AFRICAN AGENCY IN CHINA – AFRICA RELATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF ENGAGEMENTS UNDER THE FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

BY

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UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-AFRICA

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UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-AFRICA

SUMMER 2019
STUDENTS DECLARATION

I, undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university other than the United States International University-Africa for academic credit.

Sign: ……………………………………….Date: …………………………………

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ABSTRACT

Research on China-Africa relations is dynamic and evolving. Several China-Africa relations luminaries have attempted to analyze Beijing’s key interests in Africa together with the new relations guided by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) initiated in 2000 for the purpose of enhancing mutual consultation and win-win cooperation. This study is purely qualitative, relying on secondary sources of documentary data on the key study themes. Rational Choice theory is applied to understand the essence of decision making between Chinese and African actors. From a rigorous review of literature, there is optimism for a mutual relationship through the lenses of African agency exerted by African actors for self-benefiting motives amid skepticism of Africa’s lack of agency in international relations. Guided by three explicit questions; how has the Sino-Africa relationship evolved since FOCAC inception, have FOCAC objectives for Africa been met, and finally what is the leverage achieved through the lenses of African agency, this study finds out that the relationship is on the right trajectory based on indicators like improved trade, infrastructure development, and stabilizing Africa’s conflict zones. FOCAC objectives have not been fully met. Despite the flaccid evolution on the African side, Africa is showing a sense of agency and oneness in the FOCAC process through the African Union (AU) and its core body African Union Commission (AUC) driven by common African interests captured by the AU agenda 2063 among other key documents and plans of action. This study concludes that for African actors to exert more agency towards China and other global powers, first they should act on a collective African policy in this case a coherent Africa-China policy articulated by the AU together with other regional bodies. Second, Africa’s action should be knowledge based, all-inclusive to capture actors like academics, civil society, and citizens of Africa.
Key Words: African agency, China-Africa relations, Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Africa’s common interests, Collective Africa’s China policy, and African actors
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late grandfather, Javan K.N. Kalika who was a fountain of academic inspiration, my grandmother Grace Kalika whose care is unwavering, and lastly to my loving mother Joyce Litu for her enormous support that molds me to be a better person.
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<tr>
<td>AfDB</td>
<td>African Development Bank Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRICS</td>
<td>Brazil Russia India China South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMESA</td>
<td>Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Communist party of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOCAC</td>
<td>Forum on China Africa Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNCs</td>
<td>Multinational Corporations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Partnership for African Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>RECs</td>
<td>Regional Economic Communities</td>
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</table>
TICAD  Tokyo International Conference on African Development

UN   United Nations

UNPD United Nations Population Division

US   United States

SSA  Sub Saharan Africa

WTO  World Trade Organization
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This introductory chapter provides the foundation of the study in seven subsections as follows; background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, justification of the study, scope of the study, operational definition of terms, and finally organization of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

There are looming and expanding academic and scholarship debates on the role of Africa in the international system. Africa’s role seems to be somewhat imperative, subservient, or even multifaceted depending on who and how Africa is portrayed contextually. Muriithi (2013) observes that the notion of ‘Africa Rising’ has gained currency and the continent is increasingly viewed as one of the last frontiers of sustainable economic growth and investment opportunities. On the other hand, Shaw (2010) argues that African international relations are in flux as a result of the impact of the ‘emerging economies’ of Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC). BRIC was expanded to BRICS in 2010 when South Africa joined the coalition (White, 2013).

Over the recent years and especially by the beginning of the 21st century, African Countries have had a keen interest in looking for new partners including China which is seen as an emerging dominant actor compared to the ties majority of African countries have had with their former colonial masters. China and Africa greatly vary in terms of their configuration - the earlier is a sovereign state while the latter is a conglomeration of 54 states referred to as the African continent. Apart from this, statistics from the United Nations Population Division (UNPD, 2018) indicate that China has an estimated population of 1.4 billion people slightly higher than Africa’s 1.2 billion. Cornelissen, Cheru, and Shaw (2012), observe that China and Africa share a common
history in terms of triumph over colonialism, common development agendas and similar sociopolitical challenges. This relationship epitomizes South – South cooperation and the significant role of Africa in International Politics.

South-South cooperation is not new because there were prior relations between countries of the global south. Strong ties have been there between these countries but the literature has been dominated by North-South relations and the interactions between Africa and the West. Taylor (2010) argues that the historical ties with the West have been based on the slave trade, the scramble for Africa, the colonial period, the proxy wars during the Cold War, and the increasing significance of Africa’s natural resources. This factors indicate how important Africa has been in the global political economy. Therefore, it is biased to start an account of Africa’s international relations and contacts between Africa itself, Europe, and Asia from the time Europeans started ‘discovering’ Africa. Taylor asserts that Africa has been and still continues to be intrinsically part of world affairs in which it exerts its agency.

Taylor (2010) observes that Chinese interactions with Africa stretch back centuries, with coins and porcelain fragments dating from the Sung Dynasty (960 AD-1279AD) discovered in Zanzibar and the present day Zimbabwe’s east coast. However, it is significant to highlight the decline of Chinese interest in Africa by the mid-1980s. China’s policy in South-South cooperation was rhetorical because the country pursued domestic economic modernization in partnership with the superpowers. The rhetoric came to an end when relations transformed after 1989’s Tiananmen Square incident when China woke up from isolation and opened up to the world (Taylor, 2010). China’s opening up came at a period where the world was witnessing the end of the Cold War (Fukuyama, 1989).
The dynamics in the post-Cold War era and the beginning of the 21st Century have shaped Africa’s relations within itself, with Southern emerging powers, traditional powers of the West, and international organizations. In this transition, Africa has been soul-searching for a ‘transformative development model’ especially from China and other Asian giants like India and Japan. The implications to Africa’s international relations are far much deep and wide because of the changes in foreign policy of African states and the external actors. In the policy changes, most of the African governments have renegotiated and shaped terms of engagements with various partners to fulfill their own socio-economic and political interests. Most recently, there have been increased relations between Africa and the world’s new emerging powers and in this case it is China on the focal point.

The move by African states to look for new development partners especially from Asia signify a shift in African states’ interests. There have been studies that have highlighted this move with little attention to the engagements under institutionalized frameworks and Africa’s assertive role in the relations. In the case of Sino-African relations, the relationship has unique flows and ebbs. This study on China-Africa relations will examine the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) so as to draw findings on the role played by African actors in (re) shaping their relations with China.

Remarkably, 2006 marked the 50th anniversary since the beginning of official diplomatic ties between China and Africa with the establishment of diplomatic relations with Egypt in 1956 (Cheng & Shi, 2009). On 12th January 2006, the government of China formally initiated the “China’s African Policy” document (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006). The six main contents of the document are; Africa’s position and role, China’s relations with Africa, China’s African policy, the enhancement of all-round co-operation between China and Africa, FOCAC
and its follow-up actions, and China’s relations with African regional organizations. This offers a shift in the Sino-African relations because China and Africa have further deepened their partnership as envisioned in the document. The document stipulates that China will establish and develop a new strategic partnership with Africa that encompasses political and mutual trust, economic ‘win-win’ co-operation, and cultural exchanges (Cheng & Shi, 2009).

According to the ‘African Economic Outlook 2018’, report by the African Development Bank (AfDB), Africa’s average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew from 2.2 percent in 2016 to 3.6 percent in 2017. Despite the improvement, the report indicates that there is an increased appetite for debt to meet the infrastructure and social finance needs. The finance deficiency pushes African governments to borrow from external institutions and foreign governments. Onjala (2017) highlights that China has reached a mature stage of industrialization with advanced industries while Africa needs more industrial investments that will set the stage for structural transformation and diversify production. As African governments borrow to finance their development projects, Onjala (2017) cautions a debt crisis situation using Kenya as a case study. Taylor (2015), analyzes the notion ‘Africa Rising’ and finds out that Africa continues to be dependent on the global economy. Consequentially, the author observes that the continent is further entrenched in dependency and underdevelopment.

However, in most cases of relations, aid dependency can be detrimental to the development of the receivers. Grimm (2014), argues that developing countries are mostly short of funding with regard to the projects that they face. African countries as well require additional funding to fulfill the large infrastructure projects, basic functions of the state such as security, and healthcare, and welfare provision. This deficit can be serviced through borrowing, grants, and private partnerships. China is fond of easy loans that have no strings attached. Onjala (2017) highlights
that the increased access of African states to external capital markets has sparked interest in growing external borrowing that has replaced debt sustainability at the forefront of the continent’s policy agenda. In the context of loans acquired from Sino-African relations, the author argues that the debt situation in Kenya from Beijing is likely to precipitate a debt crisis.

Fijałkowski (2011) observes that China’s relation with Africa is based on soft power whose primary tool lies in development assistance. China has a good image in Africa because it lacks colonial legacy on the continent that most western powers have. Therefore, China’s ‘Charm Offensive’ and ‘Soft Power’ has made it a major player on the continent. Soft Power was coined by Joseph Nye in 1990 in which he defines it as the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction (Nye, 1990). Fijałkowski (2010), concludes that China’s Soft Power lies on the idea of strategic partnership and is of good intentions for a ‘win-win’ mutual cooperation.

In 1978 the Communist Party of China adopted the reforms and ‘Opening up Policy’ proposed by President Deng Xiaoping. The concentration on domestic economic growth granted China an ‘Isolation’ status from the international community. The ‘Opening up Policy’ entrenched stronger South-South cooperation (Zhenming , 2008). Additionally, Zeleza (2008), notes that the courtship between China and Africa has intensified since 2000. This is the year that the first ministerial conference of FOCAC was held in Beijing. From its initiation, FOCAC has become the stamp of China’s engagement with Africa. The forum encourages deeper cooperation beyond policy and economic interests to values and norms in the form of Chinese scholarships, and educational and research exchanges (Cornelissen, Cheru, & Shaw, 2012).

Predominantly, the framework envisions a ‘win-win’ relationship through equal consultation, enhancing understanding, expanding consensus, strengthening friendship, and promoting
cooperation objectives (Forum on China Africa Cooperation, 2018). At times, African actors are treated as passive and lacking agency because they are deemed to be on the receiving end of the relationship with nothing to offer in return. Brown and Harman (2013) observe that in the second decade of the 21st century, Africa has established and sustained an assertive, and high-level diplomacy in which the continent witnessed long-term economic growth. The strategic choices made out of these diplomatic relations have reshaped Africa’s relations with the western powers and the emerging powers. Africa has become increasingly important in international politics over climate change issues, world trade negotiations, and international norms. Therefore, this is African Agency.

As African agency continues to be at the center of Africa’s international relations, little is said about the interconnection of African agency and Africa’s general interests that are outlined by African Union (AU), and the various regional bodies in Africa. These organizations have common agenda in the transformations of Africa. Agency comes in at the negotiation stage through assertive bargains and diplomacy. This study will attempt to maximize the understanding of how African agency shapes Africa’s interests before they are actualized in terms of policy actions undertaken by individual governments and under their substitute organizations.

The New Partnership for Development (NEPAD) is one of the platforms that the AU and its member states use to exert African agency. According to (NEPAD 2018) NEPAD is a socio-economic development flagship programme of the AU, adopted by African leaders at the 37th Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in July 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia. One of the main mandates of the NEPAD agency is to mobilize resources and partners in support of the implementation of Africa’s priority programs and projects. Cheru and Calais (2010) write that
NEPAD’s aim is to articulate an authentic, African-owned and African-driven development agenda and to strengthen the continent’s bargaining capacity with its external development partners.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

China and Africa’s historical relations continue to grow and deepen expeditiously especially since the inception of FOCAC in 2000. Following such advancements, Strauss and Saavedra (2009) observe that China-Africa relationship is a fluid, mutually constitutive one. However, many scholars remain sceptic about the ‘win-win’ relationship between China and Africa. They view China as the dominant actor. In an International Monetary Fund (IMF) working paper, Drummond and Liu (2013) observe that more than half of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) economies maintain a trade deficit with China through large imports in manufacturing goods while SSA countries export little to China. In retrospect Mohan and Lambert (2012) argue that such sceptics pay little attention to the role of African Agency in engaging with China.

The extant literature remains unclear if the relationship is mutual and consultative as stipulated in FOCAC objectives or it is one sided.

The research gap identified is the lack of research objectification among the extensive research generated by the subjective factions namely; ‘China-Philiac’ and ‘China-Phobic’. This study filled in the gap by presenting objective findings based on how Africa conducts its diplomacy based on its own agency in the institutionalized China-Africa relations since 2000. Finally, the study offers insightful recommendations to policy makers, scholars, and heads of African government and state on how to assertively gain more leverage in China-Africa engagements under the FOCAC framework.
1.3.0 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

To examine the African Agency in China – Africa relations under the FOCAC framework of engagement

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the trends and patterns of engagement between China and Africa under the FOCAC framework

2. To assess the objectives of FOCAC for Africa

3. To find out the leverage achieved by the African agency in Sino-Africa relations

1.3.3 Research Questions

1. What are the trends and patterns of engagement in Sino-Africa relations under FOCAC?

2. How have the trends and patterns of engagement between China and Africa under the FOCAC framework evolved?

3. Have the objectives of FOCAC for Africa been met?

4. What leverage has African agency achieved in Sino-Africa relations?

1.4 Justification of the Study

Understanding the navigation of the murky waters of international relations require a deliberate study on the agency exerted by the actors involved. This is because the actors involved in different relationships pursue interests that might either be converging or diverging. The actors range from but not limited to States – the primary actors, their surrogate international organizations, Multinational Corporations (MNCs), and individuals as actors in their own capacity. This study interrogates the role of African agency in China-Africa relations entrenched
in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation FOCAC. Since the initiation of this framework, the relations are deemed as grown and deepened.

To the field of academia, this study will add knowledge of the role of African agency in the relations between China and Africa under the FOCAC framework of engagement. Therefore, the study will fill the gap in the extant literature which is biased on Sino-Africa relations under FOCAC but neglects the role of African agency in this relationship. In these relations, Mohan and Lampert (2013) note that African actors are treated as passive and lacking agency. Furthermore, the author finds out that African actors also exercise agency outside the confines of the state in relations with China through shaping engagements and negotiations. Taylor (2010), argues that, neither Beijing nor Africa’s leaders are “in charge” of FOCAC’s concrete results. Africa has no concrete China policy and China’s African policy is compromised by the nature of Chinese state and economy in a manner that FOCAC does not shape China’s interests in Africa. Lastly, even though studies have been conducted on Sino-African relations, more needs to be done with the insertion of African agency.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is precise on China-Africa relations guided by the FOCAC framework of engagement. The study investigates how African agency has shaped the Sino-African relationship despite the wide skepticism expressed in various literature that China is the dominant player in this engagements. The timeframe of this study is guided by the inception of FOCAC in 2000 although relations between China and Africa have been there stretching back to the 15th Century and rife with reference to events in the 19th Century and the Cold War period (Alden & Alves, 2008). This study will categorically be guided by the agreements and
resolutions made at the FOCAC summits which are held after every three years in Beijing and Africa alternatively.

The initial and founding forum was held in October 2000 in Beijing and was attended by nearly 80 ministers from 44 African countries. The second summit was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in December 2003 and passed the Addis Ababa Action plan (2004-2006). The third was held in November 2006 in Beijing, while the fourth summit was held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2009 (Taylor 2010). The fifth summit was held in July 2012 in Beijing and the Beijing declaration was signed for new strategic partnership. The sixth summit and ministerial conference was held in December 2015 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Previously, the seventh summit was held in September 2018, in Beijing, China. This study will be guided by this scope to analyze how African actors negotiate with China to advance their own interests.

1.6 Operational Definition of Terms

Aid Dependency

In the context of this study, aid dependency means the overreliance on foreign donations for the pursuit of national development goals which is discussed widely to be a condition among most African governments.

African Agency

The field of African agency is wide (Brown, 2012). The author further explains that delineating such a broad concept in international relations runs the risk of generalizations and oversimplification. For clarity and precision, this study uses the concept as defined by Chipaike and Knowledge (2018). According to the authors;
‘African agency in international relations (ir) is conceptualized as African actors’ ability to negotiate and bargain with external actors in a manner that benefits Africans themselves. African agency can be further taken to incorporate African initiatives taken by Africans to improve their socio-economic well-being as well as in projecting a posture of power and self-help in international engagements. In short, it is self-reflective and self-benefitting social action. What should be understood is that African agency is not exerted purely by states. In fact, the most effective form of agency is a multi-faceted kind that incorporates state and non-state actors. This means the African state must create room to work with civil society, individuals and private sector, among other actors if benefits are to accrue from their engagements with different partners’ (Chipaike and Knowledge, 2018:1).

**Assertive Diplomacy**

The type of diplomacy whereby an actor engages other actors objectively from a position of strength rather than being kowtowed to the other actor’s self-benefiting interests.

**Engagement**

Engagement means the formal or official relations between actors in international relations. In this study, engagement is narrowed down to the formalized relations between China and Africa guided by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.
Opening up policy

This is a policy that was adopted and implemented by President Deng Xiaoping to get China from ‘isolation’. China became more open to the world and it cemented relations with many countries as compared to the earlier years.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study comprises of five chapters. Chapter one is composed of the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, research questions, justification of the study, scope of the study and organization of the study.

Chapter two consists of the literature review and the theoretical framework. The literature review interrogates previous studies conducted on the various themes of the study that include; African agency, China-Africa relations, the Forum on China Africa Cooperation and the engagements there in. The theoretical framework section presents Rational Choice Theory and Regime Theory that guide the analysis of relations under FOCAC based on the interests and agency of the various actors in Sino-Africa relations.

Chapter three presents the methodology that guided the collection of data, data analysis, and later presents an overview of the limitations of the study. The methodology is anchored on a qualitative approach relying on secondary data sources namely; official government documents, FOCAC communiques, China-Africa research think-tanks publications, journals and books publications on the research topic, and other relevant data reports from credible institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, AfDB, and WTO.

Chapter four presents the final analysis and synthesis of the collected data. The chapter presents a narration of the study findings based on the three research objectives. The narration is aided by
graphical, tabular, chart and graphical interpretation of data to make concrete arguments on the subject matter. Finally, chapter five presents the summary, conclusion and the recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter interrogates the relevant extant literature on the various subjects of inquiry which are; African agency, China-Africa relations, and FOCAC framework of engagement. The review of literature will facilitate a deeper understanding of the subjects under study. The literature review is conducted thematically to fulfill the research questions. The relevant literature is reviewed through the prisms of the theoretical framework of the study and the different scholarly approaches per theme.

2.1 Africa’s role in the international system

Cornelissen, Cheru, and Shaw (2012), observe that; this concept of Africa and this sense of marginalism have also framed the study of Africa’s international relations. With the perception of marginalization, Africa is deemed to be a passive actor in international relations. However, Taylor (2010), asserts that despite the myth of marginality and irrelevance, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has always been inextricably linked to the global stage and has long played a significant role in international politics. The author points out the slave trade, the scramble of Africa and the subsequent colonial period, the proxy wars during the cold war and the increasing interest of Africa’s natural resources demonstrate the importance of the continent to the global political economy. The importance of the continent in international politics has attracted different partners apart from the traditional and colonial powers of the West.

2.2 Africa’s relations with the Emerging Powers as South-South Cooperation

Shaw, Cooper and Chin (2009) argue that there is an increased engagement between ‘emerging powers’ and African countries. Emerging Power is a concept that has gained relevance especially
in the post-Cold War era. This concept is an attribute of power in reference to an increasing degree of might of a country’s influence in politics and international economy. These countries do not identify themselves with the *status quo* of the international order (Fonseca, Paes, & Cunha, 2016). The global power dynamic is experiencing a cumulative reordering process in which countries like Brazil, Russia, India and China ‘BRIC’ -that expanded to ‘BRICS’ in 2010 with the accession of South Africa in the alliance (White, 2013) have accessed more prominent role in the international system. In relations to Africa, these countries have projected a blend of soft power, public diplomacy, private sector partnerships and direct investments to deepen the relations (Shaw, Cooper, & Chin, 2009).

Furthermore, Shaw, Cooper and Chin (2009) observe that South-South cooperation can be examined from different political economy perspectives. Despite the different intentions, emerging powers and Africa share common goals of advancing their diplomatic and economic status. This has further led to the conception of multipolarity, world order, and interdependence. The role played by the emerging powers signify that global relations are in flux because the established order is challenged with a decline in the American hegemony. The authors highlight that the diplomatic ambitions of BRICs in Africa can be seen through the summits recently initiated. China was the first one to launch FOCAC to enhance Sino-Africa strategic partnership followed by India-Africa Forum Summit in 2008 hosted by India with 14 African leaders. Japan rejoined the ‘Africa game’ through its Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) (Shaw, Cooper, & Chin, 2009). In the post-Cold War era, Brazil engages with African countries based on the state’s South-South diplomacy but particularly with Portuguese speaking countries, South Africa and Nigeria (Abdenur, 2017). Brazil’s relations with Africa are not institutionalized like those of China, India, and Japan as cited before.
Cheru (2016) contends that the rise of emerging powers such as China and India are basically reshaping global economic relations and also the future of African development. China and India are some of the Southern partners who view Africa as a continent that has the potential for economic development while the African governments view the Southern emerging powers as partners who value mutual relations unlike the traditional Western partners who are based on conditionality. Rampa, Bilal, and Sidiropoulos (2012) aver that aid from traditional donors to African countries are aligned with commercial conditionality and political conditionality around human rights, democracy and governance issues while emerging economies issue African countries with non-prescriptive aid that is project driven and not attached to politics or governance. Despite the tensions that emerge in terms of the market competition between local goods and cheap imports, African governments have advanced their own interests through agency. Cheru (2016) uses the case of Ethiopia’s bilateral relations with China to demonstrate the earlier claim on the role of African agency in engaging emerging powers. In the strategic relationship with China and India, Ethiopia has achieved several benefits that include; trade and investment, skills and knowledge sharing, and infrastructure and development funding (Cheru, 2016). The author’s focus is on the role of African agency in bilateral ties between Ethiopia – China and India. The literature contributes to fulfilling one of the research’s objective on the role of African agency in Sino-Africa relations. However, this study aims at demonstrating African agency through FOCAC framework of engagement in Sino-Africa relations.

Rampa, Bilal, and Sidiropoulos (2012; 247) argue that;

‘Optimizing the development opportunities presented by emerging powers’ growing interest in trade, investment and diplomatic engagement in Africa seems a priority for the continent in the context of a changing global system in which power is more diffuse.’
The authors fail to account for the role played by NEPAD in engaging new partners in the achievement of Africa’s development. The authors only focus on how emerging powers engage Africa on development. This study intents to interrogate both sides played by NEPAD and emerging powers in meeting development needs of the actors involved.

2.3 China – Africa Historical Relations

Taylor (2011), observes that Chinese interactions with Africa dates back to centuries ago when coins and porcelain fragments from the Sung dynasty (960-1279) were found in Zanzibar. Following this, there were several voyages made by Chinese admiral explorer Zheng Ho between 1416 and 1423. The subsequent Qing dynasty (1644-1911) adopted a closed-door policy in which China-Africa relations were insignificant. It was until 1897 when China opened a diplomatic office in Johannesburg in South Africa to provide consular services to the Chinese emigrants at the Rand’s mines. However, diplomatic relations between China and South Africa were not official until formalization in 1931 despite minimal relations until the post-Apartheid regime in 1998 when South Africa adopted the ‘One –China’ policy that means disregarding the sovereignty of Taiwan (Grimm, Kim, Anthony, Attwell, & Xiao, 2014). Moreover Taylor (2011) concludes that Sino-Africa relations became substantive in the post-1949 Communist era (Taylor, 2011). 1949 marked the year that People’s Republic of China (PRC) was founded accompanied by intense socio-economic, political and cultural changes led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Tsang, 2000).

On the other hand, Zeleza (2014) traces modern Africa-China relations to the Pharaonic times. The author cites the naval expeditions of Zheng He in the early fifteenth century. However, in the first half of the twentieth century there were minimal relations because of the colonial rule in most parts of Africa. The author claims that China’s relations with Africa were confined to South
Africa, Liberia – guided by the friendship treaty signed in 1937 and later enforced in 1941, and semi-independent Egypt that established diplomatic relations with China in 1942. Both Taylor (2011) and Zeleza (2014) assert that Sino-Africa relations began to flourish after the Chinese revolution in 1949. Additionally, Zeleza (2014) notes that Africa’s decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s signified the blossoming of these relations. Furthermore, the author categorizes the evolution of these relations in three phases. First, the initial period from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, second, the reconstructing period between mid-1970s to the end of 1990s, third, the consolidation period since 2000. Each period was characterized by unique trends and ideological thrusts. In the first period, China and newly independent African states were reshaping their national identities and repositioning their interests in the international system, the second period was marked with reforms in their political economies, while the third period is characterized with explosive economic growth and intensified engagements (Zeleza, 2014).

Despite the long historical ties, China lost some considerable interests in Africa because of its pursuit of economic modernization in the mid-1980s. During this period, South-South cooperation was only rhetoric because China continued to claim solidarity with the developing countries because of their shared legacies in terms of colonization and the economic development status. Amid the rhetoric and the unfavorable Chinese policies to Africa, African students in Beijing demonstrated in 1986 to remind China the support Africa had to its accession to the United Nations in 1971. However, the June 1989 Tiananmen Square events marked a turnaround in the Sino-African relations. The relations have intensified from this period (Taylor, 2011).

The next important juncture in the historical relations between China and Africa is the post-Cold War era. In the post-Cold War era, China has undergone fundamental economic policy changes
which accelerated China-Africa economic ties. Besides the policy changes, the general abandonment of Africa by the West created opportunities for China to exert its influence in Africa to achieve its foreign policy goals of championing for the Third World causes, national reunification, and economic development (Payne & Veney, 1998). The argument presented by the authors insinuate a biased relation between China and Africa based on the grounds that, China is a surrogate of the West and that China and the West have similar interests in Africa. The rise of China in Africa is an important question to this study.

2.4 The Dragon’s Rise and its Soft Power

‘Africa’s courtship with China is a captivating dance between the elephant and the dragon’ (Zeleza, 2008; 171). The relationship has wider implications in international politics because of the economic and political interests between China and Africa. Therefore, the extent of this relationship cannot be oversimplified or be taken for granted. Both China and Africa have strategic interests in their engagement which mostly revolves around development and economic partnerships.

Cabestan (2010) observes that ‘China is now a global Power’, which it was not before. China was in isolation before the 1979 reforms which saw the country’s economic growth and influence in the international system. The author highlights the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests as a critical juncture in China’s international relations. In the early 1990s the Communist Party of China (CPC), pursued a great power diplomacy (daguo waijiao) that strengthened China’s international relations. Additionally, former Chinese president Deng Xiaoping asked his successor, Jiang Zemin to maintain a ‘low profile’ and not to seek leadership in international affairs – tao guang yang hui. This proclamation is part of Deng Xiaoping’s 28 character strategy. Zhao (1996), outlines the 28 character strategy as follows;
‘leng jing cha (watch and analyze developments calmly), wen zhu zhen jiao (secure our own positions), chen zhe ying fu (deal with changes with confidence), tao guang yang hui (conceal our capacities), shan you shou zhuo (be good at keeping a low profile), jue bu dang tou (never become the leader), you sou zou wei (make some contributions)’ (Zhao Q. , 1996).

Cabestan (2010) asserts that this strategy is the basis of China’s foreign policy and external relations in the 21st century which is the present day.

Nye (1990) describes Soft Power as a situation which occurs when one country gets other countries to want what it wants in contrast with hard or command power in which a country orders other country to do what it wants. Moreover, Soft Power is based on the attraction of a state’s ideology and culture. States tend to be less resistant to legitimate power wielders in international politics. Nonetheless, Kurlantzick (2006) argues China’s Soft Power includes investments, aid and other forms of influence through traditional diplomacy. Fijalkowski (2011) explains that Beijing has become a major player on the African continent because of its ‘charm offensive’ that is based on ‘attraction’ entrenched in its Soft Power that envisions mutual win-win relations. However, for China to exercise its Soft Power on the African continent, African states must be willing to buy their ideology.

China has managed to employ a more sophisticated diplomacy and active cultural cooperation through its Confucius Institutes in most parts of the developing world. Consequentially, China has been able to compete the West’s ideological domination and assert its own polity on the basis of longevity (Cabestan, 2010). Hess (2010), contends that China uses the Confucius Institutes in its foreign relations to project her Soft Power. The Soft Power concept is not sufficient to explain why Sino-African relations have intensified all along, it only forms part of the reasons. Shared
development goals is another area of interest that plays a significant role in the deepened relations between Africa and external development partners.

2.5 Development Finance and Aid Dependency

Haifang (2010) observes that China started its aid to Africa at almost the same period that Western aid started flowing to Africa in early 1950s. To be precise, the author highlights China’s increased ties with the developing world after the Bandung conference in 1955. Larkin (1975) highlights that the Chinese aid to Africa was guided by five principles that include; (1) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence (Larkin, 1975). These principles still underpin the present-day Chinese foreign and aid policy towards African states (Haifang, 2010).

Haifang (2010) points out that the Five Guiding Principles were replaced by China’s ‘Eight Principles of Economic and Technical Aid’ announced by Premier Zhou Enlai on the 15th day of January 1964. The eight principles emphasize that; ‘Chinese technical assistance should build local capacities, and Chinese experts working in Africa should have the same standard of living as the local experts, economic cooperation should promote self-reliance and not dependency, and respect for the recipient’s sovereignty should mean imposing no ‘political or economic conditions ‘on recipient governments’. Later on in the post -1970s reform era, Premier Deng Xiaoping adopted the ‘Four principles on Sino-African Economic and Technical Cooperation’ which are based on; equality, mutual benefit, pursuing practical results, and seeking common development. The author observes that China’s policy shift was shaped by the globalization phenomenon in which China had to redefine her interests based on the changing nature of international politics.
On the other hand, (Wang & Elliot, 2014) research findings in eight SSA countries reveal that Chinese who are in Africa are also involved in land-grabbing, establishing environmentally unfriendly extraction projects, use colonial styles of living and working in Africa, and engage in collusion in terms of corrupt deals and bribery with the local businessmen and officials. Therefore, this fraudulent actions violet the principles of engagement that China has committed itself to over a number of years.

Most importantly, it won’t go without pointing out that Africa and other developing countries have benefited from China’s aid and cheap loans (Cabestan, 2010). The loans and aid have enabled most African countries meet their development agenda both at the national and transnational levels. Fisher (2013) supports the recent scholarship which avers that Africa’s aid dependence does not exclude African governments’, and individual actors from securing and exercising agency in relation with their donors.

2.6 African Agency in international politics

Brown and Harman (2013) contend that the study of Africa’s international relations has for a long period been dominated by an attempt to explain how the continent has been governed, shaped and marginalized by foreign and external actors. All along, the African continent has been viewed as a passive actor because its composition of ‘small states’ or minor powers who have little influence in the international system. The authors debunk the myth that Africa is ‘irrelevant’ in the international system by pointing out that Africa matters in policy areas especially in multilateral forums. In this forums, Africa has been vocal and influential in global trade agenda setting, peace and conflict discussions, areas of rising powers and human security threats such as health and climate change.
Munene (2005) demonstrates the global shift in power relationships using the example of Kenya and South Africa in what he terms as the ‘defiant’ states. The defiance of Kenya was displayed in Cancun, Mexico in 2003 during the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations when Mukhisa Kituyi by then the minister for Trade and Industry in Kenya led a delegation of developing countries out of the negotiation while defending their trade interests. This is an example of the so called small power’s assertive negotiation at the international arena. On the other hand, South Africa harshly condemned the US and British invasion in Iraq. The condemnation earned South Africa the moral authority among the great powers of the West. Through the choices highlighted, African countries have been able to earn respect and legitimacy and accrued more power which has sustained and advocated for their interests in international relations (Munene, 2005). The author has presented literature that is explicit on Africa’s rising role and importance at the global stage especially with the traditional powers of the West and their surrogate institutions but it fails to juxtapose Africa’s relations with emerging powers. This study intends to shift this argument to the case of Africa’s relations with China as an emerging power.

2.7 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is a platform established by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in collaboration with African states for collective consultation and dialogue (Taylor, 2011). The forum was established in 2000, with triennial ministerial summits taking place alternatively in China and Africa. The author views the establishment of the summit as institutionalization of Sino-African relations to concrete relations. On the other hand, Zeleza (2014) argues that FOCAC was created to coordinate and consolidate the rapidly growing Africa-China relationship. Both Taylor (2011) and Zeleza (2014) maintain similar arguments
about the inception of FOCAC as a high level organ in Sino-Africa relations. However, the role of African agency is not clearly spelled out.

This study keenly observes the nitty-gritty and proceedings from the first FOCAC summit in October 2000 to the most recent one held in September 2018. For instance, the third ministerial conference held in November 2006 was so remarkable to the extent that Zeleza dubs ‘the glittering Beijing Summit’ in which China launched the “New Strategic Partnership” with Africa (Zeleza, 2008). Just before this summit, China had fulfilled its US$ 500,000 funding to NEPAD under the FOCAC 2004-06 Action Plan. The 2004-06 Action Plan outlined the China’s support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU). Through NEPAD, Africa’s priority was prevention and treatment of communicable and infectious diseases, infrastructure development, and human resource development and agriculture (Berger, 2007). The alignment of interests between China and African countries is an interesting case of study because NEPAD only provides a framework of generalized interests and not the specific interests of different African states.

FOCAC represents a complex web of relations and interests (Naidu, 2007). Despite the wide range of interests and relations, FOCAC has four main objectives. According to (FOCAC, 2018), these objectives include; (1) Equal consultation, (2) Enhancing understanding (3) Expanding consensus (4) Strengthening friendship and promoting cooperation. The dramatic growth in the relationship between Africa and China is one of the great stories of the twenty-first century, part of the profound transformations taking place in the global political economy’ (Zeleza, 2014). However, there has been excitement, consternation, and confusion among different stakeholders. Amid the wide skepticism and optimism, this study envisions to investigate the role of African agency in China-Africa relations under FOCAC. The puzzle in this context is the unification of
Africa’s interests into the umbrella of African agency and how the agency is executed to suit the interests of all African actors.

2.8 Sino-African Relations in Perspective

Sun (2018) observes that despite the growing China-Africa relations under FOCAC, China’s foreign direct investment toward Africa remains the lowest among all continents. In 2017 for instance, China’s direct investment to Africa stood at $ 3.1 billion compared to Latin America’s $ 18 billion. Moreover, in the same year, Chinese investment in Latin America was $200 billion, double Africa’s $100 billion. This data indicates the low share of trade and investment that the continent has with China (Sun, 2018). According to the Chinese ministry of commerce, China-Africa trade amounted to $170 billion in 2017 which was a great improvement (MOFCOM, 2018).

China is now Africa's largest trade partner, exporting to basically all 54 African countries with no clear reliance on any single market, yet four countries (Angola, Libya, Sudan and South Africa) provide over 71% of China's imports from Africa. All together with the market of four other exporters (Congo, DRC, Zambia and Equatorial Guinea), 84% of China's imports from Africa is oil (one-third of China's total oil import), timber and mineral ores.

2.9 African Agency in Sino-African Relations

Besada and O’Bright (2017) assert that China’s relationship with Africa has transformed into one defined by dynamism and African agency. The transformed relationship has matured to grant Africa a favorable place better than its place in the evolving stages of the relationship (Besada & O'Bright, 2017). The authors highlight that in the advanced Sino-Africa relations, African states
have an opportunity to establish for themselves an assertive role in investments and trade deals, and enforcing compliance to labor, environmental and human rights respect.

According to Lampert and Mohan (2013), Sino-African relationships are increasingly locally driven and mediated than is generally acknowledged. Through the lens of reinserting African agency in China-Africa relations, Africa ceases to be a passive actor in the engagements. The authors maintain that African actors have shaped these relationships in ways that project their interests and further reflect the wider social benefits. The agency in this context is exerted at the individual level and through the civil society within African states Lampert and Mohan (2013). Exerting agency at the individual level seems to be beneficial to the few African elites especially those in political and business cycles. Such agency is followed by governance maladjustments. This study aims at probing collective agency that reflects the interests of the African states projected by regional bodies like the AU, and the collective bargains under FOCAC in the various summits.

Despite the African agency, critics of the Sino-Africa relationship view China’s engagement with Africa in the same way the European colonial powers related with Africa in terms of a source of cheap raw materials, an export market for manufactured goods, and an outlet for the surplus capital.

2.10 A Win-Win Relationship or Chinese Neo-Colonialism in Africa

As Strauss and Saavedra (2009) observe that there is a remarkable lack of general knowledge about China in Africa, there is also minimal interest among some Chinese policy makers and scholars about Africa. Present research shows that there exists wide skepticism on the relations between China and Africa. This skepticism is expressed among scholars and even African state
leaders and policy makers. For instance, Onjala (2017) in analyzes the sustainability of China’s loans to Kenya and how the Sino-African ties lack transparency. Moreover, Zhao (2014) highlights the critics that have been there before in this relations. Zhao identifies three scenarios that include; First, In June 2011 by then the United States secretary of state Hillary Clinton accused China of ‘New Colonialism’ in her visit to Zambia, Secondly, at the 2012 FOCAC summit, South African President Jacob Zuma remarked that China-Africa economic ties were unsustainable in the long run. Third, in 2013, Nigeria’s central bank governor Lamido Sanusi wrote that Africa must not romanticize the relationship because Beijing has her own interest just like other major global powers. Amid these wide skepticisms, African leaders still attend the FOCAC summit triennially. This study intends to probe the consistent and growing participation of African leaders in the summit to answer the ‘win-win’ skepticism.

2.11.0 Theoretical Framework

The term theory means different things to different people. Theory can be viewed as a way of making the world or some part of it more intelligible or better understood (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). Therefore, this study will use various theoretical prisms to achieve its research objectives. This study uses the rational choice theory in its analysis. Proper application of this theory will facilitate a rigorous analysis to understand and explain the past, present, and foretell the future of Sino – Africa relations under FOCAC.

2.11.1 Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory is rooted in neoclassical economics as a model of individuals and their basic behavior. This theory has a handful proponents who offer different arguments in their explanation and its applicability (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013). Proponents like Debra Satz and John Ferejohn (1994) present an approach that is applicable and insightful to this study. The
proponents veer off the ‘traditional’ view of rational choice as a psychological theory dealing with mental state analysis of an actor at any stage of his or her decision making. Their approach posits that whatever happens in the social world, including international relations, can be explained by individual choices depending on the particular given context. Therefore, the actions of states and organizations can also be explained by choices made by the individual actors. The individuals in this study include bureaucrats and politicians whose actions are rational and self-centered. Rational theorists incorporate collective action in this approach by arguing that the actions of groups and organizations be reduced to the actions of individuals (Scott, 2000).

Applying rational choice theory to multilateral engagements in this study, Green and Fox (2007) introduce the Nash equilibria concept based on the strategic game theoretic approach in that; a political institution or the marketplace is said to be in equilibrium if none of the individual actors has a motive of changing his or her behavior unilaterally. The authors give an example of the prisoners’ dilemma as actors who are faced with cooperation or defection as options which shall determine their rewards. If both players cooperate, they will receive moderate sized rewards, if both actors defect, they receive nothing. And if one actor defects while the other one cooperates, the defector gains more while the cooperator suffers a loss. Rational choice theory facilitates this study to find out the agency of individuals who participate in the FOCAC summits together with the conduct of Sino-Africa diplomacy.

2.12 Literature Gap

Review of literature suggests that a lot of studies have been conducted to study the influence of China in Africa together with bilateral and multilateral engagements between the two counterparts as cited in (Zeleza, 2008; Zeleza, 2014; and Besada and O’Bright, 2017). However, most of these studies have been undertaken on a broad basis of issues ranging from politics,
economics, and cultural aspects. With the inception of FOCAC in 2000, (Taylor, 2011 and Zeleza, 2014) view the move as a transformational juncture for African countries. The authors minimally spell out the role and influence of the agency exerted by African actors in the relationship. The question of African agency is critical in the analysis of China-Africa ties because of its emphasis on Africa as an actor not necessarily or even always viewed as acted upon by China and other global powers (Brown and Herman, 2013; Fisher, 2013, Lampert and Mohan, 2013; and Chipaike and Knowledge, 2018).

More literature suggests studies that are done on the basis of pro-China and anti-China with wide skepticism of the role of China on the continent. For instance, (Alden and Alves, 2008) view China’s role in Africa as a result of globalization and its positive impact while on the other hand (Onjala, 2017; Shattuck, 2018; and Were, 2018) question China’s debt trends in Africa and the resultant Chinese ‘debt trap diplomacy’ that grow African countries debt distress. As observed by Strauss and Saveedra (2009), there is lack of general knowledge about China in Africa. Therefore, this study conducts an objective study to reveal how African actors exert agency and shape China-Africa institutionalized relations under FOCAC. Many studies have not captured the gap.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview framework of the study. Kothari (2014) defines research methodology as a way to systematically solve the research problem, meaning that it is the science of studying how research is done scientifically. Therefore, research methodology is the framework in which the research is conducted. Methodology has also been described as the overall approach to the entire process of a research study (Bryman, 2012).

This chapter outlines the overall research strategy used to integrate the study components that are; the introduction, literature review, and the research strategy for data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research Strategy

According to Bryman (2012), the connection between theory and research, epistemological considerations, and ontological considerations-quantitative and qualitative research can be taken to form two distinctive clusters of research strategy. Thus, a research strategy refers to the general orientation to conduct the research. This study employs a mixed methodology research which combines both quantitative and qualitative strategies. The mixed methodology approach is based on secondary data from the various appropriate and relevant units of analysis.

3.3 Unit of Analysis

Babbie (2011), argues that the unit of analysis is also the units of observation. Therefore, unit of analysis are the things we examine in order to create summary descriptions of all these units and explain a difference between them. According to Bryman (2012), the units of analysis include; people, organizations, documents, and departments. The unit of analysis for this study is pegged on official documents derived from the various official states websites, heads of states and
governments officials’ statements, conference papers, journal articles and published books on
African agency and Sino-Africa relations, and FOCAC summits reports.

3.4 The Study Sampling and Selection Procedure

In quantitative research, sampling revolves around probability sampling while in qualitative
research sampling revolves around purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012). Sampling is not only
limited to people, a researcher can sample documents guided by the research questions of the
study. This study uses purposive sampling approach on secondary sources of data that include;
policy documents, official government statements, FOCAC press releases, Center for Chinese
Studies, journal databases, media sources such as Foreign Affairs, the Financial Times, and the
Economist, the Daily Nation, the Standard, the Star and publications in relation to the role of
African agency in FOCAC. The study’s purposive sampling is guided by the research questions
outlined.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

This study carries out extensive secondary data collection from the various units of analysis to
obtain statement information and statistical data from official government websites,
governments’ reports, and the FOCAC summits reports. Secondary data collection is guided by
the research objectives and research questions of this study. Bryman (2012) describes secondary
analysis as the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the
collection of these data, for purposes that in all possibility were not foreseen by those responsible
for the data collection.
3.6 Research Procedure

This study uses a systematic review of literature based on the main thematic areas of the study. This approach helps to categorize the literature per the thematic relevance. In this process, the study interrogates African agency in Sino-Africa relations from a theoretical angle in which scholars and theorists in this field are engaged to examine the ontological, epistemological, and the methodological approaches of African agency in the relations under study. This study establishes a theoretical and practical link of the role of African agency in shaping the present day Sino-Africa relations under the FOCAC framework of engagement. The systematic review of literature enables this research to collect relevant data on the subjects under study.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

According to Bryman (2012), content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner. The data gathered is thematically analyzed, further, Babbie (2011) writes that content analysis in mixed methods research is based on the rationale for the combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies. The data is content analyzed concurrently with interpretations through the prisms of relevant social theories.

3.8 Ethical Issues

In any type of research, ethics are, and should be considered. This study fully complies with the ethical standards required. Israel and Hay (2006) identify ensuring research integrity as one of the main ethical issues that social scientists should observe. This research fulfills observation of ethical issues by properly citing other people’s work to avoid plagiarism and reporting the accurate findings without bias.
3.9 Limitation of the Study

The study is more likely to be affected by the quality of data gathered from secondary sources. Bryman (2012) sets out quality of data as a limitation of the approach because the researcher lacks the full control of data from secondary sources unlike the researcher who collects data by him/herself. However, this study will ensure fundamental checks such as the credibility of websites, background information checks, and extraction of data from authentic peer-reviewed journals to enhance the quality of the data and findings.

The study is limited by the unavailability of some official statistical data from the Chinese government. For instance China is not a member of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, therefore the organization is not a reliable source of Chinese foreign direct investment data and hence new efforts of data collection from alternative sources.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents data gathered from the relevant sources that include; peer reviewed journals, organizations’ databases, books, and official reports from government spokesmen and representatives both from African countries and China. The analysis will be done thematically guided by the research questions to draw precise findings. This chapter is divided into three subsections as follows; an examination of the trends and patterns of engagement between China and Africa under FOCAC, an assessment of the FOCAC objectives for Africa, and finally finding out the leverage achieved by African Agency in Sino-African relations.

4.1 Agency, Trends and Patterns of Engagement between China and Africa under FOCAC

Some China-Africa luminaries like (Alden and Alves 2008; Grimm 2014; Besada and O’Bright 2017) observe that Sino-African relations under FOCAC are not a new phenomenon because modern-era Sino-African relations stretch back to the 1950s after the Chinese revolution and the formation of the PRC in 1949 led by chairman Mao Zedong. Despite the contestations, challenges, and skepticism mostly expressed in the media and academia, the maturing Sino-Africa relations remains to be one of the greatest stories of the twenty first century and more highlighted is the institutionalization of these relations under FOCAC just in the inauguration year of the century (Zeleza 2014; Mlambo, Kushamba, and Simawu 2016). All along in this relationship, Africa has been able to insert and exercise its agency beyond the state elites level through a multi-faceted negotiation and agenda-setting approach (Mohan and Lampert, 2013).
According to FOCAC 2018, the scope of its membership is comprised of China, 55 African states and the African Union Commission. FOCAC divides China-Africa relations into four main taxonomies as follows; Political exchanges, Cultural exchanges, Economic cooperation, and finally the Peace and Security partnership. This study focuses on the Political, Economic, and Cultural interactions that form the foundation of international relations.

Figure 1 below illustrates a brief overview of the eighteen years of Sino-Africa relations under FOCAC. From the overview, there has been increased participation by the African counterparts to involve the representation of all the fifty five African states heads or their delegates together with the representation of the AU through the AUC. The information presented in the diagram elaborates the attendees, the theme, and the main outcome(s) of FOCAC summits.

The subsequent section offers an in-depth thematic analysis of China-Africa relations in the political, economic, and social spheres.
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<th>Event</th>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
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<tr>
<td>Beijing, China – 2000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Beijing, China</td>
<td>Ministers from 44 African states, 80 ministers from China, and representatives from the OAU</td>
<td>Formation of a new economic and political order in the twenty first century to strengthen China-Africa economic cooperation</td>
<td>Beijing declaration of FOCAC and initiation of the programme for China-Africa cooperation in socio-economic development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 2003</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</td>
<td>Ministers from 44 African states, 70 ministers from China, and representatives from the AU</td>
<td>“Pragmatic and Action Oriented Cooperation”</td>
<td>Chinese government granted free market access to some African commodities</td>
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<td>- China identified 8 African countries as approved tourist designations</td>
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<td>- China would train about 10,000 African personnel</td>
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<td>- Increased Sino-Africa free trade and investments</td>
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<td>- Promote and develop small businesses in Africa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Open up an African trading center in Yiwu, China</td>
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<td>- Increased development loans to African countries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- China affirmed support to Africa’s Agenda 2063</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The two sides pledged to increase cooperation in political, economic, and security matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing, China – 2006</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Beijing, China</td>
<td>48 African countries together with 41 heads of government and state</td>
<td>“Friendship, peace, cooperation, and development”</td>
<td>Declaration of the Beijing Action Plan and the Beijing summit of FOCAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Increasing assistance to Africa by twofold</td>
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<td>- Launch of the China-Africa Development Fund</td>
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<td>- China to build for the African Union a conference center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing, China – 2012</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Beijing, China</td>
<td>50 African states</td>
<td>“Building on past achievements and opening up new prospects for the new type of China Africa strategic partnership”</td>
<td>Beijing Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>- Increasing Sino-Africa cooperation of security matters</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Consolidating China’s cooperation with the AU</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Focusing on ‘soft power’ relations based on cultural exchanges and people-to-people relations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- China affirmed its support to multilateral trading system and a vibrant world economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- African leaders renewed their support for the ‘One Belt-One Road Initiative’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 Looking Back: 18 Years of FOCAC  Source: FOCAC 2019 [https://www.focac.org/eng/](https://www.focac.org/eng/)
4.1.1 China-Africa Relations under FOCAC
In this study, China-Africa/Africa-China relations take three main forms; Political, economic, and social relations. These forms of relations are outlined as the foundation of interaction between China and the African counterparts under the FOCAC umbrella.

4.1.2 Political Relations
China – Africa political relations are neither new nor did they began with the initiation of FOCAC in the twenty first century. Van Staden, Alden, and Wu (2018) trace China-Africa political relations to the 1955 Bandung Asian-African conference and the aftermath formalization of political ties through official diplomatic missions. Some scholars like (Enuka, 2011; and Benabdallah, 2019) observe the diplomatic trends especially high level visits that the two counterparts have had since the establishment of the PRC and independence of African countries. Enuka (2011) writes that between 1963 and 2004, more than 450 African leaders have paid about 609 official visits to China while about 93 Chinese leaders of high ranks including the Premier(s), president(s), and foreign ministers have paid a total of 150 visits to different African countries. (Enuka, 2011). As of January 2019, China’s top leadership had made more than 79 diplomatic visits in 43 African countries in just a period of less than a decade (Benabdallah, 2019). In this context, the focus is on the political interactions that have been pursued since the inception of FOCAC and further the AU’s role in engaging China in FOCAC.

In 2002, just two years after the establishment of FOCAC, Africa’s regional body OAU- founded in 1963- transformed to the current AU. This transformation led to a renewed African agenda of tackling economic and social issues as opposed to the OAU’s agenda of decolonization and Africa’s political integration (Adejo, 2001). With the strengthening of intra-African systems, China supported the progress through congratulatory remarks in FOCAC 2000 and 2003. Later
on in 2006, China’s president Hu Jintao vowed that China will help Africa build a conference center at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. By then, the AU had attended the 2003 and 2006 FOCAC summits as an observer member till the AU-China dialogue was initiated in 2008 to matters of cooperation and ‘hot issues’ especially the conflicts in Somalia, Darfur, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In 2012, the AU attended FOCAC as a full permanent member and China reciprocated this representation by establishing official diplomatic relations with the AU through its representative at the AU headquarters (see Van Staden, Alden, and Wu 2018: 10). In 2015, the AUC attended as full member of FOCAC and later on in 2018 the AUC chair Moussa Faki released a joint communiqué with his Chinese counterpart president Xi Jinping both reiterating cooperation commitments and full implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action (AUC Communique, 2018).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>The establishment of the African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>China sends congratulatory remarks in support of the African Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>China vows to support Africa build the AU conference center in Addis Ababa in support of Africa’s integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Africa launches the AU-China dialogue to discuss matters pertinent to Africa’s growth and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>AU attended the FOCAC summit in Beijing, China as a full permanent member as China reciprocated the same by establishing official relations with AU through appointing a representative to the AU headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>The African Union Commission officially attended the FOCAC summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>The AUC chair Moussa Faki held released a joint communiqué with the China’s president Xi Jinping to affirm ‘the renewed Sino-Africa relations’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1 Selected Outcomes in the AU-China Relations**

Source: Author’s interpretation of FOCAC and AU relations documents

The trends in the eighteen years of FOCAC indicate increased African participation in the summits held. The participation has been significant in terms of increased number of African actors, renewed cooperation commitments, and the ‘unification’ of Africa’s voice in the summits through the AU and its commission.

The AU has increasingly become an imperative body through which African actors especially the African governments project their one voice while dealing with external actors like China. Although there are budgetary constraints to finance the organization’s operations and noticeable
competing individual state’s interests in engaging bilaterally with China (32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, 2018; and Van Staden, Wu, and Alden, 2018), these challenges do not imply that Africa remains passive in its relationship with China. Even though the AU seems not to be well structured to negotiate on behalf of Africa, there have been efforts of reformation to maximize its potential as a negotiator in international politics.

The reforms in the Union are demonstrated using President Kagame’s proposal (2017). The set of reforms articulated in President Paul Kagame’s proposal (the incumbent chairperson of the AU) *The Imperative to Strengthen Our Union*, launched and published at the 28th AU summit in January 2017 slams the organization’s inadequate capacity to tackle contemporary issues among them; acts of terrorism, challenges of development, and peace and security matters. The issues are condensed into four main categories: Political affairs, economic integration, consolidating Africa’s global voice and representation, and lastly issues revolving around peace and security domains. In addition, the report proposes reforms in terms of leadership at the AU and boost Africa’s voice through adequate representation in Forums and relations with external actors. The main forums on focus were Japan’s Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and FOCAC (Wu, 2017).

Wu (2017) argues that the report can be summarized as ‘less is more’, the author refers to the reduced and centralized number of representatives to spearhead negotiations on behalf of African governments in forums and external relations. The change will turnaround Africa’s bilateral engagements as the report proposes a smaller African delegation comprised of the triumvirate; (the incumbent, former, and incoming AU chairpersons), the AUC chairperson, and the chairperson of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as opposed to huge number of delegates like the 55 African heads of state/government and delegates in the FOCAC 2018
summit. Finally, the author observes that, the reforms to Forum and summit meetings with external actors will boost Africa’s bargaining power with China.

Apart from the reforms at the AU, there have been tremendous and successful bargain achievements through the China-AU Strategic Dialogues, the most recent (7th) strategic dialogue was held in February 2018. The AU-China dialogue was officially launched in 2008 to facilitate high level consultation on pertinent matters affecting both parties (According to FOCAC, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China). The dialogue was held jointly between China’s foreign minister Wang Yi and the AUC’s chair Moussa Faki Mahamat. The outcome of the meeting was based on five overarching areas of cooperation including; AU capacity building, peace and security, infrastructure development, public health and prevention of diseases, and aviation and tourism areas. These areas are also covered in the AU Agenda 2063 which serves as Africa’s blueprint for development. Most importantly Africa initiated the plan to establish an AU representative’s office in China in an effort to strengthen Sino-African relations through constant consultations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People Republic of China, 2019).

4.1.2 Peace and Security Cooperation under FOCAC

Peace and Security stands out to be among Africa’s main priorities alongside infrastructure development and the economic wellbeing of its population. According Bakken and Rustad (2018) analysis of conflict trends in Africa, the authors reveal that armed conflict is prevalent throughout the continent in which there was an increase in the level of conflict in the period between 2007 and 2017. For instance, in 2007, the continent encountered 12 conflicts in 10 countries versus an increase to 18 conflicts in 13 countries in 2017 (Bakken & Rustad, 2018). The AU has renewed its efforts on ensuring peace and stability in Africa through its key
initiatives like the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Peace and Security cooperation was among the main outcomes of the FOCAC 2018 summit and the 7th AU-China strategic dialogue 2018.

As part of the renewed efforts, the African Union launched the ‘Silencing the Guns’ strategy to help combat the perpetual conflict situation on the continent especially in regions like the Great Lakes, the Sahel, Horn of Africa, and the Lake Chad basin. The 2013 strategy aims at realizing a conflict and terrorism free Africa by 2020 (Gavin, 2018). As of 2017, the 5th edition of the APSA impact report indicates that 78% of AU/RECs peacekeeping and intervention efforts as ‘partially successful’ or ‘successful’ (APSA, 2017).

As the relationship between China and Africa grows, both parties are forced to adopt new measures to counter their strategic interests. Alden (2018) observes that China stepped up its role in Africa’s peacekeeping missions by first changing its policy of non-interference to selective intervention and second by shifting from non-combative undertakings to combat ready contingents under the auspices of the UN. With the shift, Beijing has been able to intervene in South Sudan and Mali, increasing the number of Chinese peacekeepers to over 2700 now. More so, China set aside $1 Billion for UN peacekeeping missions in which Africa benefited a whopping $100 million for capacity building and other APSA related programs like early warning systems and strengthening of the AU standby force (Alden, 2018).

Most of the challenges as observed by the AU are security related. China has increased its peacekeeping operations in Africa more than any other continent in the world and one of the largest contributor of peacekeeping troops among the Permanent 5 in the UN’s Security Council. Chinese peacekeeping troops are not only military personnel but a blend of civilian police,
medical practitioners, and technical specialists who assist in most of the peacekeeping related operations (UNPKO, 2019).

Africa’s ultimate goal through the setup mechanisms like APSA is securing and stabilizing the continent as established by the year 2023. China has been vibrant on the continent’s peace and stability missions since its policy change in 2003. Later on in 2005 during the FOCAC V, in Beijing launched the China-Africa cooperative partnership for peace and security to align its interests with those of the African continent (Toussaint, 2018). Why is China interested in Africa’s peace and security operations? Duggan (2018) proposes a two way approach in which; first, China exemplifies a South-South cooperation model that strives to solve common problems among the developing countries and second, is Beijing’s strategy to project its soft power in Africa in support of the state’s ‘peaceful rise’ policy. On the second argument, the author argues that Beijing supports African-led solutions to conflict on the continent including the AU-led peacekeeping operations that seem to be under resourced and undertrained. China offers financial support alongside sufficient training and supply of equipment to the AU and other regional organizations (Duggan, 2018).
Figure 2 Chinese Involved in UN Peacekeeping in Africa in the Past Decade (2009 – 2018)


Figure 1 indicates data of Chinese peacekeepers deployed in the seven UN peacekeeping missions in a span of ten years as reported by the UN peacekeeping operations statistics. The seven peacekeeping operations are:

- United nations Mission in South Sudan – UNMISS
• United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo – MONUSCO

• United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara – MINURSO

• United Nations Mission in Liberia – UNMIL

• United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali - MINUSMA

• United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire - UNOCI

• United Nations – African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur – UNAMID

Figure 3 Contributions per Selected Peacekeeping Missions in Africa as of April 2019

Source: Authors interpretation of the UNKPO (2019) data.

Available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/china

Chart 1 shows the highest number of troops sent by China to some of the UN peacekeeping missions on the continent. The high number of personnel sent by China is substantial to indicate
China’s commitment to fulfill the outcome of FOCAC 2018 in which one of Africa’s ultimate aim was to stabilize conflict prone member states.

Figure 4 The percentage Share of Chinese Peacekeepers around the World

Source: Author’s interpretation of the UN Peacekeeping Portal data (2019)

In relation to Image 1, pie chart 1 indicates that from the total number of Chinese peacekeepers (2,519) around the world, the largest percentage (83%) is deployed in Africa. China’s large peacekeeping contingents in Africa indicates Beijing’s commitment towards Africa’s initiative of silencing the guns on the continent by the year 2020. Beijing’s commitment was reiterated in the aftermath of FOCAC 2018 press release (FOCAC, 2018).
Earlier on in February 2019, Chinese president and fellow African counterparts held a dialogue summit on the implementation of the peace and security forum held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This was a follow up forum after its establishment proposal in the FOCAC 2018. The key agenda of the initiative is enhancing mutual cooperation on the continent’s security issues based on dialogue and Africa’s interests (Ndichu, 2019). As consultation ensued, the FOCAC follow up team released a press statement citing a consensus achieved between the Chinese president and African leaders. The agreement was anchored on the “Chinese Model” of attaining peace and security that strives to address the underlying causes of instability, including inequality and poverty. The two are among Africa’s biggest challenges and through the Chinese model, China has renewed its commitment on helping Africa achieve wealth creation and employment opportunities for its population (FOCAC, 2019).

4.1.3 Economic Relations

Economic relations form a key pillar of engagement between the two counterparts. Enhancing economic and trade cooperation was at the centerpiece of establishing FOCAC. The forum has since become a strategic summit of solidifying ties between Beijing and African countries (Cisse, 2012). Trade and economic ties have grown significantly since FOCAC I in 2000. Asongu and Aminkeng (2013) observe that China-Africa economic ties have been full of controversy regarding who benefits more in the economic relationship especially trade with cited trade imbalances scenarios.
4.1.4 China – Africa Trade and Investment Ties

China-Africa trade patterns are determined by various factors. Eisenman (2012) points out that China’s trade with Africa is determined by its capital-intensive production together with its comparative advantage especially in labor intensive production that by and large outdoes Africa’s. Other factors include Africa’s rich mineral resources which heavily attract China’s interest on the continent. As of 2013, more than half of Sub-Saharan Africa countries incurred a trade deficit with China which resulted to lower import prices due to the increased price of commodity goods and manufactured goods. Concurrently, imports from China lead to manufacturing pressure to local industries as a result of the Chinese competition (Drummond & Liu, 2013). Therefore, the economic spillovers from China’s trade and investment activities have derailed fast economic growth due to China’s market demands and supply at the same time. According to Eleanor Albert of the council on foreign relations, China’s economic growth and its interest in Africa led it to surpass the US to become Africa’s largest trade counterpart in 2009. China accounts for about 14 to 21 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa imports and 14 to 16 percent of its exports (Albert, 2017).
According to statistics from the Chinese ministry of commerce, the country’s total export and import volume with Africa in 2018 was at a record high of $204.19 billion which translates to an increase of 19.7%. From Figure 1, China’s exports to Africa were $104.75 billion, an increase by
10.8% while China’s import from Africa were $99.28 billion an increase by 30.8%. The 2018 increase in trade activity between China and Africa marked the highest rate of trade growth in the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Change in imports (2006-2016)</th>
<th>Total value of imports in millions USD</th>
<th>Change in exports (2006-2016)</th>
<th>Total value of exports in millions USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>51,849</td>
<td>-66%</td>
<td>95,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>181%</td>
<td>156,632</td>
<td>186%</td>
<td>310,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>107%</td>
<td>30,825</td>
<td>147%</td>
<td>32,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>142%</td>
<td>19,675</td>
<td>168%</td>
<td>5,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>192%</td>
<td>26,139</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>10,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>233%</td>
<td>435,737</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>459,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>874,981</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>827,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>219,091</td>
<td>-66%</td>
<td>482,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>3,432,539</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3,573,221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Africa’s Global Trade Share


In the period 2006 - 2016, there has been a shift in Africa’s trade with western countries in favor of increased trade with emerging economies as demonstrated by the decline in trade by 5% to the European Union and 66% to the United States in table 2 above. There has been more trade in
terms of Africa’s exports to Russia, India, Indonesia, and Turkey. Africa’s exports to China remained stable at 53% despite the shift to the new economies that recorded double trade percentages. The stability signifies profitable trade and economic ties between African countries and China.

**Figure 6 Chinese FDI Flow to Africa (2003-2017)**


Figure 3 on Chinese FDI flow to Africa indicates an unpredictable trend in how China invests in Africa. Although there are unstable fluctuations, 2008 marked a ceiling high of Chinese FDI flows marked at approximately $ 5.5 billion. According to the 2013 white paper on China-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation, there was a stable and constant flow of China’s direct
investment between 2009 and 2012 estimated at an annual rate of 20.5% (Chinese State Council, 2013). In relation to the 20.5% remarkable annual growth of China’s direct investment to Africa, the years 2009 and 2012 are significant because of the FOCAC summits that were held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt and in Beijing, China respectively. Figure 1 (Looking back at the 18 Years of FOCAC) cited earlier in this document highlights important economic outcomes in the two FOCAC summits. The outcomes include; increasing Sino-Africa free trade and investment, promoting and developing small businesses in Africa, Opening up a trading center in Yiwu, China, and increasing development loans to African countries under the Sharm el-Sheikh action plan while the subsequent summit unveiled the Beijing action plan whose major economic outcome was Innovating methods for boosting economic cooperation.

Despite China’s increased direct investments to Africa in this era of FOCAC, the US remains the biggest direct investor in Africa according to CARI statistical comparison of direct investments between 2003 and 2017. The comparison indicates that in the (2003-2017) period, the US FDI flow stands at $54.29 billion while Chinese FDI flow to Africa is at $33.67 billion, a gap of $20.62 billion as demonstrated below in chart 3. Although the 2008 China’s direct investment boom in Africa is the only year that China surpassed the US based on CARI’s statistics (CARI, 2018). The implication of the gap in FDI flows between US and Africa and China and Africa calls for a pragmatic roadmap of boosting FDI flows under the FOCAC umbrella so as to encourage Chinese companies to invest more in Africa and vice versa.
Authors like Onjala, 2017; Shattuck, 2018; and Were, 2018 have provided detailed analysis and commentary on what is viewed as ‘Beijing’s debt trap diplomacy’. The concept is opined as China’s habit of offering uncontrolled huge amounts of low interest loans to countries that stand very narrow realistic chances of paying back the loans. Shattuck (2018) further observes that for China to forgive a country’s debt, it forces a concession in which it acquires a major asset of the country, usually a port. Such forceful acquisition of key assets has been documented on the continent for countries like Djibouti where China seized its major port and the same has also happened outside Africa in countries like Greece and Sri Lanka. However, Were (2018) argues that china-Africa debt is majorly shaped by loan demand and supply factors. Africa’s appetite for

**Figure 7 US Vs Chinese FDI Flow in $ bn (2003-2017)**

Source: Author’s interpretation of CARI FDI flows to African countries data

**4.1.5 China Africa Debt Relations since 2000**

Authors like Onjala, 2017; Shattuck, 2018; and Were, 2018 have provided detailed analysis and commentary on what is viewed as ‘Beijing’s debt trap diplomacy’. The concept is opined as China’s habit of offering uncontrolled huge amounts of low interest loans to countries that stand very narrow realistic chances of paying back the loans. Shattuck (2018) further observes that for China to forgive a country’s debt, it forces a concession in which it acquires a major asset of the country, usually a port. Such forceful acquisition of key assets has been documented on the continent for countries like Djibouti where China seized its major port and the same has also happened outside Africa in countries like Greece and Sri Lanka. However, Were (2018) argues that china-Africa debt is majorly shaped by loan demand and supply factors. Africa’s appetite for
loans is high due to its infrastructure development deficits among other factors while China’s supply is based on the nature of its economic development and market size which are tremendously above Africa’s. On the dark side of Africa’s debt distress are the opaque deals struck by some greedy elites and leaders who heavily influence their respective countries’ decision making (Were, 2018).

Figure 8 Chinese Loans to Africa (2000-2017)


From Chart 2, China’s loans to African countries have steadily increased from below one billion USD in 2000 to a record high of 30 billion USD in 2016 according to CARI. The research data indicates that African countries have borrowed a total of 143 USD between 2000 and 2017. Of
which 80% and 20% come from Chinese state owned institutions and private organizations respectively. Considering that the data only captures 48 out of 54 African countries, it is sufficient to note that Africa’s borrowing trend from China is alarming. Of the 143 USD lent from 2000-2017, 138 USD was lent between 2006 and 2017. The past decade’s borrowing pattern indicates Africa’s appetite for Chinese loans and probably the borrowing spree might continue if African governments do not formulate or review their loans policies.

![Top Three External Lenders to African Countries](image)

**Figure 9 Top Three External Lenders to African Countries**

Source: Author’s interpretation of Jubilee Debt Campaign data (2018)

As indicated in pie chart 2, China is not the biggest creditor to African governments, although it comes in as the third biggest lender at 20% after 35% and 32% to multilateral and private lenders respectively according to the UK based financial pressure group Jubilee debt campaign research findings (2018). With statistics from the IMF the recent report by the group indicates that of the
16 African countries experiencing debt distress, 15% of their debt is owed to China. For that reason, African governments heavily owe China.

At FOCAC VI and VII, China promised more investment aid and loans to Africa of an amount up to 60 USD in each summit (CARI, 2018). According to the FOCAC 2018 joint press release, China announced its commitment to reduce Africa’s debt burden by allocating 15 billion USD interest free loans and grants to heavily indebted and least developed African countries. The move was well received by African leaders and representatives who attended the summit. The FOCAC 2018 saw African heads of state and government negotiate their debt burden with the Chinese president. The outcome was good and some leaders commented on the outcome of their discussion. For instance, South Sudanese president Salva Kiir confirmed that he had reached a deal with China to pay for the roads made using crude oil, a move targeted to reduce its debt. Botswana in another case that bargained its loan terms with China. President Mohgweetsi Masisi asserted that his government received a debt and interest cancellation of $ 7.2 million, a grant of $31 million and a new negotiated loan of $10.2 billion (Olingo, 2018).

4.2 FOCAC Objectives for Africa

The FOCAC process is a unique diplomatic forum that mainly promotes dialogue between China and Africa while in the same capacity, the forum enhances development of a common economic and political agenda that reflects mutual benefit in South-South cooperation. This study is embedded on two key objectives of FOCAC; to foster equal consultation and to enhance a win-win cooperation anchored on friendship. During the launch of the first ministerial conference, one of the honorary chairperson of the summit from the Chinese ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation regarded everyone who made the effort to ‘develop China-Africa friendship and Promote China-Africa trade and economic cooperation’ and later on in in the
opening ceremony of the 2006 Beijing summit, Chinese president Hu Jintao remarked that FOCAC was established in 2000 to promote China-Africa friendship and cooperation (FOCAC, 2019). The two objectives are also strongly supported by speeches from some African leaders who attended the FOCAC III. For instance, the Burundian foreign minister, Antoinette Batumubwira, depicted the forum as a mechanism that allows African states and China to “reinforce their existing co-operation and friendship” as Tanzanian Foreign minister Asha-Rose Migiro viewed the FOCAC process as a facilitator of “equal participation in decision making”, and finally the president of Comoros reiterated that FOCAC is mainly a mechanism of “promoting friendship and cooperation” between China and Africa (Hon, et al., 2010).

4.2.1 Equal Consultation

As an objective of the FOCAC process, equal consultation between China and African counterparts is imperative in growing a healthy relationship. According to FOCAC, China and Africa established the joint follow up mechanisms to address the mutual consultation gap in 2000, and later the first FOCAC ministerial consultation summit was held in July 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia. The consultation mechanism was set up under the Economic and Social Development program that guides cooperation and consultation in various spheres of interest to both parties (FOCAC, 2019).
Figure 10 China – African Countries Project Selection Consultation Model

The project selection consultation model presented in figure 1 supports the idea that China is still the dominant actor even after the FOCAC process aims at encouraging equal consultation. From the first step, Chinese actors propose the initiatives to specific African countries, an equal consultation would be much better if the African countries select the desired projects by themselves. Moreover, the Chinese Ex-Im bank, the major financial organization under FOCAC wields veto power and it holds the final word in the pursuit of any project predominantly guided by its own set standards. However, if the project is approved, funding is done immediately according to the timelines of the project. Anshan, 2010 holds that the decision making in the project selection favors Chinese interests and therefore it diminishes African countries drive to negotiate as equal partners.
Consultations continue after the main FOCAC summit through special programs like; follow up mechanisms, bilateral engagements between the AUC and the Chinese president, the AU-China envoy follow up action, and African governments bilateral engagements with China. The immediate consultative meeting held after FOCAC is between the AUC chairperson and the president of China. The most recent joint meeting was held on September 5th 2018, a day after FOCAC VI in Beijing. During the joint session, AUC chairperson and the Chinese president reiterated their renewed commitment to implement the Beijing plan of action (2019-2021) adopted at the FOCAC VI. In depth, the incorporation of the BRI in the AU Agenda 2063 was remarkable for both sides because of their common aligned interests (African Union Communiqué, 2018). With the increased involvement of the AU in the FOCAC process, there is a lot of homework for African countries to ponder how they can harmonize a collective African policy through the AU. According to the AU, further consultations are done yearly at the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. The AU would have gained more bargain power if African leaders could have been engaging Chinese delegates annually after the AU head of states and governments summits in Addis Ababa because the AU states that issues of common interest are of great importance during the summit. When this happens, the AU will be able to consult widely among member states and engage with China from a position of strength.

Follow up committee of FOCAC has 33 agencies in various fields according to FOCAC, 2018. The committees’ mandate include; follow up actions for the main summits’ declarations, and coordination of the implementation of the plans of action. The most recent follow up action was held in Beijing on 25th June 2018. In a joint report of the coordinators’ meeting on the implementation of the follow up actions of FOCAC VII, the two sides agreed to elevate mutual
cooperation on the key areas of strategic interest, candidly engage in the BRI cooperation, and build stronger ties (Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). As the consultations ensue, China’s interests are pursued most considering analysis of the Beijing declaration (2018). China drives many agenda in various areas of interest in the declaration namely; agriculture development, technology skills transfer, infrastructure development, and peace and security initiatives. African leaders seem to only rubber stamp the declarations and plans of action thereafter.

For instance, following the end of the 2018 FOCAC summit in Beijing, the summit can be regarded as the most remarkable in terms of Africa’s strategy in engaging China. This saw a detailed consultation and incorporation of Africa’s interests in the final report of the Summit which was also rubberstamped by the African Union Commission Chair (AUC) Mahamat Faki (Africachinapresscentre.org, 2018). The agreement covered contentious issues in areas like; debt relief for African countries, assistance in human resources development, helping African countries develop in agriculture, enhancing Africa’s health care sector, opening Chinese market to Africa, expanding investment and financing in Africa, consolidating social support for China-Africa cooperation, and constructive intervention in Africa’s peace and security (Aiping & Zhan, 2018).

Despite an array of issues observed after the FOCAC 2018 summit, this study picks out five that are of immense significance in demonstrating policy shifts in the Sino-African relations. This is not to say that the remaining issues are regardless and the five are the most important, all are of equal importance to Africa’s international relations. The five issues are; debt relief for African countries, assistance in human resources development, opening Chinese market to Africa, expanding investment and financing in Africa, and constructive intervention in Africa’s conflict
zones for securitization efforts. These issues form part of the leverage achieved by African actors in FOCAC, as later observed in this chapter.

4.2.2 Win-Win Cooperation under FOCAC

As the second objective of FOCAC, Win-Win cooperation in Sino-African relations continues to steer wide debate on whether there is an ultimate winner (most likely China) whose interests are well safeguarded at the expense of a mutual relationship. The findings of this study as demonstrated by the trends and patterns in the relationship demonstrate that China has been always on the winning side right away from setting the rules of the game to orchestrating desirable outcomes. For instance, balance of trade in figure 2 favors the Chinese side and Chart 3 indicates the growth of African countries debt caused by Chinese ‘cheap’ and unsustainable loans.

Infrastructure for resources in Sino-African relationship has also gained prominence in the view that it is part of win-win cooperation. The latest infrastructure for resources deal with China was struck between Salva Kiir, the president of South Sudan and Chinese president Xi Jinping at the FOCAC 2018 summit in Beijing. In the deal, South Sudan will give part of its oil to China in a swap deal of roads construction. The desired result of South Sudan is to evade the Chinese ‘debt trap’ that heavily indebted African countries. Alves (2013) discusses the infrastructure for resources topic and reveals that the pursuit has mixed impacts on African economies. On one side, the infrastructure helps to satisfy Africa’s infrastructure development appetite and on the other side the practice further aggravates unequal exchange in terms of environmental effects, debt sustainability, and labor relations. Furthermore, the study reveals minimal agency by African actors in terms of negotiating for better deals and the weak nature of institutions in most of the African countries (Alves, 2013). Therefore, African actors should strengthen their local
implementing institutions and extend assertive diplomacy using their own agency while negotiating with Chinese bureaucrats. Such acts will strengthen Africa’s position in Sino-Africa relations to strive for a win-win cooperation that is yearned to be achieved.

The BRI has attracted wide condemnation as China’s plot to especially indebt African countries. In an address to the ‘naysayers’, Chinese ambassador to South Africa Lin Songtian, emphasized that the BRI aims at a win-win cooperation not zero sum games. Amb. Songtian went on to highlight that out of the 113 countries and 29 international organizations signatories of BRI include the AU plus 37 African countries. The initiative is also part of Africa’s continental connectivity ambition (Songitan, 2018). Regardless of the resounding remarks by the ambassador, a policy paper published by the Stockholm based research think-tank SIPRI opines that BRI is meant to serve an array of China’s critical interests that include; achieving its $1.2 trillion blue economy, enhancing its food and energy security, safeguarding its territorial integrity, and above all its global superpower ambition is at stake (Ghiasy, Su, & Saalman, 2018). In sum all these endeavors are at the behest of China’s self-interests rather than a win-win cooperation together with her partners.

China – Africa relations are an embodiment of South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation mainly aims at a win-win relationship unique from the unequal exchanges in the North-South relations which are dominated by the former western colonial masters. Therefore, institutionalized relations under FOCAC focus on creating a mutual win partnership which enhances Africa’s agenda on a variety of interests.
4.3 The Leverage Achieved through African Agency in China-Africa Relations

This objective sought to find out what leverage has been achieved through the lenses of African agency driven by various African actors who sit at the bargaining table with Beijing’s technocrats.

Collectively, Africa’s bargain power in FOCAC has exponentially grown courtesy of two major events; first is the full member participation of the AU in FOCAC 2012, and second is the inclusion of the AUC as part of the FOCAC 2015 summit as highlighted in table 1 of this study. Both the AU and AUC represent the a common voice articulating Africa’s common interests majorly revolving around economic development, infrastructure growth, and issues on peace, security and stability according to the AU (2019). The Johannesburg action plan (2015) acknowledges the role played by the AU in promoting regional integration and the organization’s endeavor to foster peace and stability in major conflict zones on the continent. The two sides vowed to abide by and implement the Memorandum of Understanding in the following fields of priority; Railway, highway, regional aviation networks, and industrialization with more emphasis on bilateral cooperation efforts using existing mechanisms such as the Joint Working Group of Transnational and Trans-regional Infrastructure Cooperation in Africa. Most importantly, the adoption and inclusion of the AU Agenda 2063 in the Johannesburg Action Plan after FOCAC VI in 2015 marked Africa’s bold step forward as part of the FOCAC process Agenda-setting (Johannesburg Action Plan, 2015). As this happens with more representation and agency, African countries are able to achieve self-benefiting outcomes as they are part of the active agenda setting process. There have been more representation apart from the FOCAC summit by both sides to boost cooperation. Such alternative representation include; the establishment of the mission of China to the AU at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia before the FOCAC
2015 summit and later followed by a reciprocation of the same in September 2 2018 as the AU launched its representative mission office in Beijing, China a day before the FOCAC 2018 (Shaban, 2018).

With the increased representation, Africa should be able to increase its collective agency especially through the AU and the AUC. The AU plays a pivotal role in Africa’s agenda setting discussed by African leaders. More political consultations are key to improve Africa’s collective bargain position. The Chinese ministry of foreign affairs (2019) outlines that China is committed to political consultation with the African counterpart as epitomized by the UN General Assembly sidelines consultations between China and African heads of state and governments. A shift from the UN General Assembly sidelines meetings to stronger follow up actions and consultations after every year’s AU summit will be pragmatic and resolve for African governments as it will encourage concrete collective agenda setting that is subsequently blended to FOCAC follow up action and consultation at the AU headquarters. Contrarily, China has a better Africa policy (Berridge, 2015:306). China’s Africa policy is an integral part of China’s strategy in the FOCAC process. As of today, Africa has no collective policy towards China, which should have been part of the efforts of negotiating with China as equals. Most of the FOCAC agenda comes out to be Chinese because Beijing’s interests are at stake. The norms that guide FOCAC are still in favor of Chinese interests like investments, trade, natural resources, and generally its superpower ambition plays a colossal role in the Sino-African engagements.

Balance of trade has all along been a contentious issue debated widely by some of the African leaders and in scholarship. Through FOCAC China promises a fair balance of trade to enhance a win-win relationship. Chart 2 in this study highlights statistics of China-Africa trade growth of $204.19bn signifying a record growth of 19.7% in 2018. The trade boom indicates growing trade
relations between the two counterparts although China remains to be the major beneficiary because it exports more to Africa than it imports. There have been several efforts of bargaining for fair trade by African leaders at the FOCAC summits. For instance, the South African based, trade law center Tralac, reported that African leaders through South Africa’s president Cyril Ramaphosa the co-chair of the FOCAC 2018 urged China to pursue investment led trade in Africa to promote economic growth and sustainability (Tralac 2019). Opening up of the Chinese market for import goods from African countries is a great boost to ensure fair trade practices. Recently, China Daily news cite reported the trade expo hosted in Hunan province of China. The expo consisted of more than 10,000 people and representatives from 53 African countries. The expo is an annual event initiated by FOCAC to mark China-Africa trade and economic cooperation. The Chinese ministry of commerce highlighted that by the end of 2018 more than 3,700 Chinese companies had set up branches in Africa boosting FDI up to $46bn. Though free and fair trade is the desired outcome in the partnership, it has not been met since China accounts for the biggest share of the trade deal.

By and large, significant debt relief for African countries would be one of the most remarkable gain for Africa at this period of Africa’s skyrocketing debt. As observed earlier, the notion of China’s debt trap diplomacy taints Beijing’s global image as an oppressor who holds hostage key assets of a defaulting country. The move has received wide criticism from various foreign heads of state and government together with some scholars input. Despite the criticism, China is not Africa’s big lender as it falls behind multilateral and private lenders respectively according to the Jubilee Debt Campaign report (2018). Olingo (2018) observes that after FOCAC 2018, a number of African heads of state and government had negotiated for better loan relations to save their countries from debt distress. Botswana’s president Mokgweetsi Masisi successfully sought a
$7.2 million of debt cancellation after Ethiopia did the same. South Sudan’s president Salva Kiir offered concessions of infrastructure for its crude oil rather than cash in payment. China extended $60 billion grants to Africa to suppress the ballooning debt owed by African countries (FOCAC, 2018).

Among the significant leverage to demonstrate mutually negotiated China-Africa agreements especially under the FOCAC framework can be broken down as follows; debt relief for highly indebted African countries, assistance in human resource development, opening up of the Chinese market to African countries, expanding investment and financing for Africa, and finally constructive intervention in Africa’s conflict zones. The shifts are not necessarily one sided to either party but they outline the role of African agency in bargaining with the Chinese government to strike a balance and achieve self-benefiting agreements aligned to the Africa’s interests.

**Debt Relief for Highly Indebted African Countries**

As African governments borrow to finance their development projects, Onjala (2017) cautions a debt crisis situation using Kenya as a case study. Furthermore, the author highlights that the increased access of African states to external capital markets has ignited interest in growing external borrowing that has replaced debt sustainability at the forefront of the continent’s policy agenda. Therefore, the loans that African countries acquire from China can easily precipitate a debt crisis on the continent. On the other hand, during FOCAC 2018, Beijing exempted the debts in the form of intergovernmental interest-free loans thus alleviating African states’ financial load. Earlier on, skeptics like (Shattuk, 2018) have written about China’s ‘Debt Diplomacy’ whereby China lures developing countries and mostly the African countries to take the cheap loans from China. The author cites the case of Djibouti whereby the government was in a huge debt with China and it had to lease a port for 99 years at $20 million per annum. The scenario of debt burden was alleviated by grants and interest free loan offered after a mutual consultation.
Assistance in Human Resources Development

As existing literature vindicates, there has been a spat between African leaders and the Chinese government over African human resource handling and African workers treatment by the Chinese employers in Africa. To advance this argument, (Asongu & Ssozi, 2015) First state that the Chinese do not hire African workers because they import their own labor from China and Second Chinese in Africa hire local workers at relatively low wages compared to the imported workers. According to (Aiping & Zhan, 2018), FOCAC 2018 attached much efforts on human resource development through mutual agreements between China and African countries. More importantly, knowledge transfer between the two partners received great attention. Knowledge transfer has been achieved through increasing the number of Chinese scholarships for African students from 2000 in 2006 to the current 10,000, increased capacity building and training of African laborers to fill the skill gap, and finally to nature local talent that will empower the local population in Africa. As a result, there is hope for fair human resource handling and fair treatment of local African workers by the Chinese employers.

Opening Chinese Market to African Countries

Trade imbalance has been an issue of concern especially by African countries in Sino-African relations as cited by Taylor (2010) and Munyi (2011) earlier on. The elephant in the room has been how to create a ‘win-win’ trade situations as it is pointed out that the African market is flooded by cheap goods from China. Despite the damage caused in terms of commodity price destabilization, African countries have assertively negotiated for reciprocity in order to access the Chinese markets. One of the detrimental impacts of cheap Chinese goods as pointed out by (Taylor, 2009) is the collapse of Africa’s clothing exports due to the domination of the apparel industry by Chinese companies. South Africa was hit hardest as her exports via the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) reduced by about 50 percent. After the FOCAC 2018, China affirmed the access to its market with a tariff free treatment (Aiping & Zhan, 2018). However, this efforts have been in place since the 2006 FOCAC summits and more agency has been exerted by African leaders to seal a good deal.
Expanding Investment and Financing in Africa

There has been a great shift of African investment companies, especially in the manufacturing industry, moving to the Pudong and Shenzen districts in China. According to (Alden, China in Africa, 2005), these shifts have limited the expansion of Africa’s industries to the Chinese side. As such, (Aiping & Zhan, 2018) argue that there is an improvement after the FOCAC 2018 as Africa negotiated with China to consider the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, the support of construction and infrastructure, and the favorable working conditions of Chinese enterprises in China and Africa. The expansion of investments and financing of sectors like infrastructure will further a mutual relationship in terms of benefits to both sides. On one hand, Haroz (2011) argues that China is interested in Africa for investment, trade, finance, technology transfer, development assistance, cultural exchange, and tourism. Contrarily, Alden (2015:148) contends that ‘by far the most publicized example of Chinese interest in Africa is its foray into the continent’s energy business.’ Supported by (Jiang, 2009), that China is increasingly interested in Africa’s energy and the extractive industry. These sentiments can be interpreted as China and Africa are both interested in investing in different sectors of each other’s economy.

Constructive Intervention in Africa’s Conflict Zones

A case of intervention contravenes both China and Africa’s policy of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of each other’s territory. However, Kioko (2003) argues that the African Union (AU) shifted its policy to interference under ‘the right of intervention AU’s constitutive act’ which was non-existent in the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Contrarily, in 2017, China had adhered to its non-intervention policy in Africa and around the globe (Mumuni, 2017). On Africa’s assertive bargain, (Aiping & Zhan, 2018) writes that in 2012 and 2015, the FOCAC summits had deliberated on a security plan for a China-Africa peace initiative. Thus, these operations will support anti-terrorism fight, national defense, and custom supervision. This progress indicates the successive agreements that both sides have entered into and to especially support Africa’s peace and security situation which is aligned to the AU’s interests.

4.4 Conclusion of Findings

This chapter’s main sub sections are as based on the specific objectives of the study. The subsections are; an examination of the trends and patterns of engagement between China and
Africa under FOCAC, an assessment of the FOCAC objectives for Africa, and finally finding out the leverage achieved by African Agency in Sino-African relations. The chapter presents data analysis from the various documentary data sources outlined in the preceding methodology chapter.

The analysis in the chapter begins with looking at the eighteen years of the FOCAC process since its first ministerial meeting in 2000 to the recent held FOCAC 2018. The number of attendees, the theme of the summits, and the key outcomes are outlined to enhance understanding of the major trends of the process. Generally, there has been increased participation efforts especially from African countries and the African Union. The African Union and its commission come out as agents of collectiveness as they present Africa’s collective action in FOCAC summits. The two bodies are full members of the process.

Subsection one focuses on the political and economic trends. Politically, China and a majority of African countries have good ties based on friendship as stipulated by FOCAC objectives. The study findings reveal that peace and security cooperation under FOCAC is vibrant and African countries have benefited from direct funding from the Chinese government. China is a great peacekeeper in Africa, accounting for the highest number of UN peace keepers compared to the other UN P5 members. Economically, the study focusses on trade, debt, and investment relations. The three economic aspects have steered wide debate concerning the role played by China as some critics argue that there is a huge imbalance in the relations. On trade and investment, there continues to be a wide gap and China is the major beneficiary followed by Africa’s economic giants. However, many African leaders call for more free trade and increased investments in various African countries. Debt relations are poor as more African countries owe China more than what they can actually pay, some scholars refer to this as ‘debt trap diplomacy’.
China protects its international image by announcing debt cancellations and more grant awards to African countries. The facts presented in this section reveal that the debt trap narrative is not fully justified because of three reasons; first, there are cited instances of loan negotiations between African countries and China, second, seizure of critical states’ assets is a rare occurrence as there is the case of Djibouti and likely Zambia as revealed, third, African countries source most of their loans from elsewhere including multilateral and private lenders, and other bilateral loans from states.

The subsequent section assesses FOCAC objectives for Africa. A lot of emphasis is put on equal consultation and a win-win cooperation as the key objectives. Consultation between China and African governments is dynamic and evolving. The increasing collective action through the African Union and its commission has boosted Africa’s bargaining position at FOCAC. Further consultations apart from the FOCAC summit are conducted through the AUC chairperson with the president of China, follow up actions and declarations held by various stakeholders from different sectors, and the yearly consultations held at the sidelines of every UN General Assembly meetings. At the end, each African nation conducts bilateral consultations through diplomatic avenues when a project decision has to be made in a particular country. Such wide consultations encourage mutual cooperation even though the study finds out that they are not inclusive of the civil society and informed China-Africa researchers. The emphasis on a win-win cooperation is not wholly justified because of the arising conflicting interests among African countries and the Chinese agenda in Africa. For example, debt relief by some African countries to China is negotiated by the infrastructure for resources model.

The final subsection discusses the leverage achieved by African agency. The study finds out that, African countries are exerting more agency on common issues through the AU, some of the
African leaders have successfully used the FOCAC forum to negotiate their precise development objectives and also find leverage on debt relief, and finally African countries are now able to access the Chinese market through trade expos and people exchanges that promote market expansion of African goods in China.

In conclusion, the growing China-Africa relationship is pregnant of ‘goodies’ for both China and African countries. The data presented in the discussion imply that despite skepticisms on issues like trade and debt trap, China has no bad intention to African countries. It is evident that the debt trap is not fully justified because so far China’s seizure of key assets of African countries is very rare, the data reflects Djibouti as a concrete case and Zambia and Angola as most likely cases. Furthermore, China is not the biggest lender to African countries, Beijing comes in at third after multilateral and private lenders respectively.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the core findings of the study, the study’s conclusion, recommendations based on the study findings, and the chapter sums up with suggestions for further research based on the potential research gaps identified while conducting this study.

5.1 Summary

The main focus of this study was to analyze the African agency in China-Africa relations based on engagements under the FOCAC framework that officially institutionalized the relations in Beijing in 2000. The first chapter presented the background, statement of the problem, the research objectives, the justification, and organization of the study. The background of the study was done thematically by studying Africa’s international relations generally, with emerging powers, and China specifically under the FOCAC mechanism. The research problem was based on the existing conflicting narratives about the role of China in Africa and how African countries are seen as bystanders who lack agency in the Sino-Africa relations. The research process was guided by three specific objectives;

1. To examine the trends and patterns of engagement between China and Africa under the FOCAC framework

2. To assess the objectives of FOCAC for Africa

3. To find out the leverage achieved by the African agency in Sino-Africa relations

The research was justified by its contribution to academia by filling in the research gap identified in the research problem and also offer pragmatic policy recommendations to African actors on
how to exert more agency using the available platforms such as FOCAC. The entire research covers five chapters; Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, Data Presentation and Analysis, and finally the Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations chapter.

Review of literature was based on key thematic areas guided by the research objectives. This revolved around; African agency, FOCAC, Sino-Africa relations, and the leverage achieved by African agency. Finally, the chapter presented the literature gap.

The methodology of the research was on a purely qualitative desktop research. Documentary data was the main source of data used from government websites, FOCAC summits reports and communiques, the China Africa Research Initiative, Brookings institute, FOCAC follow up actions reports, Financial Institutions, China-Africa and FOCAC research think tanks, published journals and books on this study’s themes.

The findings reveal that:

- The trends and patterns of engagement under FOCAC since its establishment in 2000 are still evolving. African countries have increased their membership to 53 states together with the AU and its commission participating as full members which signify a collective action based on Africa’s common interests outlined by NEPAD and the AU agenda 2063. Economically, African countries are doing better as China continues to open up its market to African commodities through trade expos and tariff exclusion. On the side of Africa’s ballooning debt distress China has offered some grants and debt cancellations announced in the respective summits. Moreover, China is not the biggest lender to Africa, Beijing stands third in the rank after multilateral and private lenders respectively. Lastly, Peace and security stands out to be one of the main Africa’s agenda in FOCAC in which
China fully supports through the peace and security initiative fund and deployment of more UN peacekeepers on the continent.

- FOCAC objectives for Africa have not been fully met because of the dynamic nature of engagements. This study examined mutual consultation and win-win cooperation as the main objectives. Africa is continuously increasing its agency through the AU and its respective agencies despite China’s actions reflects its dominant action in agenda setting in various sectors like infrastructure development, technology transfer, and agriculture development on the continent.

- African actors especially the heads of state and government together with the AU and AUC chairpersons have actively participated in agenda-setting at FOCAC summits which has gained results such as; more representation at the FOCAC and its follow up actions, gaining debt relief, and a range of projects in different sectors on the continent.

**5.2 Conclusion**

The study concluded that, there are several factors for China-Africa relationship some driven by Africa’s self-interests while some are based on mutual interests as well as Chinese interests. The analysis of the study revealed that institutionalized relations under FOCAC are on the right trajectory of mutual win-win cooperation as opposed to the earlier bilateral relations. China and African countries are committed to multilateralism avenues of cooperation rather than competition. Despite lack of Africa’s policy towards China, Africa’s action has been boosted by collective agency of the AU and the AUC. China is not the predator or even an extreme of a new colonial master per se as dubbed in other literary works. China is in Africa by invitation by African actors especially the heads of state and government who have cemented official ties with Beijing.
From the study findings, Africa has not fully exerted its agency because of the following tripartite explanation: First, the effects of diverging political and economic interests of various African countries considering their economic muscles and geopolitical position largely affects their continental and overseas international relations. Africa is not a homogenous state, therefore each sovereign African state has its own unique foreign policy towards external actors including China just in the same way African states formulate and implement distinct foreign policies amongst themselves. For instance, Schiere (2011) observes that there is an unbalanced exchange between China and African countries which result to different terms of exchange as China mostly favors more investments and trade with a handful of Africa’s resource rich countries like; Sudan, Nigeria and South Africa. However, some scholars and analysts of international relations like;(Munyi,2011 and Muresan,2017) proffer a collective African policy towards China for the essence of a common voice towards the pursuit of common developmental goals shared by majority of African countries and project concrete plans like the AU Agenda 2063 to China and other foreign partners. A collective African policy can be pursued through regional bodies and Africa’s supranational bodies such as the AU, the AfDB, and some of the regional bodies. Further this will boost Africa’s regional integration through common policy and developmental objectives. China’s relations with Africa are guided by the China African policy which was officially sanctioned in the FOCAC process during the FOCAC 2006 summit in Beijing, according to the Chinese ministry of affairs report (2006).

Second, China is ‘in the driver’s seat’. China still drives agenda in the FOCAC process. Despite the agency exerted by African actors like the AU cited by this study, China’s foreign policy towards African countries is very clear as outlined in its China-Africa policy in the FOCAC
process. For instance, mega infrastructure projects like the BRI and the 21st Century maritime Silk Road are by design or default to satisfy the dragon’s global connectivity interests.

Third, lack of transparency in dealing with China especially crafty deals signed by African elites including heads of state and government. For instance, Kenyan economist Anzetse Were (2018) observes that the burgeoning Sino-phobia and the debt-trap diplomacy narrative have increased because African states like Kenya undergo a chronic fiscal transparency problem and hence corruption and concealed government deals with the Chinese side.

Finally, to increase this study firmly proffers a generalized approach of exercising African agency through; a collective private and public approach at the national level and a more proactive and assertive diplomacy at the continental level through the AU and its agencies. An increased coordination of Africa’s negotiation on issues of common interest among African countries would boost Africa’s position in the FOCAC process and pave way for a win-win outcome (Shelton, 2016:274). As a full participant of the FOCAC process since 2012, the AU should lead the China-Africa agenda through agenda-setting, common policy approach, and a harmonized collective action in dealing with China. The AU should encourage more discussions about Sino-African relations among its own leaders in fora like the annual AU summits that brings together all African heads of state and government or their representatives.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the study findings, this paper drew three recommendations to key stakeholders who participate in China-Africa bargains in FOCAC summits and the subsequent follow up actions. Stakeholders include; African heads of state and government, policy makers/advisors, chairperson(s) of the AU and AUC and China-Africa research fellows.
1. African states should urgently develop a collective China-Africa policy based on a shared vision like the African Union’s agenda 2063 articulated by the continental body and its core agencies participating in the FOCAC process.

2. To maximize agency, African states should shift to an all-inclusive based decision making process that includes actors like; the citizens, civil society, and academics. This step will fill in the knowledge gap created by under-informed and biased negotiations led by heads of state and government and their representatives.

3. African states should creatively broaden proactive consultative mechanisms to supplement the FOCAC summits and the follow-up actions. Broader consultative mechanisms can be increased through the AU summits to achieve Africa’s actorness in terms of agenda-setting and core decision making in and outside the FOCAC framework.

5.4 Suggestion for Further Study

First, this paper suggests an empirical study on the multi-sectoral impact of Chinese development projects given a case study of a particular country or countries with stronger Chinese ties.

Second, an analytical research on the leverage achieved by African actors through their diverse agency applied in dealing with China.
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