zambian government will eventually listen to its people. In previous instances of national protest, the government has renegotiated public policy and tax policy; perhaps under the right amount of pressure, it will renegotiate relations with China.<sup>268</sup> Nonetheless, it will be much more difficult for Zambian officials to restructure China's neo-colonial FDI because of Zambia's economic dependence. No matter how anti-Chinese investment Zambian officials are, the Sino-Zambian relationship will put up a fight because of how deeply intertwined Zambia's economy is with China's. For instance, Michael Sata extensively used anti-Chinese rhetoric when campaigning for the presidency. However, once in office he adhered to policy that was subservient to China. This implies that breaking away from economic integration with China is much more of a challenge than anticipated, reinforcing that China is a neo-colonial force in Zambia. This is not to say that Zambia must disengage with Chinese FDI; Chinese FDI simply needs to be restructured and funneled into poverty mitigation and social services. If not, ordinary Zambians will never see the benefits of the Sino-Zambian relationship.

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<sup>268</sup> Spilsbury, 256.

## Conclusion

China's long-standing relationship with Zambia laid the groundwork for its neo-colonization of the country. Zambia's economic vulnerability to predatory Chinese lending practices began when China first established itself as a Global South ally during Zambia's decolonization process in the 1960s and 1970s through the financing of the Tanzanian-Zambian heavy rail. The Sino-Zambian relationship was strengthened even more in the 1980s and 1990s when Zambia became even more economically vulnerable as a result of the damaging SAPs enforced in Zambia by IFIs. Zambia's economic dependency on China intensified in the 2000s when China began strategically employing the neo-colonial process of Flexigemony to solidify its place as Zambia's most prominent and leading economic partner. China used Zambia's desire for development through infrastructure as a bargaining chip to fulfill its economic agenda.

Since One Belt One Road was established by President Xi Jinping in 2013, it has become the brand for China's foreign policy. One Belt One Road has also become the primary tool of neo-colonization in Zambia by disguising debt-traps as friendship and mutual benefit in order to build economic dependency while building infrastructure in Lusaka. Currently, China is the primary neo-colonial presence in Zambia, closely followed by Western countries and institutions. Prospects of Zambia achieving economic independence anytime soon are grim. Zambia's decision to prioritize and prefer Chinese lending must be recognized as the enforcement of the country's national sovereignty and the Zambian government's decision-making power. It is imperative to understand this exertion of power as Zambia's responsibility for its continuous declining economic status. Holding the Zambian government partially responsible for currently aiding in the

process of China's tightening grip on the country's economy by no means blames the Zambian government for its neo-colonization. Holding the Zambian government responsible establishes the government as capable of helping its economy by stopping senseless borrowing for white elephant infrastructure projects that do not benefit local people and only work to increase Zambia's debt.<sup>269</sup> In light of this, it is important to recognize that working with China is the Zambian government's best effort at making the best of its no-win economic status.

In this thesis, I've used the concept of neo-colonialism, an unequal economic relationship, in framing the cohesive macro-level engagement between China and Zambia. On the micro-level, the Sino-Zambian relationship cultivates urban fragmentation in Lusaka due to the lack of improvement to living standards, perceptions of Chinese hegemony, the displacement of peri-urban informal communities at the hands of Chinese developers building gated communities for Chinese expatriates, resulting in a growing anti-Chinese sentiment that blurs the line between patriotism and xenophobia. The growing anti-Chinese sentiment in Lusaka is not rooted in racism, but geopolitics. As Lusaka residents grow more frustrated with the impacts of the Sino-Zambian relationship, they use xenophobia as a tool to scapegoat and villainize Chinese nationals living in Zambia. Zambian politicians like Michael Sata in 2006, 2008, and 2011, heightened these complex feelings held by Lusaka residents in order to gain political control. At the same time, Zambian media, in the form of op-eds and letters to the editors of news outlets, also exacerbated and aggravated anti-Chinese sentiments, resulting in violence (i.e. riots, protests, and beatings) targeting Chinese expatriates in Lusaka.

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<sup>269</sup> A white elephant project is an infrastructure project in which the cost of financing and upkeep is more than its usefulness or value. Essentially, the maintenance of the project is more expensive than its profits.

Not embracing China as a neo-colonial force in Zambia by arguing that the Chinese government is simply an exceptionally strong economic partner to Zambia neglects to take into account Zambia's postcolonial economic history which explains its vulnerability and the fundamental imbalance of power that characterizes Sino-Zambian relations. It is most important to acknowledge that Zambia has never necessarily been economically independent despite gaining national independence from Britain in 1964. Even when Zambia was sovereign and considered a middle-income country in the 1970s, it still relied on trade with Britain in surrounding colonies. In striving for economic independence Zambia would be fighting against neo-colonization, as the two are the same. Despite the fact that China was not the original country that colonized Zambia, resulting in its economic dependence, it is important that China's role in cultivating and exacerbating economic dependence in Zambia today should not go with impunity. Furthermore, recognizing China as a contemporary neo-colonial force in Zambia, but not holding Zambia accountable for its agency in fashioning this relationship gives credence to the notion of Zambia as a victim. As previously discussed, the perspective of Zambia as solely a patsy feeds into the narrative of Africa as the sitting duck of globalization in which endless things "happen" to African countries, instead of taking into account the internal power of African governments to act and make their own decisions.

As already indicated, complete economic independence for Zambia in the near future is impractical because damage to the country's economy (its extreme debt and heavy reliance on FDI) runs much too deep to repair and bounce back from in the next decade. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the Zambian government work towards economic independence as efficiently as possible. Seeing that FDI is essential for the



Zambian government in terms of carrying out its own national objectives, it would be impractical and irresponsible to call for the immediate ending of Chinese FDI in Zambia. A break in Chinese FDI would push the Zambian government into more economic trouble because it would most likely seek to increase investment from its other neo-colonial powers. Alternatively, Chinese FDI needs to be used more wisely to foster development and enable economic independence for African countries. Chinese FDI can facilitate development (and thus economic independence) by channeling a percentage of it to entrepreneurial initiatives that work to transition informal work to the formal sector. As of 2018, Lusaka had the highest percentage of residents working in the informal sector in all of Zambia, at nearly thirty percent.<sup>270</sup> Whereas generally employment in the informal sector is perceived as better than no employment at all, there is no reason that it should not be officially recognized as profitable to the national economy.<sup>271</sup> Chinese FDI could be channeled into entrepreneurial programs that work to help local Lusaka residents establish their businesses as a part of the formal economy, benefiting locals through poverty alleviation, and the government through taxes.

Moreover, the Zambian government can alter the nature of Chinese FDI by utilizing its (limited) bargaining power to place regulations on importing unskilled Chinese workers and by mandating improved working conditions for Zambian workers. Whereas the Zambian government vows development through infrastructure oriented FDI, it has failed to “combine growth-promoting policies with policies that allow the [urban] poor to participate fully in the opportunities unleashed and so contribute to that growth. This includes policies to make labor markets work better... and increase

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<sup>270</sup> Erin Duffin. “Share of Employed Population in Informal Economy in Zambia in 2018, by Province.” *Statista*, 10 Jan. 2020.

financial inclusion.”<sup>272</sup> As addressed in chapter 3, the anti-Chinese sentiment found throughout Lusaka stemmed from feelings of exclusion and abandonment of the Zambian government in terms of reaping the on-the-ground benefits of China’s One Belt One Road initiative in their own city. By improving employment opportunities, locals will finally see improvements in their own lives, slowly chipping away at Lusaka’s inequality gap (one of the highest in the world).<sup>273</sup>

By all means, channeling a portion of Chinese FDI into entrepreneurial initiatives and other poverty alleviation programs, while simultaneously improving employment opportunities for local Zambian workers in infrastructure development in Lusaka will not guarantee immediate economic success. But, it will foster sustained growth over a longer period of time which will eventually help guide Zambia to decreased fiscal susceptibility and facilitate eventual economic independence. Only once Zambia is economically independent can the Sino-Zambian relationship be considered equal.

In recent events, the unforeseen Coronavirus, known as COVID-19, has swept across the globe, infecting over two million people. The global pandemic originated in Wuhan, China, and has undoubtedly threatened China’s ambitions One Belt One Road initiative.<sup>274</sup> We are too early on into the global pandemic to see the extent to which China’s One Belt One Road partners will be affected both health-wise and economically. Many of China’s One Belt One Road partners are reporting low rates of COVID-19, but health advisors hypothesize that’s a result of lack of testing.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> “Growth: Building Jobs and Prosperity in Developing Countries.” Department for International Development, 2019. 7.

<sup>272</sup> “Growth: Building Jobs and Prosperity in Developing Countries.” 2.

<sup>273</sup> The World Bank in Zambia.” *The World Bank*, 13 Oct. 2019.

<sup>274</sup> Ashutosh Pandey. “Coronavirus Could Force China to Rein in Belt and Road Ambitions.” *Dw*, 17 Apr. 2020.

<sup>275</sup> Kirk Lancaster, et al. “What the COVID-19 Pandemic May Mean for China’s Belt and Road Initiative.” *Council on Foreign Relations*, 27 Mar. 2020.

China's response to COVID-19 took expansive measures to isolate the virus and essentially shut down cities across the country, but no measures were taken to cease construction on One Belt One Road projects.<sup>276</sup> Nevertheless, there was no need to. Globally, One Belt One Road projects have come to a standstill due to the suspended "flow of Chinese labor...with thousands of Chinese workers unable to return to their country of work" and disrupted Chinese manufacturing supply chains that One Belt One Road projects rely on for materials and supplies.<sup>277</sup> COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerability of One Belt One Road as misrepresented and reliant on Chinese goods and services. Instead of operating like a network (as it is promoted by the Chinese), the initiative operates on bi-lateral trade with its supposed partners.<sup>278</sup> If One Belt One Road projects were locally sourced, construction could have continued, and economic impact would have been limited. As for future One Belt One Road projects, Chinese policy banks will be less inclined to prioritize FDI over domestic economic reconstruction.<sup>279</sup>

Quite early on into the start of the global pandemic, the Chinese government recognized the global economic disadvantage that would come with being the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak. In order to remove itself from the hot seat, the Chinese government has begun to present itself as a reliable ally to infected countries. Officials work to make sure that "Beijing is remembered not primarily for initial cover-up and harsh containment tactics, but as a source of eventual pandemic support."<sup>280</sup> Whereas the Chinese government has begun shipping medical supplies to desperate One Belt One Road countries, Chinese policy banks have promised to financially support companies in

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<sup>276</sup> Lancaster, et al.

<sup>277</sup> Lancaster, et al.

<sup>278</sup> Andreea Brînză. "Some Say China's Belt and Road Helped Create This Pandemic. Can It Prevent the Next One?" *The Diplomat*, 2 Apr. 2020.

<sup>279</sup> Pandey.

One Belt One Road countries (while maintaining true to their opaque nature by not clarifying whether aid would only be given to Chinese companies.)<sup>281</sup> As can be seen in China's COVID-19 response and the contemporary and historic Sino-African relationship, China has found strategic value in positioning itself as a global friend, while other economic powers position themselves as global enforcers.

In positioning itself as a friend, the Chinese government intends to (yet again) set itself apart as a global leader in the wake of COVID-19.<sup>282</sup> Similarly to the way in which the Chinese government used a global infrastructure gap to create a foreign policy (One Belt One Road) and propel China to the center of a global network, it is clear they intend to do with same with the health crisis and the global lack of communication. China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, recently revealed that the government was looking into constructing "an international community with a shared future" that will tackle the current outbreak and future pandemics by implementing an avenue for spreading information, best practices, technology, and know-how."<sup>283</sup> Predictions project that if this new global health initiative comes to fruition, it could eclipse the World Health Organization inefficiency, essentially placing China at the center of the global health conversation.<sup>284</sup>

Despite positioning itself as a global pandemic ally, the Chinese government's domestic response to COVID-19 places an incredible strain on the Sino-African relationship by prioritizing radical race-based containment measures over the rights and well-being of African nationals in China. After five Nigerians tested positive for COVID-19 in early April, the Chinese government blamed Africans in China for the spread of the

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<sup>280</sup> Lancaster, et al.

<sup>281</sup> Lancaster, et al.

<sup>282</sup> Vivian Wang and Amy Qin. "Coronavirus Fades in China, Nationalism and Xenophobia Flare." *The New York Times*, 16 Apr. 2020.

<sup>283</sup> Brînză.

disease.<sup>285</sup> In response, Chinese officials have imposed a very strict surveillance and testing program, followed by a fourteen-day mandatory quarantine of all African nationals in China, regardless of testing positive for the disease or travel history.<sup>286</sup> This restrictive policy has sprouted xenophobic roots and developed into the out-right mistreatment of African nationals.

The ill-treatment of African nationals in response to COVID-19 is most obvious in Guangzhou, one of China's largest destinations for African traders and businessmen, and the largest population of African nationals in China.<sup>287</sup> In Guangzhou, African nationals are singled out for their race, evicted from their apartments in the middle of the night, forced into quarantine, and in some cases even refused entry to apartment buildings and local businesses because of bans on black people.<sup>288</sup> Clearly, containment efforts of the disease have taken a dark turn in a racist manner, which has “snowballed into an embarrassing and awkward diplomatic race scandal for Beijing.”<sup>289</sup> Social media brought international attention to the mistreatment of African nationals in China after photos and videos of African families being violently evicted, forced to sleep outside and under bridges during the global pandemic, and being denied entry to apartment buildings and service in businesses surfaced online.<sup>290</sup>

African officials that “normally do not rock the boat about matters related to China - especially at a time when African countries are looking to China for debt relief as COVID-19 debilitates economies around the world” have expressed that the treatment of

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<sup>284</sup> Brînză.

<sup>285</sup> Youyou Zhou. “A Chinese YouTuber Shows How China's Political System Ends up with Africans Being Mistreated.” *Quartz Africa*, 25 Apr. 2020.

<sup>286</sup> Zhou.

<sup>287</sup> Betsy Joles. “Complains of Racism Mar China's Coronavirus Response.” *Al Jazeera*, 25 Apr. 2020.

<sup>288</sup> Joles.

<sup>289</sup> Zhou.

<sup>290</sup> Zhou.

African nationals by the Chinese government is a betrayal of South-South solidarity.<sup>291</sup> They have reached out to Chinese officials both informally (through social media) and formally, to protest as an expression of their anger and concern.<sup>292</sup> Chinese officials have defended their merciless policy against African nationals and their refusal to hold Chinese landlords and business owners accountable for Anti-African sentiments by insisting it is a misunderstanding. Zhao Lijian, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, has asserted that all foreigners are being treated equally in China's domestic response to COVID-19.<sup>293</sup> What Lijian does not take into consideration is that "not all foreigners come from an equal footing."<sup>294</sup> African nationals in China are more vulnerable to China's mandatory quarantine policy because they often come from lesser developed countries with lower socioeconomic status. The mandatory quarantine policy charges an average of US \$40 to \$50 per day, billed directly to the patient. Given how the disease has essentially placed the formal and informal economy at a stand-still, some African nationals are having immense difficulty paying their quarantine bill.<sup>295</sup> Chinese officials claim to have a strategy to reduce financially burdensome medical costs, but yet again, true to its opaque nature, has not clarified how this relief program will be put into practice.<sup>296</sup>

The public political conflict between African and Chinese officials is unprecedented in the Sino-African relationship. Never before have "the two sides had such a critical, high-profile, and widespread clash of positions, let alone allowed it to

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<sup>291</sup> Joles.

<sup>292</sup> "An Unprecedented Rupture in China-Africa Relations." *The China Africa Project*, 13 Apr. 2020.

<sup>293</sup> Zhou.

<sup>294</sup> Yun Sun. "COVID-19, Africans' Hardships in China, and the Future of Africa-China Relations." *Brookings*, 17 Apr. 2020.

<sup>295</sup> Sun. "COVID-19, Africans' Hardships in China, and the Future of Africa-China Relations."

<sup>296</sup> Sun. "COVID-19, Africans' Hardships in China, and the Future of Africa-China Relations."

erupt in front of the public.”<sup>297</sup> This public clash raises the concern that even if the Sino-African relationship is politically mended, social fragmentation between the two societies will be irreparable after the damage caused by Chinese society’s domestic treatment of African nationals following COVID-19. Much like the uncertain future of Sino-African relations, it is unclear whether or not African nationals will be socially accepted back into their Chinese communities, as well as what kind of long term negative social consequences they will face for being associated with the disease.

Returning to Zambia, as of April 27, 2020, there are eighty-eight recorded cases of COVID-19 and three deaths; Zambia is currently ranked thirty-second in Africa in numbers of cases.<sup>298</sup> It’s been reported that the government has not yet put a stimulus package in place, but it would be in their best interest to do so as quickly as possible.<sup>299</sup> The Zambian government should take advantage of China’s dial back in One Belt One Road projects in the wake of COVID-19 to gain the trust and support of Zambians. Seizing China’s economic pullback as an opportunity would allow for the Zambian government to distance itself from China. If the COVID-19 crisis has cracked the window for Zambia to distance itself from China, it is up to the ambition and will of the Zambian government to blow it wide-open and take measures to finally gain economic independence.

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<sup>297</sup> Sun. “COVID-19, Africans' Hardships in China, and the Future of Africa-China Relations.”

<sup>298</sup> “Coronavirus Map: Tracking the Global Outbreak.” *The New York Times*, 27 Apr. 2020.

<sup>299</sup> Miko Zulu. “Zambian Government Officials Don't Care About Life.” *Zambian Watchdog*, 29 Mar. 2020.

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