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## China's Policies Towards The Post-Arab Spring Africa

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### **Abstract**

This research article is an attempt to investigate China's policies in Africa in the post-Arab Spring while focusing on the case study of Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. China's approach, reflected in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), emphasis on expanding its influence via substantial economic investments and diplomatic outreach. Throughout this power struggle, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Egypt act as central figures due to their considerable energy reserves, and significant populations making them indispensable to the strategic interests among the great powers. This article deals with China's engagement with Africa historically, and the response to the Arab Spring and its implications for Africa. It also analyses China's economic and resources diplomacy as well as soft power and cultural diplomacy in Africa. While China has concentrated on trade, resources extraction and infrastructure development, particularly in Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, its growing influence has raised concerns over debt sustainability and governance. It also discusses challenges and opportunities and has far-reaching implications for Africa's governance structures, economic trajectory, and national sovereignty, while also recalibrating the broader contours of global power dynamics and international relations. For data collection, the study predominantly involve a qualitative content analysis methodology, as well as for data analysis, this study employs a thematic analysis approach, guided by Dependency theory articulated by Raul Prebisch. The article argues that China's strategy is characterized by economic partnerships, resource extraction agreements and extensive infrastructure investments oriented towards accessing to raw materials and expanding its global and regional influence. The article finds that Chinese investments and FDI is instrumental in shaping the geo-political and socio-economic landscapes of Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia and prioritize obtaining access to resources and to strengthen bilateral economic dependencies.

**Keywords:** China's Policies, Africa, Arab Spring, Dependency Theory

### **Introduction**

In Africa, in the contemporary period, China's influence has grown significantly, with massive socio-economic, political, military and geo-strategic engagements. China's increasing engagement is motivated by strategic goals such as securing natural resources, strengthening geopolitical power, and advancing economic partnerships across the continent (Cheru & Obi, 2010, pp. 1-25). China's BRI aims to strengthen interconnectivity and economic cooperation with African countries. China has established itself as an important development partner for several African countries by making significant investments in infrastructure,



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mining, and manufacturing. This influence reaches beyond commercial activity into diplomatic endeavors and cultural interactions, increasing China's prominence in the region (Alden & Large, 2019, pp. 1-23).

The Arab Spring began in late 2010 and early 2011, marked by widespread and mostly peaceful demonstrations across several Arab states against entrenched regimes (Bizuru, 2021, pp. 13-20; Chaziza, 2013, pp. 1-11). Thus, there are several reasons why China's post-Arab Spring strategy in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Egypt needs to be addressed. Throughout Africa, due to their strategic landscape, large populations, potential for economic expansion these countries wield significant power. Egypt is an important North African country that controls the Suez Canal, a crucial international commercial route, and plays a dominant roles in regional dynamics. Nigeria is a major oil exporter and a prominent player in West African geopolitics. It boasts Africa's greatest population and economy. The African Union's headquarters are in Ethiopia, a rapidly rising country in the Horn of Africa that also serves as a gateway to East Africa (Christopher Alden, 2008, pp. 45-48). To understand China's relationships with these countries sheds light on the various implications of its policies and provides insights into larger continental dynamics. These countries saw substantial socio-political shifts during the Arab Spring, which make them valuable case studies for assessing the impact of external pressures on their development pathways.

This article adopts the theoretical framework i.e. Dependency theory articulated by Raul Prebisch in order to analyze China's policy in the selected countries like Egypt, Nigeria and Ethiopia. In this theory, a prominent concept in the social sciences, emerged in the late 1950s and was led by figures like Raul Prebisch and Hans Singer, along with notable Marxist scholars including Andre Gunder Frank, Paul A. Baran, and Paul Sweezy, as well as world systems theorists like Immanuel Wallerstein. It gained significant traction in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s as a response to Western-originated modernization theory and free trade policies. According to dependency theory, developing countries' economic circumstances are greatly impacted by their reliance on more developed countries, which leads to an uneven distribution of gains and the continuation of patterns of inequality and underdevelopment (Prebisch, 1950, pp. 1-9). The theory shed light on the global economic disparities between advanced 'core' nations and less developed 'peripheral' nations (Romaniuk, 2017; Prebisch, 1950) as well as its central premise revolves around the entrenched structural dependency of peripheral countries on their core counterparts, perpetuating a cyclic pattern of economic inequalities and political subjugation (Vernengo, 2016).

Therefore, the present article is an attempts to critically examine whether China's involvement in these countries exacerbates these dynamics or promotes real mutual growth by adopting this theoretical framework. Besides, this article also examines China's involvement in these three countries to see whether it is a legitimate relationship that encourages mutual growth or a form of neocolonialism. It focus on the areas in which China intends to participate in Africa, the consequences of FDI on traditional social and political systems, and how China's investments and diplomatic efforts affect local economies, governance frameworks, and social fabrics. It also consider the broader geopolitical implications of China's expanding influence in post-Arab Spring Africa. Using this theoretical perspective, the article seeks to improve a grasp on



the power dynamics at work and to highlights the complexities of Sino-African relations.

### **China's Engagement with Africa: A Historical Analysis**

From a historical perspectives, China has been involved in Africa for centuries, starting with early trade relations. For example, during the Ming Dynasty, Chinese explorer Zheng He (1371-1433) made multiple trips to Africa's eastern coast in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, building early diplomatic and trade relations. Such engagement laid the groundwork for subsequent interactions defined by shared interests (Eisenman, 2012, pp. 20-29). In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, formal diplomatic contacts were established, with China assisting numerous African countries in their fights against colonial dominance. The first major Asian-African conference, held at Bandung in 1955, was a watershed moment in Sino-African relations, highlighting the common anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ideas held by China and the fledgling African republics (Ogunsanwo, 1974, pp. 15-23).

Similarly, China's economic involvement in Africa has grown since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, mostly due to its need for natural resources to support its rapid economic growth. Importantly, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was established in 2000, to strengthen economic links and trade, and development aid between African states and China (Chun, 2013, pp. 1-15; Gavin, 2021, pp. 2-9; Naidu, 2007, pp. 283-294). China has emerged as one of Africa's main trading partners due to a huge growth in trade volumes. China has made investments in the mining, manufacturing, infrastructure development, and oil extraction sectors often in the form of grants and concessional loans. China has also contributed to the development of Africa's emerging countries by constructing hospitals, schools, and other essential infrastructure that boosts economic expansion and lowers poverty (Brautigam, 2011, pp. 61-67). The long-term effects of these investments on Africa's economic independence and sustainability of development, however, have generated discussion.

From a political perspectives, China has maintained strong diplomatic ties with African countries, seeing their independent and territorial integrity (Konings, 2007, pp. 341-367; Lum, 2008, pp. 113-123). This support hails from the 1960s and 1970s, when China vigorously backed anti-colonial movements and liberation efforts in countries such as Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (Schmidt, 2013, pp. 1-33). China's strong position against colonialism and imperialism resonated with countless African leaders, promoting a sense of solidarity and collaboration. (Muekalia, 2004, pp. 5-11). China's political ties with Africa have been marked in recent years by high-level visits, bilateral agreements, and membership in multilateral organizations such as the African Union. African leaders have found China's non-interference policy particularly intriguing since it offers an alternative to Western methods to engagement, which frequently include rigid political and economic constraints. This program has increased China's political influence in Africa, allowing it to form and retain critical relationships throughout the continent (Alden & Large, 2019, pp. 56-67; Lum, 2008, pp. 114-123).

Hence, it is vital to assess China's policies in Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, along with Africa as a whole, in order to follow the dependency theory and China's engagement in these countries comprehensively.



## **a) China's Policies in Egypt**

Since 1956, Egypt became the first African and Arab country to formally establish diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China. Both countries have a deep diplomatic history and their connection has evolved over time in response to local and global political developments. During the Cold War, both countries strengthened their cooperation by promoting anti-imperialist causes and a new world order based on non-alignment and mutual respect (Shinn, 2012, pp. 41-55). This historical basis established the framework for strong political and economic collaboration in the current age. China has had a considerable economic impact in Egypt, as seen by its large investments and infrastructural projects. By the way of illustration, one of the best examples of China's influence on Egypt's development is the building of the country's new administrative capital outside of Cairo. Chinese companies, such as the China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC), are leading a number of projects. One of these is the construction of the new capital's core business area, which will include government buildings and skyscrapers. These programmes complement China's BRI, which aims to increase trade and connectivity throughout Africa and around the globe (Sun, 2014).

In particular, after the Arab Spring, China's growing economic connections with Egypt are politically significant. Beijing's ideals of non-interference and respect for Egypt's sovereignty are consistent with the Egyptian government's objectives and offer an alternative to Western techniques that restrict freedoms. Also, China has made major financial investments in Egypt's economy to support industrial and infrastructure projects (Large, 2008, pp. 45-61). However, because of Chinese loan, concerns about potential debt dependency have arisen. To give example, China's strategy in Egypt, which prioritizes economic cooperation above political conditions, contrasts with Western countries' engagement, backs rule-of-law and right reforms. Egypt appreciates China's pragmatic support in maintaining political stability and control. In contrast to China's commercial-driven approach, regional players like Saudi Arabia and the UAE connect their investments with political and geopolitical interests (Schuyt, 2017, pp. 1-22).

In Egypt, since the Arab Spring, China's influence has grown significantly in the context of socio-cultural, diplomatic, and economic spheres. It has invested heavily in important projects i.e. the Suez Canal Economic Zone, which is expected to become a major hub for global logistics. So, both states have committed to enhancing their bilateral relations through a number of high-level diplomatic encounters. In various other fields, China actively promotes its language and culture via programmes like cultural exchanges and Confucius Institutes. These initiatives have improved bilateral relations while strengthening China's soft power in Egypt, enabling stronger cooperation (Shambaugh, 2015, pp. 99-107).

## **b) China's Policies in Nigeria**

Since 1971, when ties were formed, both China and Nigeria have had a complex connection that includes political, cultural, and economic dynamics (Ogunkola, 2008, pp. 1-17). For example, China's rising resource demand has resulted in significant investments in Nigeria's oil industry by companies like the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) and the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), as well as infrastructure projects led by the China Civil



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Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). All these cooperation, which began as Cold War support, has developed to meet current demands. Important initiatives include power plants and railroads, which help Nigeria's economy flourish. The complexities of this bilateral engagement are underscored by the fact that these efforts raise concerns about the debt's sustainability and its impacts on environment (Ogunkola, 2008, pp. 5-15).

Additionally, it also considered that China's investments in Nigeria have enhanced connectivity, boosted the construction industry, and empowerment opportunities via infrastructure development and technology development. Despite this, concerns about the quality of the jobs produced, the loss of localised industries, and the feasibility of the debt incurred for these projects remain barriers (Brautigam, 2011, pp. 140-152). Notwithstanding, such Chinese investment raises the risk of debt dependency and possible ecological harm on Nigeria. Besides, instability could disrupt current projects and investments, highlighting in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the complex dynamics of China-Nigeria cooperation (Taylor, 2010, pp. 50-65).

Thus, China's influence on Nigeria's prosperity has had both positive and negative consequences. Chinese investments have improved infrastructure and fueled economic growth through programmes such as the Lekki Free Trade Zone and industrial parks, which aim to enhance exports and manufacturing. However, the long-term ramifications for economic diversification and poverty alleviation remain unclear. Although there have been considerable infrastructure improvements, it remains unclear how these changes will effect poverty reduction and economic diversification in general. According to dependency theory, these investments will increase Nigeria's dependence on foreign capital and primary exports, potentially perpetuating the country's current structural imbalances. Nigeria must find a careful balance between these aspects to ensure sustainable development (Prebisch, 1950, pp. 15-25).

### **c) China's Policies in Ethiopia**

Since their relations began in the 1970s, China and Ethiopia have had substantial growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Africa, Ethiopia is very important partner of China due to its geo-strategic importance and historical legacy of resistance to colonial power. Such collaboration has been highlighted through high-level visits and bilateral agreements (Shinn D. H., 2014, pp. 149-164). China is a major contributor in Ethiopia's infrastructure development, with efforts such as the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway and industrial parks helping Ethiopia achieve its industrialization aspirations. Moreover, Ethiopia expects that these projects would help it transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy, encouraging commerce and urban mobility while creating jobs (Cisse, 2022, pp. 1-9).

In similar vein, in Ethiopia, China's engagement has both beneficial and negative socio-political consequences. Even Though that Chinese investments have fueled infrastructure development, job creation, and economic growth, large loans from China have raised questions about the sustainability of debt. Besides, Ethiopia gains from China's non-interference policy, which permits it to pursue growth on its own, although this may disregard problems with human rights and governance (Christopher Alden, 2008, pp. 71-79). It is assumed that such combination may strengthen authoritarian inclinations and obstruct the



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advancement of democracy. China's investments in Africa complement its actions in Ethiopia, but Ethiopia's economic ambitions and strategic relevance draw special attention because they prioritize industrialization above resource extraction, which is the priority of other African countries (Hackenesch, 2018, pp. 5-22, 100-109).

In this regard, it is reasonable to assume that China's engagement with Ethiopia has brought about differing consequences. Infrastructure projects such as industrial parks and railroads have the potential to transform the economy, however they also come with significant prices and debt obligations. Ethiopia's reliance on Chinese finance raises concerns about the country's economic independence and the long-term repercussions of its indebtedness. Furthermore, China's investments reflect Ethiopia's broader economic involvement, despite its preference for industry and agriculture over resource extraction, distinguishing it from other African countries. This technique is compatible with dependency theory, which suggests that while China fosters growth, it may also increase economic reliance (Brautigam, 2011, pp. 129-137).

Despite China's long-standing foreign policy principle of non-interference and non-intervention, recent developments show an increased interest in African affairs, particularly in the Horn region. Likewise, China's engagement i.e. establishing its first overseas military base in Djibouti, acting as a patron for Sudan, participating in peacekeeping missions. Besides, China has expanded its involvement in various sectors in Ethiopia (Ayferam, 2016, pp. 792-793). Hence, this growing presence in the Horn of Africa has sparked debate among academic scholars and the contemporary discourses. Many believe it as an opportunity, providing a counterbalance to American and Western influence, while others caution against potential neo-colonial implications. The extent and nature of China's rise in the Horn of Africa remain under review.

### **China's Response to the Arab Spring and Its Implications for Africa**

China took a measure of non-interfering approach at the start of the Arab Spring in order to prioritize regional stability and defending its core economic interests. Such strategy founded on its Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, placed a strong emphasis on respecting national sovereignty and exercising non-intervention. China's response to the Arab Spring also shaped Africa's perceptions of China and had impacts on the countries of Africa and beyond.

In late 2010 and early 2011, the Arab Spring began with mass protests in various Arab states (Bizuru, 2021, pp. 13-20; Chaziza, 2013, pp. 1-11). In 2011, the term "Arab Spring" was coined by American political scientist Marc Lynch in an article in "Foreign Policy" journal to describe the series of uprisings across Arab states like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. Besides, phrases like "Arab Awakenings" and "Arab Revolutions" have also been proposed as well as traced back to historical movements like the Prague Spring and European Revolutions. It also signifies a desire for democratization and freedoms amidst autocratic rule as well as reflects debates over secularism versus religious influences as Islamist regimes emerged. (Abusharif, 2014, pp. 1-8). Hence, due to its profound implications for Nigeria, Egypt, and Ethiopia, the Arab Spring movements in North Africa, particularly in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, led to the toppling of entrenched autocratic rulers, notable shifts in its governance landscape, triggering calls for greater political freedom, economic opportunity, and an end



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to corruption throughout the continent (**Bizuru, 2021, pp. 13-20**).

Thus, such uprisings also ignited demands and protests in numerous African capitals for change and served as a source of inspiration inspiring protests while centered in North Africa, resonated deeply across Africa. In particular, Nigeria, with its presidential elections in 2011, marked a significant stride toward democracy, considered by increased transparency and neglect (**Abusharif, 2014, pp. 1-8**), while Ethiopia maintained a semi-authoritarian system. So such changes reflected the broader institutionalization of democracy in Africa, with emerging legislative bodies contributing to checks and balances. However, multiple challenges persisted, i.e. political party ineffectiveness, weak national identities, limited civil society engagement, politicized security sectors, and the presence of the natural resource curse in various African states. Change patterns in Nigeria, Egypt, and Ethiopia illustrate the diverse responses of African states to the call for democratic reforms in the wake of the Arab Spring (**ACSS Special Report, 2011; Bizuru, 2021**).

Thus, the Arab Spring changed the region politics shaped by democratic movements that started in late 2010 across the Middle East and North Africa. It is important to look at how major global players like the USA and China responded and constructed their policies. The Likewise, to maintain power politics, USA has typically focused on promoting democracy and human rights in Africa, while China has been more interested in investing in infrastructure avoiding internal involvement. Therefore, the present article uses Dependency theory, which explains how power is unevenly distributed between rich and poor countries. With this theory, we can better understand why China acts the way they do in Africa. This article aims to analyze China's post-Arab Spring policies in Africa within the framework of Dependency theory.

So it is concluded that China took a watchful stance and explicit silence in the very beginnings of the Arab Spring that began in late 2010 and spread over North Africa and the Middle East (Kandil, 2012). Likewise, China's foremost concerns throughout the uprisings against established regimes were maintaining regional stability and protecting its economic interests. To highlight the importance of peaceful outcomes, the Chinese government emphasized stability and non-interference. Its large investments in the whole geographical region and its desire to avert any disruptions that would threaten these interests guided this strategy (Jakosbson, 2013, pp. 1-22). Hence, the Arab Spring had a profound impact on China-African ties because African countries learned from China's measured response and dedication to its non-interference policies, which shaped their own desired outcomes and relationships with China.

China's foreign policy has heavily emphasized its non-interference strategy, which is based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. According to this policy, Beijing would respect other sovereign states' right to self-determination and refrain from interfering in their internal affairs. Throughout the Arab Spring, Beijing maintained an impartial stance, avoiding involvement in the affected countries' domestic political problems. Despite the political turmoil, China relied on economic cooperation and diplomatic engagement to maintain its connections. In the context of Africa, this method was especially relevant where countries such as Egypt faced significant political instability. China distanced itself from Western countries that typically lobbied for political shifts and human rights initiatives by maintaining a firm commitment to non-interference,



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affirming its commitment to African stability (Taylor, 2009, pp. 55-62).

In the similar way, China's approach to African governance, stability, and trade links has been profoundly influenced by the Arab Spring. The Egyptian upheavals led to the resignation of longtime leader Hosni Mubarak (1928-220) (Jalal, 2024, pp. 1-8). Throughout this political transition, China emphasised its support for Egypt's sovereignty while focusing on strengthening economic ties through infrastructure projects and investments critical to Egypt's post-revolutionary economic recovery (Matambo, 2023, pp. 99-111). It is also to be noted that the Arab Spring had a less immediate impact in Nigeria and Ethiopia, but it demonstrated the importance of political stability for long-term economic success. China responded by increasing its involvement and prioritising activities such as infrastructure development and capacity building, drawing growth and stability (Brautigam, 2011). These initiatives aimed to improve stability and minimize the socio-political unrest.

Hence, it is generally assumed that China's foreign policy is versatile and pragmatic, as evidenced by its response to the Arab Spring and its consequences for Africa. China strengthened its position as a reliable partner for African countries undergoing difficult political transitions by sticking to its non-interference policy and changing its economic policies to foster growth and security.

### **Economic Diplomacy: Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Africa**

Since its launch in 2013, China's BRI has garnered considerable interest, with the goal of reshaping regional, global trade and infrastructure development. In Africa, the BRI holds both hopes and hurdles, with Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia taking on pivotal role. Thus, this section examines the BRI's influence on these African states, taking into account its ability to shape geopolitical dynamics, stimulate economic growth, and improve regional connectivity.

In 2013, China announced the BRI with the potential to invest 1 trillion dollar in infrastructure development and trade link extension throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa in order to boost global economic growth and stability. China's corporate and product image would improve, and the BRI's goal of greater connectivity would benefit both China and Africa, perhaps encouraging integrated economic and infrastructure growth in Africa (Githaiga, 2019, pp. 117-130). Though objectives vary between Africa's regional integration programmes and China's outward-focused BRI, there is plenty of room for cooperation. Broader engagements aids both regions commerce and connectivity as a result of policy alignment, with Africa's regional projects acting as the foundation for BRI cooperation (Lisinge, 2020, pp. 425-448). Trade between China and Africa grew from USD 1 billion in 1980 to USD 128 billion in 2016, illustrating China's long-standing interest in the continent's infrastructure since the 1960s. China is currently Africa's largest bilateral creditor, having provided USD 143 billion in loans since 2000, half of which came in the last four years. China offered USD 60 billion to Africa's development until 2021 at the 2018 Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (LOKANATHAN, 2020, pp. 1-12). However, because BRI projects are administered jointly, it is unclear how effectively these initiatives will contribute to China's geopolitical and economic goals, these links include many global parties.

In this article's case study, it is considered that the BRI has seen widespread



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implementation throughout Africa, particularly in major partner countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Egypt. These countries' BRI projects have a significant economic impact on these countries as well as a regional and global sphere of influence.

Notable infrastructure projects have occurred in Egypt i.e. the construction of a new administrative capital and the expansion of the Suez Canal, BRI played a major role as well (Cisse, 2022, pp. 1-9). It is also noted that Egypt is one of the most popular destinations for Chinese investment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and region is widely recognized worldwide. In the context of Chinese participation in the region, this investment trend emphasizes Egypt's strategic importance. A watershed moment occurred in 2013 when President Xi Jinping introduced the BRI, asking nations along its path to collaborate. Similarly, Egypt and China's bilateral relationship expanded to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2014, allowing for more cooperation. Egypt's development goals and China's BRI have the potential to align, as evidenced by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's 2016 announcement of Egypt Vision 2030, a new national development strategy (Chen J. , 2017, pp. 219-235). However, the BRI and Egypt Vision 2030 share both benefits and risks. Egypt is 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Russia in BRI projects volume, with 109 projects in progress or in the pipeline (Chen, 2018, p. 3242).

In addition to, it stands 8<sup>th</sup> in BRI projects with a collective value of almost USD 100 billion. Although the partnership has brought favorable outcomes in both foreign investment and infrastructure development. But challenges remain, particularly in socio-economic, political and security dynamics (Shaaban, 2020). Enhanced trade logistics have fueled Egypt's economic growth and higher economic output from the extension of the Suez Canal, strengthening Egypt's role in global trade network (Habibi, 2022, p. 33970).

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, took significant advances in its connection with China in 2018 by officially joining the BRI. Since then, China-Nigeria commerce has increased significantly, reaching USD 15.2 billion in 2018 and USD 25.6 billion in 2021 (Wang, 2023, pp. 186-193). Nigeria's BRI focus has been on energy and transit i.e. the Abuja-Kaduna railway and other power plants. These efforts targeted critical infrastructure, for instance, sectors like the energy and transport, which are very important to Nigeria's economic development (Alhassan, 2023, pp. 192-209). For example, the Abuja-Kaduna railway has greatly improved domestic connectivity, while power projects have attempted to alleviate Nigeria's ongoing energy shortages, bringing significant improvements to infrastructure and development (Cisse, 2022, pp. 1-9; Chen S.-C. J., 2018, p. 3242).

As reflected in the mainstream media discourse, In BRI, Nigeria's involvement in has prompted a range of perspectives. Even though the awareness of BRI benefits in local media and their potential for growth, there are numerous critique regarding China's involvement and its possible effects on Nigeria's sovereignty. The potential for negative views highlight the need for truth are fueled by Western media falsehoods. Nigeria is committed to seizing economic potential and promoting regional integration while advancing national interests via BRI engagement. Nigeria aims to use BRI for sustainability and enhance its international status by working in tandem with China (Wang, 2023, pp. 186-193).



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In similar vein, Ethiopia stands out as a major recipient of Chinese infrastructure funding in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Weng, 2021, pp. 1-12). The BRI has facilitated the development of standard gauge railways, most notably the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, which has significantly reduced transportation costs and schedules, essentially cutting the transit time from three days to ten hours (Cisse, 2022, pp. 1-9). Furthermore, the Chinese government's establishment of the East African Free trading Agreement (FTA) in Djibouti has made regional trading even easier (Yalew, 2020, pp. 175-193). The signing of a contract worth around USD 3.8 billion for the construction of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway by China's Export-Import Bank (EXIM Bank) and the Chinese Civil Engineering and Construction Corporation (CCECC) in 2011 marked an important milestone. Ethiopia's goal of industrialization, as described in the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II 2015–2019), was greatly facilitated by this investment, which helped the nation overtake Kenya in GDP in 2016 and draw a wave of foreign investment, especially for its transport infrastructure (Weng, 2021, pp. 1-12).

But problems still exist, especially with regard to Chinese FDI investment in Ethiopia (Calabrese, 2021, pp. 1-61). Even with large investments in railway construction of which the Export-Import Bank of China funded about 80% (USD 4 billion) through commercial loans problems including a deficiency in foreign exchange have made it difficult for Ethiopia to repay its debts to China. For this reason, questions regarding Ethiopia's ability to repay these loans persist, focusing on challenges for Chinese businesses in the region and beyond (Weng, 2021, pp. 1-12).

In this dynamics, as aptly argued by dependency theorists that economies excessively reliant on international economic conditions beyond control, face debt crises become more likely. To give an example, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) underscores a troubling trend in Sub-Saharan African countries, since 2013, twice as many states face debt trouble. Importantly, according to the World Bank data, African governments collectively owed USD 130 billion in debt to other governments by the close of 2016, with a substantial portion owed to China, making it leading creditor (Tarrosy, 2020, pp. 8-28). If we analyzed it within the context of dependency theory, Raul Prebisch argued that peripheral country' development is hampered by reliance on core country a concept pertinent to assessing the BRI impact in Africa. BRI projects spur growth, yet they simultaneously deepen economic ties between African nations and China, leading to increased reliance. Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia have amassed significant debt to finance BRI endeavors, prompting concerns regarding their long-term debt sustainability and exposing them to economic vulnerabilities if not managed with caution (Foster & Briceño-Garmendia, 2010, pp. 75-92). Hence in the above context, the dependence on commodity exports could be reinforced by an emphasis on resource extraction and export-oriented infrastructure development. Echoes dependence theory, which holds that peripheral countries tend to heavily rely on foreign markets and imports.

Encouraging industry and broader economic bases, the BRI helps break dependency cycles. Consider Ethiopia, where BRI investments include industry and infrastructure and in a more resilient and diverse economy. When we analyze it in the framework of Dependency Theory, it is clear that BRI projects are twofold. Also, they have the potential to either create more self-reliant and



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sustainable economic growth or strengthen current dependencies. This result is contingent upon how African countries manage their economic policies and make use of these investments (Cheru & Obi, 2010, pp. 129-145).

To cut the story short, the BRI has emerged as a catalyst for change in Africa, with Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia leading the way. There are concerns about debt sustainability and dependency though the BRI brings enormous investments and opportunities for economic development. African states must tackle these issues carefully, exploiting BRI funding for long-term goals. This allows them complete use of the BRI's potential to lead Africa towards prosperity and self-reliance in the region and beyond.

### **Resource Diplomacy: China's Quest for African Resources**

China's participation in Africa, fueled by resource diplomacy, is critical to its economic growth. China's economic progress in Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia is driven by natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals, and agriculture. To understand these techniques is crucial for comprehending China's greater participation in Africa's resource landscape.

In strategic resource diplomacy, China's drive to sustain its growing economy is principle force behind its investment in Africa region. That is to say, in Egypt, the focus is on natural gas and oil, involving investments in oil production, exploration, and energy infrastructure like pipelines and refineries, expanding energy security via ventures like those led by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) (Downs, 2007, pp. 42-86). As well, China's resource diplomacy is evident in Nigeria's oil sector, with investments from firms like Sinopec and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) in refineries, pipelines, and mineral mining operations (Christopher Alden, 2008, pp. 54-69). Over and above, Ethiopia, while not as resource-rich, engage China in mining gold, tantalum, and potash, alongside agricultural investments aimed at ensuring food security, reflecting China's broader resource-driven strategy in Africa (Brautigam, 2011, pp. 70-80). Hence, to understand these strategies is key to comprehending China's wider engagement in the continent's resource landscape.

The infusion of Chinese capital into African resources brings both challenges and opportunities for the progress of the whole continent. Chinese energy investments in Egypt have strengthened infrastructure and production, promoting economic growth and improving energy security. These investments, however, bring up issues with the potential for over-reliance on one industry and its effects on the environment (Zafar, 2007, pp. 103-130). Similarly, Chinese investments in Nigeria have increased GDP by facilitating technology transfer, creating jobs, and improving infrastructure, particularly in the oil and mineral resource sectors. However, problems including degradation of the environment, uprooting of communities, and deficiencies in governance continue, creating obstacles to open resource management (Obi, 2010, pp. 219-236). Besides, Chinese investments in Ethiopia have aided the country's modernization and industrialization goals by expanding the agriculture and mining sectors. However, land acquisition raises concerns about community exclusion, and the long-term health of ecosystems and livelihoods (Cotula, 2011, pp. 1-30).

To put it briefly, there is considerable scope for economic growth due to China's resource investments in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Egypt. Still, careful oversight is key to maximizing their advantages and guaranteeing sustainability. This entails



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strengthening legal frameworks, encouraging openness in contracts, and managing ecological and social repercussions.

### **Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy**

In Africa, through educational programmes like Confucius Institutes and other academic scholarships, bring up cultural ties, China promotes its soft power. In all these countries (Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia) such efforts aim to build favorable perceptions of China. For instance, China's soft power strategy in Africa prominently involves promoting Chinese language, culture, and education via Confucius Institutes and scholarships. In Egypt, the Confucius Institute at Cairo University deals various language courses, cultural activities, and educational exchanges, reinforcing cultural links (Hartig, 2015, pp. 77-89). On the other hand, in Nigeria, institutes at Nnamdi Azikiwe University and the University of Lagos teach Chinese culture and organize events e.g. Chinese New Year to build goodwill (Wekesa, 2013, pp. 62-78). On the flip side, Ethiopia, the Confucius Institute at Addis Ababa University and scholarships for Ethiopian students studying in China deepen academic and cultural links. Such efforts aim to improve China's reputation and create a network of individuals with favorable views towards China (King, 2013, pp. 40-55).

Cultural programs build bonds of friendship and unity

In all these countries, China's cultural activities have had a big impact on bilateral relations and conventional wisdom. For examples, Confucius Institutes and cultural exchanges have improved educational and cultural ties in Egypt, but there is still some doubt regarding China's strategic objectives. Though labor standards and quality raise concerns, Chinese cultural diplomacy has a considerable impact on Nigeria, as Confucius Institutes and cultural programs build bonds of friendships and unity (Umejei, 2015, pp. 54-78). Similarly, China's cultural diplomacy in Ethiopia, especially in the form of educational opportunities and cultural exchanges strengthening ties despite opposing views on China's influence. This has helped Ethiopian youth develop a good perception of China (Repnikova, 2022, pp. 440-463). In Africa, despite uncertainty, China's cultural diplomacy boosts bilateral relations and re-shapes positive opinion, promoting socio-cultural and educational engagement.

### **Comparative Analysis of China's Policies in Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia**

China's ties to Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Egypt show that both familiar and unique techniques are used. Importantly, China not only prioritizes economic cooperation, the development of its infrastructure, but also maintained non-interference approach in internal matters of these states. China makes large trade and economic investments as well as major infrastructure investments in every country. Different priorities are placed on different areas: China concentrates on the oil industry in Nigeria, industrial parks and manufacturing in Ethiopia, and the Suez Canal Economic Zone and energy projects in Egypt. China also adapts its cultural and diplomatic endeavors to the particular historical and sociopolitical setting of each nation, demonstrating a customised approach as opposed to a homogeneous one (Christopher Alden, 2008, pp. 100-107; Brautigam, 2011, pp. 83-95).

It is also assumed that there are considerable differences in the political and



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socioeconomic results of China's interactions with Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Egypt. Chinese investments have helped Egypt modernize its infrastructure and diversify its economy, but worries about the sustainability of the country's debt and labour conditions still exist. Chinese investments in Nigeria's infrastructure and oil sector have helped the country's economy flourish, but the influx of Chinese labour and goods has also led to economic displacement and unrest in the local community. Chinese investments have significantly accelerated infrastructural development and industrial expansion in Ethiopia, resulting in a swift economic transition. These advantages are countered, though, by worries about debt, political power, and the social effects of fast industrialization (Hackenesch, 2018, pp. 88-108).

Clear disparities exist between Chinese and Western strategies. This is to say, Western countries, including the USA and the European Union, frequently attach economic aid to human rights and governance changes. Many African countries, on the other hand, benefit from China's non-interference policy because it encourages economic cooperation while imposing no political constraints. This policy has helped China quickly capture commercial interests and enhance its authority. It is also found, Western critics argue that this might stifle democracy and strengthen authoritarian regimes. Besides, Chinese investments are perceived as more urgent and pragmatic, with a focus on economic and infrastructure projects, whereas Western investments are more concerned with long-term development (Shinn D. H., 2014, pp. 149-164; Christopher Alden, 2008, pp. 103-109).

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

China has major hurdles in Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. Political unrest and security concerns, such as the Nigerian insurgency, ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia, and Egypt's complex post-Arab Spring landscape, jeopardize plans and investments. Local backlash against Chinese labour and business based on fears of economic displacement and cultural insensitivity, delays China's plans (Brautigam, 2011, pp. 92-98; Christopher Alden, 2008, pp. 110-117). Despite these hurdles, potential lies in digital infrastructure, industrial development, renewable energy. Both technical and infrastructure expertise of Chinese can help modernize African economies and enhance network access in the contemporary global world. Various projects under the BRI and increasing educational and cultural exchanges can help to boost China-Africa collaboration (Hackenesch, 2018, pp. 105-11; Sun, 2014).

From China's participation in Africa, methods are advised to solve problems and optimized benefits. It is necessary to improve openness and sustainability in Chinese investments can help address concerns regarding debt and exploitation of economy. Thus, applying tough criteria ensure that projects benefit both local populations and the environment dynamics (Brautigam, 2011, pp. 131-140; Christopher Alden, 2008, pp. 113-119). Local empowerment reduce resistance and increase the beneficial impact of Chinese investments. Strengthening diplomatic ties can lead to greater mutual understanding and trust, making cooperation more equitable and productive (Hackenesch, 2018, pp. 111-118). Handling Chinese loans debt is essential to avoiding economic dependency (neo-colonialism) and potential sovereignty violations.

Therefore, in Africa, Chinese infrastructure projects shaped social and



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environmental conditions. Even though these programmes support economic progress, they lead to harm. Key challenges are: environmental decline and ecological neglect, deforestation, community dispersion. Area inhabitants may face social upheavals, such as cultural insensitivity and large scale displacement. To address these impacts, rigorous environmental assessments and participatory planning procedures involving all stakeholders and local residents are required (Brautigam, 2011).

China's engagement in Africa has been characterized of neo-colonialism, with critics claiming that China exploits African resources and labour for profit while ignoring local needs and human rights. All these claims come from the idea that Chinese investor's priorities resource extraction and economic rewards over long-term development and local welfare. Concerns over labour standards, environmental degradation, and unequal economic gains motivate criticism in Nigeria and Ethiopia (Hackenesch, 2018, pp. 115-120). To address all these allegations requires assuring fair labour practices, equitable economic advantages, and a true commitment to the social and host countries' ecological well-being.

### Conclusion

The 2010-2011 Arab Spring uprisings were key events, triggering socio-political transformations and redefining regional roles. China have significantly shaped the post-Arab Spring landscape of Egypt, Nigeria, and Ethiopia with different strategies influencing Africa. Each states' strategy influencing their spheres of influence in the continent via ideological, economic, strategic, and market concerns. In these countries, the review of China's policies reveals pros and cons. The significant investments of China in infrastructure and crucial sectors have boosted economic growth, also triggered debt and unrest. This highlights need for insight of China's position in Africa, particularly its impact on regional geopolitics and governance. As Africa embrace China's neutral policy, governance and human rights repercussions are still in questions. Future academic research should look into investigating the socio-economic implications of Chinese investments and proposing policy recommendations to build mutually beneficial relationships while focusing on debt and environment impacts.

It is also reveals in these countries, China's increasing involvement in Africa marks a major shift in the continent dynamics. With efforts like the BRI, China has emerged as a major player in Africa's development agenda, Highlighting resources, infrastructure, and economic links. Thus, the selected countries illustrating both the potential benefits and challenges connected with China's engagement. Albeit, China's investments provides growth and prosperous, concerns persist regarding debt sustainability, environmental impacts, and socio-political ramifications, illustrating collaboration and conflict.

Similarly, in Africa, China's growing influence leads to profound outcomes for global and regional influence. Western countries are facing raising challenge as China makes significant economic investments and diplomatic efforts to strengthen its foothold across the continent. Though there are also challenges of dependency and governance, Africa can greatly benefit from China's economic cooperation. To address these hurdles, a cooperative strategy based on accountability, transparency, and local empowerment is required. China and African countries can navigate their relationship's problems and achieve prosperity via fair alliances and sustainable policies.



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Hence, China's economic strategy based on non-interference, has advanced strong bilateral relations with African countries. Concerns over neo-colonialism call for equitable solutions to ensure that the benefits of Chinese engagement are shared broadly. Future academic research must focus on the consequence of China's involvement, with an emphasis on sustainable practices and growth and empowering communities. To address the challenges and criticisms surrounding Chinese investments would help build mutually beneficial partnerships for Africa's prosperity, stability and growth.

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