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## **The Blind Eye in Sino-African Relations: Social Trust and Business Scams**

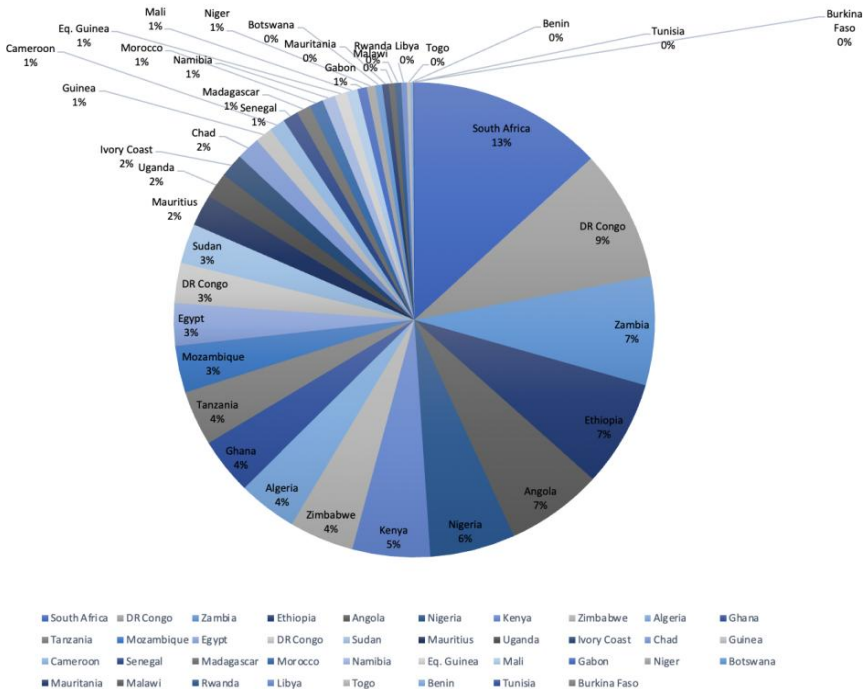
### ABSTRACT

The combustible state of Sino-African relations raises the need to study the concept of social trust between both Chinese in Africa, as well as Africans in China, by documenting and analyzing the proliferation of business scams. This paper shows that there are issues of corruption in two geographies, Africa and China, and with actors forming a quadrilateral of murkiness in their modus operandi. One, there are several reported cases of Chinese defrauding Africans in Africa; two, of Africans defrauding the Chinese in Africa; three, of Chinese defrauding Africans in China; and four of Africans defrauding the Chinese in China. The quadrilateral of crime is significant particularly because China and African countries purportedly have a friendship that extends beyond their business dealings. This study explores reports of alleged fraud in African countries and in China pertaining to Chinese and African citizens. Based on an analysis of both Chinese and African media sources

as well as global news sources, this study finds that cybercrime, visa fraud, and illegal mining are issues that need to be addressed to improve Sino-African relations.

Keywords: Social trust, Business Scams, Fraud, Sino-African Relations, China in Africa, Cybercrime, Mining

The relationship between China and Africa is arguably an important one for trade and investment. According to the worldwide management consulting firm, McKinsey & Company, China is Africa’s largest trading partner and revenues of Chinese firms operating in Africa could reach US\$440 billion by 2025 (Yuan Sun, Jayaram & Kassiri, 2017, 14).



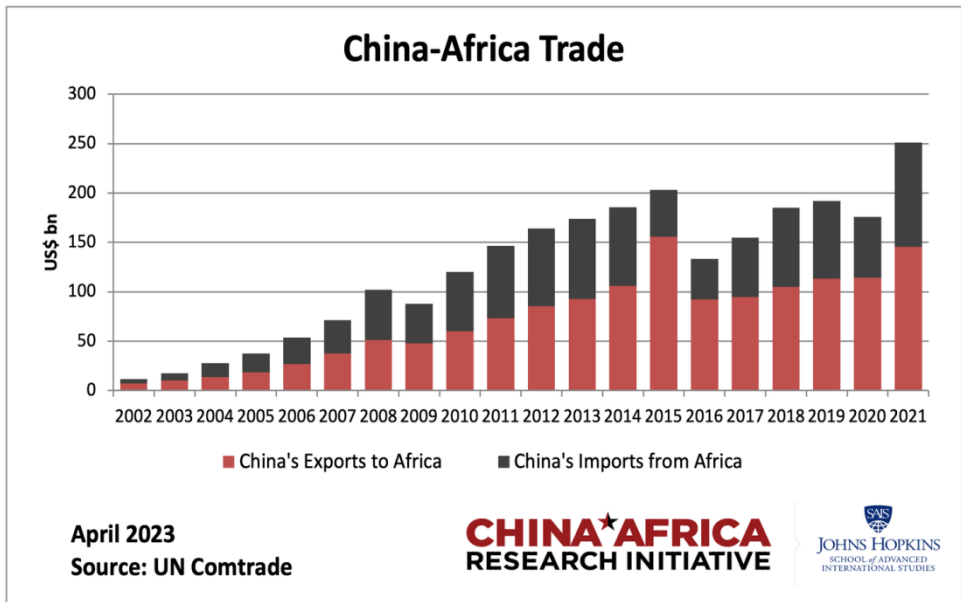
China’s Outward Foreign Direct Investment to Africa in 2020. Source: Y, S. Z. (2022). What is China’s investment end game in Africa? Retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2022/11/04/what-is-chinas-investment-end-game-in-africa/>



While the presence of China in Africa has increasingly been the subject of recent research, particularly in terms of Chinese aid and investment in many African countries, the fraudulent activity of business, governments, and regular citizens has not been the focus of much literature on Sino-African relations in the context of the social implications of these acts. The social aspect of this relationship is significant as governments on both sides have mutually expressed that their policies are based on “friendship.” This paper will analyze the quadrilateral social and business relationships, whose four sides are: one, Chinese dealings with Africans in Africa; two, Africans’ dealings with the Chinese in Africa; three, Chinese dealings with Africans in China; and four Africans’ dealings with the Chinese in China. Through the operation of the separate sides of the quadrilateral, this paper discusses the occurrences of fraud and the consequences of these crimes on Sino-African relations. The goal of this paper is to determine how fraud and corruption in the form of cybercrime, visa fraud, and illegal mining does—or can—affect business and social relations between governments, businesses and citizens.

The first example describes various news reports on cybercrimes by both Africans and the Chinese, and the reactions of their respective governments. Thereafter, the issue of visa fraud is discussed in reference particularly to Africans going to China. Lastly, a more academically researched issue of illegal mining is discussed, which references how African and Chinese governments have had to work together to address this issue. The final section discusses future options for Sino-African relations wherein a choice must be made between corruption or cooperation. The findings show that not only were Chinese committing fraud in Africa but that there are various other combinations of

corruption as well such as Africans committing fraud in China against Chinese, and Chinese committing fraud against Africans in China.



Source: The SAIS China Africa Research Initiative (SAIS-CARI) at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (2023). DATA: CHINA-AFRICA TRADE. <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-china-africa-trade>

The Chinese have a long history in Africa as traders, and since the early 1900s as workers in the mining industry in Africa. Although by 1906 they made up 34 percent of unskilled workers in mines, by 1910 they were repatriated at the end of their contracts (Ericsson, 2020, 153). Later in the century, Africa became ideologically crucial to China's foreign policy, increasingly so since the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949 when Beijing supported several African national liberation movements during the Cold War. For every year since 1950, bar one, the foreign minister of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has visited an African country (Vines and Wallace, 2023). By the mid-1900s, China also began providing financial aid to African states to build railways (Wyrod, 2019, 175).

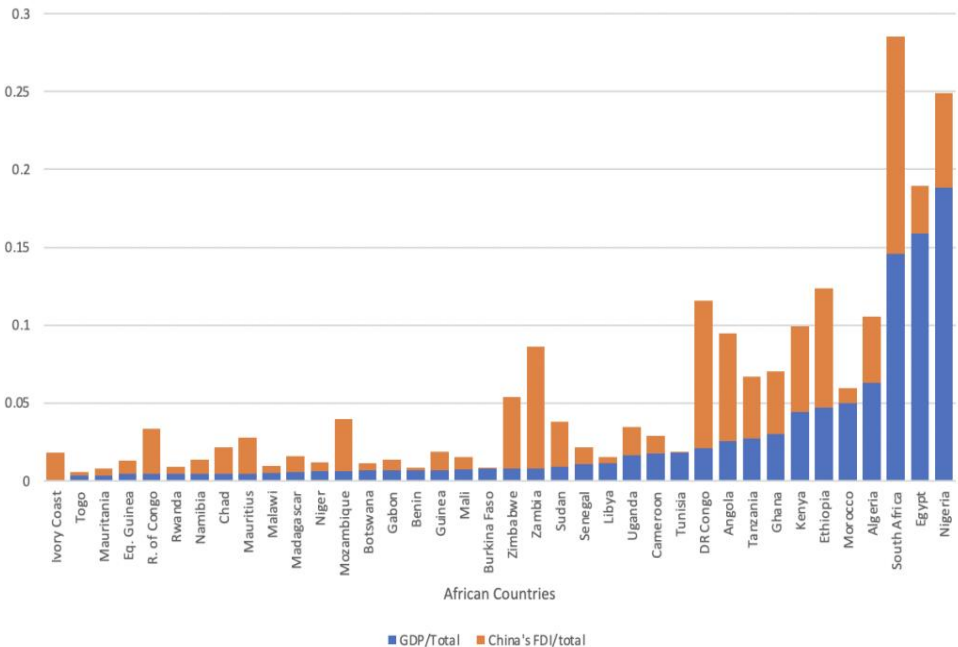
As relations progressed, in 1971 China used Africa to its diplomatic advantage when the votes of African countries were instrumental to win control of China's seat in the UN General Assembly and Security Council, dislodging the representatives of Chinese Nationalist forces, who had been defeated in the civil war and retreated to the safe haven of the island of Taiwan. Soon thereafter, when China pressured African states to de-recognize Taiwan's government. All—but one—switched recognition from Taiwan to the PRC. Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) is the only African nation that still recognizes Taiwan's government. In May 2023, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen arrived in Eswatini on a four-day trip, amid rising tensions with China. In her departure speech, the president said, "Eswatini has always stood up to firmly support Taiwan, giving us confidence and strength. Taiwan will not stop its steps going global and will continue to move forward more firmly and confidently to let the world see Taiwan as a steady force for good" (DW, 2023).

Although the Chinese were working in African mines since the beginning of the twentieth century, they started investing in the industry beginning in 1997 (Wyrod, 2019, 175). Over time, the economic influence of China and its loans to Africa bulked large. In 1999 China articulated its 'Going Out' strategy, encouraging Chinese companies to invest beyond China. The strategy made a powerful statement of China's growing economic muscle, unleashing a new wave of Chinese engagement in Africa. It also exported unemployed Chinese workers, putting them to work on new infrastructure projects abroad. Cooperation was elevated several notches with the staging of the first tri-annual Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit in Beijing in November 2003. FOCAC was created to serve as a vehicle to improve cooperation between China and African states, and signaled China's expanding strategic initiative in

Africa (DW, 2023). China tightened its relationship with Africa with a flurry of visits. China’s foreign minister Qin Gang visited five African countries and the African Union in January 2023. Wang Yi, the former foreign minister, visited 48 African countries, and President Xi Jinping undertook 10 visits to Africa between 2014 and 2020 (Vines and Wallace, 2023).

Sino-African relations have expanded to include a significant amount of investment, trade and aid to Africa in the form of loans. The amount of loans, which are commonly concessional, run into billions of dollars, and contribute to the ballooning African debt. Moreover, 45 percent of China’s foreign aid between 2013 to 2018 went to Africa (the SAIS China Africa Research Initiative, 2023).

GDP Share and Chinese FDI Share in Africa (2020)



Source: Y.S.Z. (2022). What is China’s investment end game in Africa? Retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2022/11/04/what-is-chinas-investment-end-game-in-africa/>

## **Sociology of Chinese Crime in Africa**

From a sociological perspective, Fraud is concerned with anti-corruption and is viewed through both a sociopolitical and socioeconomic lens. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Module Series on Anti-Corruption presents an explanation of collective action theory as to why systemic corruption persists. This theory highlights the fact that trust and perceptions of others' behavior are important considerations for levels of corruption (2017, 14). Moreover, when corruption becomes normalized and turns into a practice that is expected, then people continue to commit corrupt activities as it is seen as a means to an end. If Chinese and their African counterparts view each other as corrupt then this explains why they may feel the need to fight fire with fire.

Many sociological articles on fraud refer to cybercrime, specifically, and to Nigeria, which is also discussed in this paper. For example, Odumesi John Olayemi describes the prevalence of cybercrime in Nigeria as well as the global awareness of these crimes and negative perceptions of Nigeria that follow. They also argue that cybercrimes are "... a threat to the economy of a nation, peace and security" (2014, 123). In a socioeconomic approach to the Nigerian cybercrime phenomenon, Suleman Ibrahim argues that the aim of these crimes is not to do psychological or political harm but is strictly economic, particularly as the phenomenon is male-dominated and men are expected to be breadwinners (2016, 54).

One of the more comprehensive studies of corruption involving China in Africa is by Tawiah, Kebede, and Kyiu that uses data from a sample of 49 African countries between 2000 and 2018 to investigate how the level of corruption in these countries affects economic engagement with China through Foreign Direct Investment, trade, and construction (Tawiah, et al., 2022). The authors argue that, first, the

Chinese investment into Africa is largely controlled by the Chinese state and central government due to the significant involvement of the central government in most multinational companies, unlike investment and trade from other countries, which are mainly done by independent multinational companies. Second, Chinese investments involve large amounts of money, compared with most private projects.

Some scholars believe that because China operates in Africa in order to build its power and stature as a global leader, it may find countries with weak governance more attractive (Dreher et al., 2018). The scholars argue that this is because China itself is perceived as a country with a higher prevalence of corruption compared to other rich countries. This claim is supported by Transparency International (2011) which ranked Chinese companies second among firms from 28 other countries that are likely to pay bribes abroad. The study found that more than 60 percent of Chinese firms in Africa surveyed admitted to paying bribes to obtain a license (McKinsey & Company, 2017).

Chinese behavior abroad contrasts sharply with its behavior at home. Domestically, China pursues strong anti-corruption strategies, encompassing anti-foreign bribery laws. These laws ban bribery of foreign officials but the reality is quite different. Since his ascending to power in 2013, President Xi Jinping has focused on the elimination of corrupt practices. Researchers have found evidence that the anti-corruption measures have reduced the corruption level in China in recent years compared to the 1990s and early 2000s (Taplin, 2019).

Tawiah, et al have discovered that corruption affects each channel of the China-Africa economic engagement in different ways (2022). Their study found a negative relationship between corruption and the flow of China's FDI in African countries. At the same time "corruption is positively and significantly associated with trade and



construction activities in China” (Tawiah, et al., 2022). The study concludes that “countries with low perceived corruption will benefit from a long-term flow of FDI from China”. It adds, “we observe that the positive relationship between corruption and trade is strong in natural resource-rich countries. However, corruption reduces construction contracts and increases the flow of FDI in natural resource-rich countries.” Finally, Tawiah, et al’s statement—“we do not find evidence of Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption campaign changing the course of China-Africa engagements on corruption, trade, and investment” (2022)—demonstrates the ineffectiveness of Chinese campaigns and brings to our attention the fact that both the Chinese and some African countries are turning a blind eye to the modus operandi.

Tawiah, et al provide insights into why corruption may appear beneficial to some economic engagement strategies and detrimental to others (FDI). Our results show that the impact of corruption in international business is not as straightforward as documented in most prior studies. However, the relationship significantly depends on whether the risk and cost of corruption can be accounted for at the entry level of the foreign operation. Tawiah et al focus on international business from a single country (China) to different countries in order to show how a foreign investor adapts to different levels of corruption via different routes of international business. Their research signals to policymakers that “although countries with high levels of corruption may attract some form of investment from China, this may only be for the short term. Hence, having a robust partnership with China for long-term investment will require control of corruption” (2022).

The following section explains that a geopolitical element must be considered when examining the reported incidents of the Chinese being victims of Nigerian cybercrimes. Moreover, the victims arguably

suffer psychological damage, particularly those who are involved in romance scams which are discussed below.

### **Cybercrimes: Romance Scams, Telefraud, and Malware**

In 2017, *The Guardian* reported on the arrest of a Nigerian man based in China that was jailed for global email scams, in which he was paid through bank accounts opened in China (Reuters, 2017). The article points out that many such scams are carried out with the use of Chinese bank accounts (Ibid.). Even though in this case the Chinese are not the only victims of the scam which is global in its reach, it does negatively affect China as global victims can blame them for allowing such bank accounts to be opened, which thus provides the opportunity for the scams to operate.

Similarly, romance scams have been reported with African perpetrators targeting Chinese victims. These types of scams, in which a scammer uses the potential of a romantic relationship as a false pretence to gain affection and trust of their victims before asking for money, are known as ‘Nigerian Prince’ scams since a common method employed is for a criminal to pose as a prince from Nigeria that needs money to get out of a situation such as to safely leave their country. Criminals use online dating websites or apps as well as social media to find potential victims. *Quartz*, a publication which covers the global economy, reported on romance scams of Hong Kong women between 2014–2018 (Steger, 2018). According to this article, scammers posing as successful European and North American men were actually Nigerians in Malaysia on student visas (Ibid.). Moreover, the article states that the “. . . rapid growth in cases in Hong Kong led the police to establish an Anti-Deception Coordination Centre in July 2017 to combat fraud cases, which also encompass other scams such as those involving people posing as

mainland Chinese officials or courier companies” (Ibid.). Romance scams are well-known worldwide, but China may potentially take such matters more seriously when they operate out of Asia and Asian citizens are the victims.

Such e-mail and romance scams are not a new phenomenon, nor are they only characteristic of Africans. Chinese have been found committing similar fraudulent acts in Africa as well. For example, as reported by the BBC in 2014, in Kenya, 77 Chinese nationals suspected of being part of a cybercrime network were arrested for hacking and money laundering (BBC, 2014). The charges included staying in the country illegally (Ibid.). Kenya’s foreign minister summoned China’s ambassador and China promised to send investigators to work on the case (Ibid.). Two years later, in 2016, an article in the *China Daily* reported that 77 Chinese fraud suspects, including 45 Taiwan residents operating in Africa were repatriated due to their involvement in telecommunication related crimes (Yining & Zhang, 2016). This article also reported how such incidents affect tourism negatively and, therefore, the economy.

In a more recent example from April 2020, *Asian News International*, a multimedia agency, reported that 37 Chinese nationals in Uganda were arrested on telefraud charges (ANI, 2020). It reported that “WeChat,” a Chinese online platform, and Ugandan telephone lines, were used as a tool for financial crime transactions to target Chinese victims (Ibid.). The article ends by stating that there is a tension in China-Africa relations as Chinese nationals have been found to be misusing their visa status (Ibid.).

Lastly, in August 2020, BBC News reported that China had been accused of installing malware on phones provided to Africans in Africa. These victims were reported as being low-income. In these cases, mobile

phone users experienced their prepaid data being used up even though they had not used them (BBC, 2020). These allegations were denied by China as the manufacturer asserted that this was done without their knowledge (Ibid.). Whether or not this was an intentional fraud by the Chinese, it did occur through the use of Chinese technology. Not taking responsibility for such crimes can have negative implications that highlight the lack of integrity by China, not least of which is a lack of trust for Chinese products. African customers may potentially not buy Chinese products which would also have financial implications.

As made clear by the above examples, Africa has been the source, as well as victim, of cyberattacks (Kshetri, 2019, 80). Investment in cybersecurity is needed to develop skills to combat these crimes. Most importantly, there should be joint cooperation between African countries and China to ensure it is being addressed equally on both ends. Whether it is the Chinese operating in Africa committing these crimes or vice versa, simply deporting nationals will not resolve the issue as the source of the problem stems from the fact that these activities are allowed to happen under corrupt governments and where there is abuse of visa privileges. This leads to the next topic of discussion, which is visa fraud with a focus on Africans in China.

### **Visa Fraud**

In 2018, 55 South African students were scammed with fake Chinese visas to work in China as English teachers (IOL Supplied, June 21, 2018). It was not reported internationally but did appear in South African media sources including *International Online*, which is owned partly by both South Africans and Chinese and whose articles are from syndicated services such as *Xinhua* (About IOL, n.d.). When the students arrived in China they continued to work although their visas were not certified,



which is against Chinese law (Ibid.). In China, the students were not paid salaries, as agreed upon, and were advised by the fraud suspect to avoid police (Ibid.). Their parents felt they could not expect help from the South African government (Ibid.). The South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Lindiwe Sisulu, advised that the Department of International Relations and Cooperation would provide consultations for the students while encouraging South Africans to apply for visas with proper authorities to avoid such situations from occurring (Ibid.). It indicated hesitation on the part of the South African government to take responsibility for individual actions. This is further reinforced in another article on the incident, this time in *The South African* that reported on an e-mail from the embassy of South Africa in Beijing to one of the parents of the students. The email stated, “The embassy is not permitted to become involved in the legal processes followed by the Chinese authorities” (Head, June 20, 2018). However, an article appearing in *The South African* the following day reported that the International Relations Minister stated the South African embassy in Beijing is “. . . liaising with the Chinese authorities in addressing this matter. We are also in touch with the Chinese Ambassador to South Africa to have their passports released. The Chinese Ambassador to South Africa has made an undertaking that he will expedite the matter” (Head, June 21, 2018).

The recent South African case is not an isolated incident. Such scams are committed by nationals in Sub-Saharan African and Asian countries on visitor or student visas. This is described in Young-Chan Kim’s book *China and Africa: A New Paradigm of Global Business* in the tenth chapter written by Dong Niu. In their discussion of Africans in Guangzhou, Niu states that “. . . a considerable number of African visas don’t belong in the business criteria. In order to extend their visas, some

traders have to apply to Chinese universities to become students so that they are able to stay in Guangzhou for another 6-12 months to continue their businesses, although such actions are regarded as illegal by Chinese laws and regulations” (2017, 251).

It is unclear if such practices are the norm, so to speak, and if there is a mutual “turning a blind eye” that allows this to happen. Moreover, Niu mentions that not all Africans are involved in business, and that one informant from Uganda wanted to be an English teacher but “. . . she didn’t realize that it was a fraud by dangerous Chinese and African agents, until she reached Guangzhou and lost all her money” (Ibid.). It is worth noting as well that Niu describes how Nigerians are considered responsible for most crimes committed by foreigners in Guangzhou including marriage fraud and consequently, “Generally, other Africans are willing to keep a distance from Nigerians in order to retain their reputation, and other ethnic groups from Nigeria tend to declare that they are different from Igbo Nigerians” (Ibid.). In this sense, the social consequences of fraud are very apparent not just for China-Africa relations but also between Africans. Whereas one may feel a kinship to other Africans especially while living abroad, in situations such as these there is a desire and necessity to separate oneself or face serious social, economic and/or legal consequences. The author expresses their pessimism that such consequences can be overcome by arguing that

although Africans in Guangzhou are a differentiated community in the eyes of the Chinese, business secrets, ethnic backgrounds, and national reputation have shaped a culture with a high degree of mistrust within the community. Considering the high mobility of Africans and China’s tightened visa policy, it is doubtful

whether an integrated immigrant society will ever exist (Ibid., 252).

All in all, if the Chinese government wishes to open its borders to African workers, they need to ensure they are being protected against visa fraud. Similarly, African governments should ensure their citizens are informed of the proper procedures before applying for jobs in China.

### **Illegal Mining**

There are Chinese mines in five sub-Saharan African countries, namely Guinea, Zambia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Between 2006 and 2017, all Chinese mining investments in Sub-Saharan Africa were estimated at US\$ 33 billion (Ericsson, 2020, 167). However, the dollar value of contracts and amount of revenue earned tend to vary depending on sources. Magnus Ericsson, Olof Lof, and Anton Lof describe their concerns over dubious access to accurate information when they state, “It is, however, frustrating that often, but not always, when a company or an operation becomes majority-controlled by Chinese interests, it is getting more difficult, and sometimes impossible, to obtain correct and reliable information on ownership and production” (Ibid., 156).

China is reliant particularly on Sub-Saharan Africa for imports such as cobalt, bauxite and uranium (Ibid., 175). Chinese-controlled production of minerals in Africa was 6.4 percent as of 2018 (Ibid., 174), but also varies depending on the mineral. For example, the Chinese control a staggering 82 percent of bauxite production, and 40 percent of uranium across Africa (Ibid., 175). These two minerals represent the highest volume of minerals produced under Chinese control. In addition, although the Chinese-controlled share of Africa’s copper is 28 percent (Ibid.), in Zambia, China’s Chambishi has an 85 percent share in the

copper produced there (Ibid., 162). Moreover, in Guinea, for example, Chinese companies control 37 percent of total national mine production (Ibid., 170). Although this is a larger portion than in Zambia and the DRC, the total value of Chinese mining in Zambia (12 percent) and the DRC (24 percent) is much higher than in Guinea (Ibid.).

In addition to the visa scams described above, a topic more represented in academic literature is that of illegal mines in Africa. More specifically, since at least 2013, there has been a crackdown on Chinese-run illegal mines in Ghana (Chipaike and Bischoff, 2018, 9). In their research on locating agency in Angola and Ghana's economic engagements with China, Ronald Chipaike and Paul Henri Bischoff reject the passive role assigned to Africa and assert that the shutting down of illegal Chinese mines can be viewed as a form of agency although they admit it is "constrained" (Ibid., 8). The same authors highlight how Angolan elites were able to "successfully" negotiate a lower interest rate and longer repayment period with China due to the latter's need for oil (Ibid., 5).

While viewing these occurrences as examples of African agency is up for debate, it is not difficult to see how any African pushback can stress relations between the countries. China has specifically made threats about African pushback affecting relations on their end as they would like Africa to allow the mining operations to continue (Ibid., 9). However, there was growing resentment from the Ghanaian public towards Chinese miners, as reported by the *East Asia Forum*, which analyzes and researches politics, economics, business, law, security and international relations relevant to public policy, as well as a lot of media coverage of the issue by the *Guardian* and BBC (Sibiri, 2019). To help improve these social conditions, the illegal mining issue has forced Ghana and China to work together by establishing a "high-powered

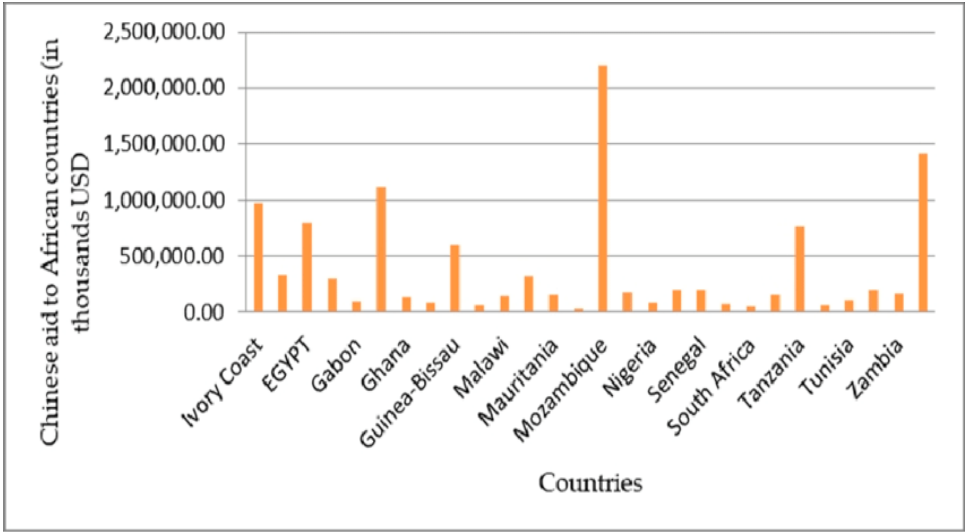


working committee” that includes representatives from Ministries of Lands and Natural Resources, Interior, Local Government & Rural Development, Attorney-General and Ministry of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Science & Technology, as well as the Chinese Embassy, National Security, and Ghana Immigration Service (Ibid.). There are still more recent instances from 2018 and 2019 involving illegal mining, but they represent an example of the two countries attempting a cooperative effort to address a problem that they mutually share.

### **The Blind Eye Towards Corruption**

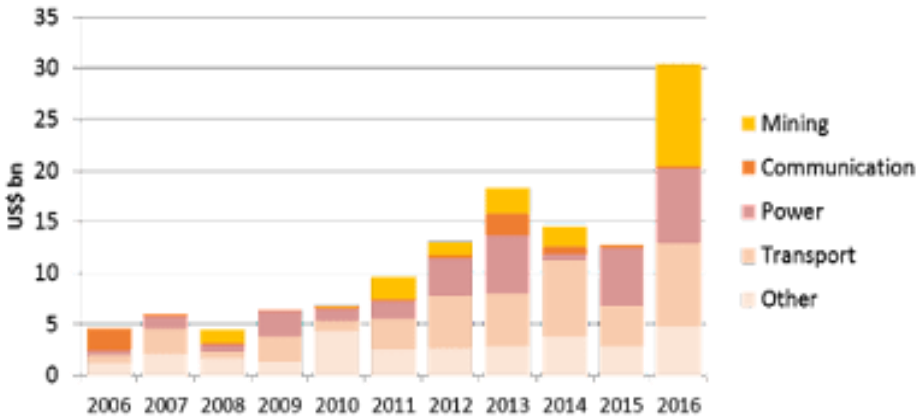
The global consulting firm McKinsey and Company recommends that in order for the China-Africa trade partnership to remain sustainable in the long term, they need to address corruption (2017, 39), which is “fed by perceptions on both the African and the Chinese sides” (Ibid., 64). According to the report, 60 percent to 87 percent of Chinese firms said they had paid a “tip” or bribe to obtain a license in connection with business transactions in Africa (Ibid., 15). Studies of the political and economic impact of corruption and bribery is well researched. But thus far the analysis has not been extended to consider Sino-African relations. Africa and China operate on the principle of non-interference wherein they have a mutual agreement to ignore their respective human rights violations (Chipaike and Bischof, 2018, 3). Furthermore, a “no strings attached” policy usually follows from this logic, which entails loans and investments without African governments having to improve their political or economic standards and conditions. However, when such projects as Chinese-funded railways are halted due to African corruption (Omondi, 2018), it becomes questionable whether China can

“look the other way” when there is a real threat to their investments by local corruption.



Source: M. Miao, J. Yushi, and D.Borojo (2020), “The Impacts of China–Africa Economic Relation on Factor Productivity of African Countries,” *Economies* 8(2), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies8020047>

### Chinese loans to Africa by sector



Source: The SAIS China Africa Research Initiative (SAIS-CARI) at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. (2018). Lumpy “SAIS-CARI” Data on People’s Daily. Retrieved from <http://www.chinaafricarealstory.com/2018/06/lumpy-sais-cari-data-on-peoples-daily.html>

Several countries have provided aid to African countries with the mining sector being increasingly the largest recipient. Although China's idea of "aid" is arguably different from the common notion of the word, and evidently is not the same as that defined by the OECD, the issue is that a breakdown of trust will also affect these transactions.

In 2018, *Corruption Watch*, a South African non-profit, published an article, "Do Chinese Aid Projects in Africa Worsen Corruption? And if so, Why?" wherein they argued that,

China has weak anti-corruption norms, and that these norms spread through development aid projects to local police and bureaucrats—in part because the Chinese government takes little active role in fighting corruption in its projects, and also because the Chinese government and its contractors themselves engage in corrupt practices (Leder-Luis, 2018).

The article further argues that the cost of Chinese development assistance outweighs the benefit (Ibid.). Whether this is true or not is beyond the scope of this paper but it is something that should be taken into consideration and may change depending on the continuation of fraud and corruption defining the Sino-African relationship.

One of the main components of international relations is cooperation. It is important that trust is involved in relations between nations as it facilitates cooperation. As Deborah W. Larson remarks, ". . . states often fail to cooperate even when they have compatible preferences because policy-makers make incorrect inferences about the opponent's motives and intentions . . ." (1997, 701). This can be applied to the China and Africa case as a breakdown of trust because the operation of various scams can make them doubt one another. This is what Larson refers to as a "missed opportunity" (Ibid.). Ultimately, in

this sense, ethical business practices and transparency is required. However, if the governments struggle to maintain these good practices for themselves within their own countries, how can they expect to offer them in business relations with each other?

## **Conclusion**

Chinese presence in Africa, specifically in sub-Saharan countries, has been marked by significant trade, aid and investments in the twenty-first century. This paper has discussed corruption and fraud through cybercrime, visas, and illegal mining. Despite the fact that China and Africa publicly insist on a friendship-backed business policy, it seems they lack an important component of any friendship: trust. Moreover, the Sino-African friendship is potentially threatened, and their non-interference and no-strings-attached policies may need to be reconsidered if corruption and fraud continue to define their interactions. Thus, the main argument of this paper is that a vicious cycle occurs when fraud is accepted and perpetuated in corrupt African and Chinese regimes, and subsequently their governments refuse to hold each other accountable. This will not only continue to perpetuate fraudulent activity, but their victimization of one other could affect the “friendship” they are so eager to portray.

In order for corruption to be taken more seriously, in its various forms described in this paper, there needs to be more academic reporting on the issue that not only details its occurrence and frequency but also the implications. More specifically, the level of fraud and corruption is detailed in academia in reference to governance mainly, but does not extend to how crimes of citizens may affect business relations. This phenomenon is related as citizens are able to commit such crimes due to the level of corruption on the state-level. In addition, policies by both

African and Asian countries, respectively, will need to reform their approach to build trust with a joint effort to combat the crimes committed.

Overall, this paper attempted to show that fraud and corruption, although not new to either Africa or China, are being committed with both Chinese and Africans being victims and sources of the crimes. This makes the situation more complicated but also more necessary to address. In this sense, it is not just a matter of addressing Africans committing fraud against the Chinese, or vice versa, but also Chinese defrauding other Chinese while in Africa, as one example. If this is not addressed there will be too many missed opportunities as described by Larson. These opportunities are alluded to in Steve Hess and Richard Aidoo's book *Charting the Roots of Anti-Chinese Populism in Africa*. They assert that “. . . cynicism towards China has been the exception rather than the rule among African governments and general publics,” and that “. . . Africans have viewed China's presence in their respective countries in highly positive terms” especially due to “substantial economic success” they have enjoyed as a result (2015, 3).

Nonetheless, Africa risks losing these important investments and aid projects, which could be detrimental. To be clear, since the reason the Chinese are operating in Africa is to do business, it is important to address business relations. Besides poor future business relations, it is important to address fraud and corruption and its impact on race relations as the worst-case scenario is murder, which unfortunately has occurred in Africa where Chinese nationals were killed. One example of this happening was in 2007 at a Chinese oilfield in Ethiopia where ethnic Somali rebels killed 74 people, 9 of whom were Chinese (Jedlowski & Thomas, 2017, 67). Unfortunately, as recently as March of 2023, another

9 Chinese nationals were killed under “mysterious” circumstances at a mine in the Central African Republic (Hong & Peltier, 2023). In other words, there are significant social consequences due to the fact that if one feels threatened or scammed, they may attribute it to one’s race or culture and act out in violence. Time will tell if they continue to victimize each other with fraudulent business activities, and whether the sentiment towards their policies will change. In other words, these governments tend to turn a blind eye to their respective fraud schemes, but if they are the victims themselves, will they finally act to combat these issues?

### ***Note on the Author***

**Nicole Smith** completed her M.A. in Sociology with a Double Degree from Bielefeld University in Bielefeld, Germany, and Bologna University in Bologna, Italy in September 2021, and a B.A. from McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada in 2013. Her background is in mental health and addiction. She is interested primarily in interpersonal relationships as well as social inequality and social justice. Her articles have been published in *Rising Asia Journal*. She has written papers on migrant ethics of care in home healthcare, consequences of misperceptions of social inequality, as well as the potential role of genetics in addressing educational inequality and pedagogical advancement. Her Master’s thesis explored the use of trauma-informed care by social services assisting people experiencing homelessness during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the future she plans on pursuing her PhD potentially in Anthropology with a keen interest on executing an ethnography on culture-based interventions employed in addiction treatment for Indigenous populations in Canada.

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