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RISING POWER LIMITED INFLUENCE

The Politics of Chinese Investments in Europe & the Liberal International Order

EDITED BY

Indrajit ROY

Jappe ECKHARDT

Dimitrios STROIKOS

Simona DAVIDESCU

Rising Power, Limited Influence

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The usual disclaimers apply.

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List of Abbreviations

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ANSA	Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CGN	China Guangdong Nuclear
Cosco	China Overseas Shipping Group Co
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change, UK
DfID	Department for International Development
EDF	Électricité de France
EEC	European Energy Community
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
Fidesz	Hungarian Civic Alliance
GVC	Global Value Chains
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LIO	Liberal International Order
M5S	Five Stars Movement, Italy
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MSR	Maritime Silk Road
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDB	New Development Bank
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFDI	Outward Foreign Direct Investment
PRC	People's Republic of China
SASAC	State Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SCP	Standing Committee of the Politburo
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
SRF	Silk Road Fund
UK	United Kingdom
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
US	United States
V4	Visegrád Four
WB	World Bank

List of Contributors

Editors

Indrajit Roy, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of York

Jappe Eckhardt, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of York

Dimitrios Stroikos, Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science

Simona Davidescu, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of York

Contributors

Yu Jie, Chatham House

Ran Hu, School of Social Sciences and Global Studies, The Open University

Ágnes Szunomár, Center for Economic and Regional Studies Institute of World Economics, Hungary and Institute of Global Studies, Corvinus University of Budapest

Filippo Boni, School of Social Sciences and Global Studies, The Open University

Małgorzata Jakimów, School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University

Nicholas Crawford, International Institute for Strategic Studies

Jan Knoerich, Lau China Institute, King's College London

Catherine Jones, School of International Relations, University of St Andrews

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Catalyst for Stasis?

China's Engagement with Developing States and its Influence on International Development Assistance

Catherine Jones

Introduction

This volume considers China's influence in Europe through its economic investments. In this chapter, I argue that this influence is evident not only in how China directly engages with states within Europe, but that China's engagement with the international development architecture and its investments in developing states also produces effects—tantamount to influence—in Europe.

China's role in providing aid and infrastructure assistance continues to attract attention and scholarship. China's engagement with developing states, particularly in Africa, has been seen as being instrumental in the People's Republic of China (PRC, hereafter China) gaining the UN Security Council seat from the Republic of China (hereafter Taiwan) in 1971. More recently, attention has been focused on China's creation of and engagement in formal multilateral forms of development and infrastructure assistance.

The debates on how China engages with existing international trade and financial institutions and practices have been broadly considered in terms of rule-breaking, rule-making, or rule-changing (see, for example, Lee, Chan, and Chan, 2012; Hopewell, 2015: 327–332; Wang, 2017). More recent scholarship in this area has further refined these categorizations, highlighting the role China plays in shaping practices from outside institutions (Hopewell, 2019).

In the context of this book China's demonstrated agency in creating changes to the broader aid and investment architecture is particularly relevant. China remains outside the Organisation for Economic Cooperation on Development–Development Assistance Committee (OECD–DAC) countries, but it has an effect on the decisions they make. In this regard, this

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chapter considers influence to come in different forms: direct and indirect. Other chapters of this volume assess the direct forms of influence that China has by acting in or with European states. This chapter instead considers how Chinese investments in the developing world have consequences in Europe and therefore generate indirect Chinese influence.

Significantly for this volume, this shaping happens in two political locations: through China's actions in partnership with the aid recipient, and through China's engagement with European partners in investments in Europe where lessons from aid practices and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in low-income states are being attempted to be replicated at the same time the EU and its member states seek to learn from the demonstrated practices of China in its aid engagement and apply lessons learned to their own agreements with China. As a result, understanding the role China plays in aid and investment in developing countries is essential underpinning work in understanding relationships between China and Europe in investment, particularly in relation to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Background

Understandings of China's approach to international development have broadly fallen into two arguments. On the one hand, China is clearly striving to be an agenda-setter—at least in Asia, and potentially further afield (Ekman, 2015: 4). In the development space this ability to set the agenda has been widely acknowledged. As far back as 2011, then UK development secretary Andrew Mitchell stated, 'Chinese investors, Brazilian social entrepreneurs and Indian bloggers now rival Oxford and Oxfam in setting the development agenda' (Mitchell, 2011; see also Jones, 2019). As a result, China's entry as a significant development actor has been seen as shaping and setting a (new) development agenda for over a decade. According to these arguments, China is a challenger to the existing architecture.

On the other hand, a smaller group of scholars (Jones, 2019; Loke, 2018) and commentators make the argument that China may be instrumental in modifying what already exists within established development architectures and is creating parallel complementary approaches. China in this sense is a modifier. This characterization, then, draws on the debate indicated above regarding China as a rule-breaker, maker, or changer (Lee, Chan, and Chan, 2012).

At the intersection of these two sets of arguments lies the example of the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank (AIIB) and other Chinese-inspired multilateral institutions. The creation of the AIIB, the New Development Bank (NDB), and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI—formerly known as One Belt, One Road—OBOR) has further spurred discussion and analyses that argue that China is challenging the current aid architecture which has been dominated by Western powers through the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), guided by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and engagement with the Bretton Woods institutions (see, for example, Hameri and Jones, 2018; Liao, 2015; Peng and Tok, 2016; Reisen, 2015; Ren, 2016; Stephen and Skidmore, 2019). This chapter makes a distinction: the aid architecture is being challenged, China is a key development actor, but that does not mean China is challenging the existing liberal order of development.

Within these analyses there is an excellent focus on how the AIIB and other Chinese-led institutions arise from frustrations with the Western liberal approach to development (for example, Liao, 2015), and although there is a common observation that the inspiration for creating these new China-centric approaches was this frustration, it is also becoming clear that—at least in the first years of existence—the functional operations of these new approaches mimic the existing banks (Hameri and Jones, 2018; Wilson, 2019).

The quality of the empirical work across these articles is not in dispute. What is missing from these analyses is a common framework to assess the nature or scope of the challenge that China's actions present. For example, Beverley Loke (2019) argues that China is not seeking to challenge US hegemony or the Liberal International Order wholesale, but rather to be recognized as being central, whereas Stephen and Skidmore argue that 'the AIIB stands in a relationship of *partial accommodation and partial challenge* to the LIO' (2019: 65, emphasis in the original).

As a result, we have a collection of literatures all seeking to understand China's role in international aid provision and its functional contribution to enhancing infrastructure. But, within this broad objective we have several foci: What is China functionally doing? What does China want to achieve politically? Is China a challenge to Western or liberal aid provision? Is China actively seeking to challenge or undermine the effectiveness of aid provision by other actors?

In the introduction to this volume, Hu and Roy set out a clear framework for understanding here. In particular, they outline that China's power may be conceptualized as being resource based or influence based. They note also the significance of intentionality, that China's power—demonstrated through its investments—produces consequences, but not all of these consequences may be intended. Hence, it is not straightforward to claim that because China has produced a consequence (in European states approaches to investment in the developing world) this was China's intention. Similarly, Hu and Roy point out that influence does not infer there is a conflict of interests. Although, it should be noted that identifying influence is methodologically more straightforward when such a conflict exists. This element of influence is developed in this chapter by arguing that China's presence as a development actor has catalysed actions that European states and development scholars had already identified as being necessary. Hence, China's influence here was to accelerate a process, rather than change its direction.

This chapter seeks to engage with this debate on the nature and objective of China's role in aid and infrastructure and does so by framing it in terms of whether China is challenging the status quo of development assistance. It presents a new schema for analysis, dividing out different types of challenge that China could instigate, but it also seeks to reflect that how China integrates its approaches within the existing architecture is affected by the architecture as well as by China's actions. Hence our analyses need to take into account that both cogs are turning, not just one.

In this context, the argument is made that through these developments China is a catalyst for a form of stasis. In making this argument a differentiation is made that this 'stasis' is premised on an understanding that the liberal international aid architecture is always evolving, it needs to adjust for lessons learnt, to new opportunities and new ideas. Hence, rather than understanding the liberal order as an entity with fixed contents and institutions, it is an organism of practices and norms that change incrementally in response to a variety of inputs. It therefore is not a static constant entity, but one that is constantly adjusting.

China's role in this adjustment is to change the tempo (both in terms of speed of change and intensity of input) of adjustments in some directions, but also to fill in gaps that emerge in this architecture—importantly gaps that would otherwise have to be filled by liberal or Western actors and that hamper a range of concerted development activities. For example, in providing support for education (particularly of women and girls) in schools, there is a created gap in further, higher, and tertiary education provision, and this created gap is partially filled by China's approach to scholarships for degrees. This provision by China allows and facilitates other actors to continue to focus on school education. In essence, China has enabled liberal development actors to continue their agenda, although they may also adjust what they are doing in light of additional provision. This in essence means China's presence as a development actor provides evidence of gradual incremental innovation that is generated by other aid actors responding to China's presence rather than these changes being caused by China. But, China's presence is not solely in a 'filling' capacity. In the places we see innovation and change, non-status approaches are the result of China's presence widening existing fractures or fissures in global consensus in aid, rather than radically overhauling the OECD-DAC/Bretton Woods approach. I argue that understanding the places where China maintains the status quo, or widens existing fissures, is essential in understanding the relationship to Europe in terms of investment.

In developing this argument, the chapter separates out different ways of 'seeing' China's challenge and maps this to different identification of 'causes': passive, permissive, catalytic, entrepreneurial. The chapter then explores the implication that, if a challenge is being created, it is necessarily normatively bad. This chapter makes the argument that the presence of China as a trigger for change (or an input for incremental adjustment) may actually benefit and force specialization, improvements, re-evaluation, and new approaches within the existing aid architecture, rather than posing a destructive challenge to it.

China As a Challenge to International Aid Praxis

There have been three distinct phases or focal points in the debate on China's engagement with the international aid architecture. The first phase was centred on China's relations with states, particularly those who could help China to achieve its objective of claiming the seat in the United Nations Security Council,. Subsequently, this discussion of China's engagement with African states has both deepened and become more specific. See, for example, Alden (2007); Brautigam (1998, 2011); Dent (2011); and Taylor (2009, 2011).

The second phase or grouping of China's aid engagement was to focus on China's perceived challenge to or ability to sustain the international aid architecture and particularly the aid practices of the Bretton Woods system (Goldstein and Lardy, 2005; Wang, 2015; Wu, 2018). China's engagement with the Bretton Woods institutions encompasses a huge range of topics and almost all of them court controversy. For example, China's currency pegging, changing World Bank and IMF voting shares, and WTO membership have all risen to the fore in gaining international attention. At least in part there is a concern that China will challenge or compete with the practices and approaches of these institutions, by providing and provoking an alternative to the rules of global governance (see Wu, 2018).

The final—but related—aspect of China's engagement with the development architecture is in its development of challenger institutions—the BRI and the AIIB. From the debates on China's challenge to the Bretton Woods and OECD aid architecture, it is not only that China challenges in bilateral ways, but that China institutionalized its alternative to the existing frameworks, objectives, and definitions of development (Jones, 2019: 258).

The World Bank is operating in a world of increasing diversity of actors; it is not only new powers as individual agents that contribute to this multiplicity, but also the manner of their engagement with each other, and the importance of regional approaches to development (Subacchi, 2008). As noted by Sophie Harman and David Williams (2014), the World Bank is increasingly concerned about the rise of regional fledged development actors. Among these competing actors are the new BRICS bank or New Development bank (Bracht, 2013; Trevisani, 2013), the AIIB, and the BRI.

Within these debates it is common for China to be presented as a challenger or a changer of the existing development architecture (see for example Mawdsley, 2007). Moreover, it is presented or implied that China's engagement is a normative bad. These conclusions contain three important assumptions. First, that China does something substantively different in terms of the aid it provides. Second, that what it does is unwelcome, unhelpful, or contrary to the existing approaches adopted by the OEDC–DAC states. Third, it assumes the aid architecture and its approach is in stasis rather than evolving in response to new approaches, critiques, and challenges. However, this form of argument is being increasingly challenged, and scholars including Wang (2017) and Wu (2018) increasingly indicate that China's role is more nuanced, supporting the continuation of some aspects of global financial institutions but reforming or rebalancing others.

Is China's approach different?

A fundamental recurring theme of these debates revolves around the question 'how different is China?' Particularly concerning the so called Beijing Consensus (Halper, 2010; Peerenboom, 2007; Ramo, 2004) or China model (Breslin, 2011; Zhao, 2010), there are claims that 'The Chinese have subsequently walked through an open door with an alternative philosophy that makes few demands on the internal root and branch of client states' (Halper, 2010: 36; see also Jones, 2019).

This argument makes three assumptions about China's approach: (1) China has an alternative philosophy or teleology of what counts as development; (2) that the liberal order states make no demands of client states; and (3) that there were already weakness and problems in the aid architectures and practices (for a longer discussion see, Jones, 2019: part 3). The first two parts of this argument are supported in the literature on China's new institutionalized approach to aid and investment. As Liao puts it: 'In fact, the AIIB's Articles of Agreement have remarkably similar (and broad) operating guidelines to banks within the Bretton Woods framework, but bar members from influencing political affairs' (2015). Wang (2015: 4) puts it more starkly, positioning the role of the AIIB as neither revolution nor affirmation: 'the AIIB does not constitute a new Bretton Woods moment or a total triumph for China in the broad sense'. Other authors adopt a similar approach in considering the 'coherence' of China's approach with other approaches to development finance and identifying that scholars have overemphasized the challenge that rising powers present (Heldt and Schmidtke, 2019: 1180). A crucial nuanced point here is that the challenge or the change that China does present is that whereas China's approach doesn't seek political influence, it does place longer-term economic demands on states.

The third element is of particular interest as it suggests that rather than China having a deliberate intention or agency over change or at least the most feasible, there were pre-existing issues that have made China's approach appealing. In consequence, it is not necessary for China to have an alternative guiding philosophy to be 'distinct and different' in how it enacts its aid policies—it just needs to do different things. If this is the case, it should affect how we conceptualize China as a development actor and subsequently how coordination activities take place. Consequently, the aim of this paper is not particularly concerned with related (and in some cases overlapping) debates surrounding the China model/Beijing Consensus; rather it looks in more detail at the type of agent China is in the wider context of aid infrastructure. As such, this paper broadly agrees with the trend in the literature that seeks to outline the nuance of China's position by presenting a framework through which China's agency can be consistently assessed. It therefore develops aspects of the introduction developed by Hu and Roy in this volume in considering intentionality of consequences of influence and conflict of interests.

Is the aid system static?

The third element above, that China has walked through an open door, suggests that both China's own agency and the context in which it is acting are both key components in any change we perceive in the liberal international architecture. A problem with the existing analyses is that they struggle with being able to capture that both parts of interaction are important in understanding change.

According to the rules of association with the OECD, all states have to sign up to a common aid architecture which includes a set of criteria of what constitutes official development assistance. Up to 2017 this was:

'The DAC defined ODA as "those flows to countries and territories on the DAC List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral institutions which are:

i. provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and
ii. each transaction of which:
   - is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective; and
   - is concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25% (calculated at a rate of discount of 10%)"'. (OEDC, no date)

Since 2017 this definition has been updated to include further specifications and greater nuance:

'Official development assistance flows are defined as those flows to countries and territories on the DAC List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral development institutions which are:

i. provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and
ii. each transaction of which:
   - is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective; and
   - is concessional in character. In DAC statistics, this implies a grant element of at least (see note 4).
     - **45 per cent** in the case of bilateral loans to the official sector of LDCs and other LICs (calculated at a rate of discount of 9 per cent).
     - **15 per cent** in the case of bilateral loans to the official sector of LMICs (calculated at a rate of discount of 7 per cent).
     - **10 per cent** in the case of bilateral loans to the official sector of UMICs (calculated at a rate of discount of 6 per cent).
     - **10%** in the case of loans to multilateral institutions (see note 5) (calculated at a rate of discount of 5% for global institutions and multilateral development banks, and 6% for other organisations, including sub-regional organisations) (see notes 6 and 7)'. (OECD, no date)

This change in itself demonstrates that the liberal countries' approach to aid is not static, but responds to a changing field of development activities. One such activity is the arrival of China as a development and investment actor. However, it is not the only important factor.

Looking at China's importance in this change from the variation or scaling of the component of grants and separating out different sectors of types of assistance, this appears to mimic the approach to official assistance that China has adopted. Specifically, the action of reducing the 'gift' or grant component and increasing the economic cooperation activities and investments with developing states (Brautigam, 2010; Jones, 2019: pt. 3; Tan-Mullins et al., 2010: 876) seems to replicate the commercial approach of China. As a result, understanding these dynamics would have an implication for understanding China's FDI engagement in Europe.

Alternative reasons for the change in the aid definition are hard to find, but they include the reasons of the DAC countries themselves. The UK government committed itself to spending 0.7% of GNI (gross national income) on official development assistance by 2013. The UK, along with other developed states, has consistently met this obligation. However, the change in definition by the OECD of what official assistance is has allowed different types of economic and other engagement to be counted as aid—for example the UK sought to ensure that its contribution to peace and security in conflict areas was also able to be counted as 'aid' (Bond, 2016). However, the new methodology of calculating what counts as ODA has also changed, resulting in the production of incomparable data between pre- and post-2017 definitions. Significantly, it also means that it appears Western states are giving less in aid (Reliefweb, 2019). This means of calculating the amount of ODA may bring the OEDC approach more in line with the approach to calculating Chinese ODA—where commercial investments are excluded (Brautigam, 1998: 211, 2011: 168–172. For a longer discussion of the problems of calculating Chinese aid, see Jones, 2019: 200–202).

The change in the OECD–DAC definition of aid doesn't appear to have a direct link to any requests or specific actions by China. But instead it is the result of an internal four-year-long negotiation between states to change the definition and calculation of ODA. Yet, the movement in how the definition and calculation methodology of ODA could bring the DAC countries actions closer to the aid modalities of China. A question then arises of how do we account for China's effect here?

The actions of the UK government since the change in definition of ODA, in particular the merging of the Department for International Development (DfID) with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), appears to confirm this impetus, so that in keeping the same headline figure for aid of 0.7% of GNI, different international activities are counted in rather than counted out. Hence making it easier to meet international obligations without adding more aspects to development assistance. Despite the potential there has still been a reduction in the assistance provided by DAC members since 2017. Indeed, the UK's commitment to contributing 0.7% of GNI to development was reduced to 0.5% during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A key criticism of Chinese assistance has been that it explicitly furthers the interests of the Chinese government, whereas the charitable or grant aspect of ODA assistance was ostensibly to distance the gift from the interests of the sender state. This claim was always a fallacy but, in the last decade from 2010 to 2020, successive DAC countries have sought to more explicitly demonstrate the link between their aid and their interests. For example, in explaining the importance of the merger of these two departments into the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, the government announced: 'This is exactly the moment when we must mobilise every one of our national assets, including our aid budget and expertise, to safeguard British interests and values overseas' (Gov.UK, 2020). This approach to making the interests of Western countries clear echoes the words of the German Chancellor in response to the announcements of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) III, that 'European policy towards Africa should not be based on "charity arguments" as … in the past but on our "stalwart interests"' (quoted in Taylor, 2011: 74; see also Jones, 2019: 229). Why is it now necessary for Western governments to use ODA to more explicitly champion their own interests? Again it is clear that a correlative argument can be made that this change is in response to the presence of China and an aid giver, but the causal claim is less evident.

So far in this discussion, I have only highlighted the correlation of actions of the DAC in terms of aid to those of China. However, it is also important to factor in that it has been well noted in the literature that it is not only China (not an DAC member) that has different approaches to aid and how it is allocated. Brautigam (2011: 80) noted that both South Korea and Japan operated systems of aid that were recipient-led and also adopted assistance practices similar to China's recipient-led shared risk approach prior to their membership of the DAC group. Contrary to the argument in China's challenge to Liberal Norms (2019), where it was claimed that changes in aid modalities in the OECD triggered by South Korea and Japan were likely to have occurred when those states joined, I would add a rejoinder or modifier to that argument, that the direct cause of the change in the OECD definition may have been the demonstrated experience of Japan and South Korea, but that catalyst for the need to make the change could plausibly be China.

This section has demonstrated two important things: (1) that in understanding China's effects of the liberal aid architecture, it is essential to develop a new conceptual framework to enable different types of causal effects to be disaggregated; and (2) within this framework it is vital to acknowledge that the 'effecting agents' are both in motion, the international aid system is also developing and adjusting at the same time China is acting the aid space.

China as a Catalyst for Change? A Conceptual Framework

One issue arising from this—very brief—review of the relevant literatures is causation. Across these literatures it becomes clear that the problem of causation is alive and well in exploring China's relationships here. Looking at China as a development partner or a challenger in providing investments, the most obvious approach is to adopt a view of causation associated with Hume (Hollis, 2008: 49; see also Jones, 2019)—A caused B to act in a particular way. However, as noted in the introduction to this volume (Hu and Roy) and in considering difference forms of causation (see Kurki, 2008: 296–297; Wendt, 2003: 495; see also Jones, 2019: 16), it is clear that in developing debates on the effect of China's use of material power and its influence, is not equal to arguing that these effects reflect the intentional outcome that China sought.

In line with that framework and the wider conception of causation discussed above, this chapter argues that it is China's presence rather than its intention that allows consideration of China as a 'cause' or the influencer of changes in practices and policies. In this sense identifying China's presence as the cause of any changes in approach is difficult, and in the data we are only likely to see a correlation of timing rather than a specific binary link between China's actions and any changes in the investment architecture.

As a result of these different relationships and different approaches to causation, it is possible to identify three possibilities for understanding how China engages with these institutions:

(1) China is providing alternative ideological or pragmatic methods to determine how to do aid; the presence of this alternative then challenges the principles that underpin the practices of Western institutions and investment actors;
(2) China, by just providing an alternative venue for seeking loans and finance, contributes to the negation of the effectiveness of these institutions' strategies, rendering changes/modifications more likely;

(3) The presence of China acts as a catalyst for demonstrating that these institutions are simply no longer necessary or 'fit for purpose' in the globalized world of today, and consequently they must adjust and adapt their own approaches.

In parallel with these differential 'inputs' that China as an investment actor might have, there are also a multitude of effects that we might want to consider as a response to this. So, in addition to considering the type of agent China is, there is—whether implicit or explicit—a tendency to assume changes or outcomes are the result of China's actions rather than a correlation to China's behaviours or practices.

This chapter makes the argument that although China is an agent and is a trigger or catalyst for responses within investment architecture across Europe, the effect that is having is to curtail or limit changes that might be increasingly liberal and politically tied development investments, and in some places and development locations China fills in development gaps that enable the continuation of liberal approaches to investment. As such, it contributes to maintaining a status quo.

It is evident from these three possible outcomes of the literature that they are in part premised on the type of causation that is sought when looking at China.[1]

Framework, data, and research issues

The data in this paper draws heavily on open-data sources. In the past few years new databases have been developed to aid researchers exploring engagements of different actors in countries. The International Aid Transparency Index (IATI, Extractive Industries Index (EITI), Gap Minder (2020), and aid data (Aidata, 2020) give a good picture of both the 'gaps' in the data and 'gaps' in the interlinks between projects. The discussion and exposure of these gaps may then enable better 'coordination' between partners, but also may enable smaller donors to contribute small interstitial projects that have a significant transformative effect.

One significant area for discussion in this paper is how to understand the issues relating to China as a cause of change/challenges to existing bank practices and how to identify China's presence being merely correlative to changes

[1] Adopting an Aristotelian four-causes approach, it becomes evident that some of the challenge presented by challenge is through formal causes rather than efficient causes. For a greater discussion of the distinction between these, see Aristotle (1993: Books 4–6); Kurki (2008: 296–297); and Wendt (2003: 495).

Table 10.1 Types of causes and definitions

Type of Cause	Definition
Catalyst	Accelerates trend or changes that had previously been identified in the aid literature or by development actors.
Permissive	The presence of an alternative actor taking on some projects (for example building roads) enables other types of projects by other actors.
Entrepreneur	Developing new ideas for how to approach development or aid projects. This approach encompasses ideas that include presenting a new alternative that is deliberate and geared towards China mapping out a 'new' world order.
Passive	An actor doing actions that are necessary for its (China's) own growth and development of future. Its other actors or effects are therefore outside its immediate concerns.

already taking place. In seeking to overcome this problem, this paper suggests a typology for what kind of effect China may be having.

Moving the discussion away from partner or competitor is important in setting out alternative means to engage with China as well as for identifying 'gaps' in coordination. Consequently, this paper puts forwards four possibilities for understanding China and the bank and therefore awareness of the risks of creating gaps (see Table 10.1).

Opening up this different approach to understanding China's aid engagement also opens up space to discuss gaps in development and how to engage China in filling them. Importantly, it is essential to recognize that these possibilities are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for China to be a catalyst in the area of debt sustainability but also a permissive cause that enables the effects of catalysed actions to come about.[2]

In moving towards looking at the data in this area three different elements are explored: infrastructure, education, and debt sustainability.

Probative Analysis of the Data

This section provides an initial discussion of the above framework in relation to data currently available on infrastructure projects, education, and debt sustainability and management. This section illustrates the utility of the above framework in better understanding the nature of challenge or contest that China presents to the liberal order.

[2] This point then bridges discussions of multiple Chinas in foreign policy making.

Infrastructure projects

China is cited in the literature as being a big contributor to African infrastructure projects (Davies et al., 2008; He, 2010; Reisen and Ndoye, 2008). More recently, the development of the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank and the Belt and Road Initiative have become focal points for China's infrastructure projects. According to reports in The Economist (2022), China accounted for 31% of all infrastructure projects in Africa. They note that according to figures from Deloitte this is up from 12% in 2013. Indeed there has been a seeming reversal of contributions from the Deloitte data; *The Economist* reported that in 2020 'western firms were directly responsible for just 12% or so (compared to 37% in 2013)' (The Economist, 2022). These figures are seemingly borne out by Kang-Chun Cheng's (2022) research for Africa Report, where the 30% figure is repeated but also supported by claims that China's provision of these infrastructure projects is filling in significant gaps for populations.

As these figures indicate, it is not that infrastructure projects are not a concern of Western or OCED-DAC donors, but that their contributions to infrastructure are dwarfed by the commitments of China. Similarly, it is not that multilateral development banks are becoming increasingly of interest for development by traditional donors (Harman and Williams, 2014). The key point here is that these infrastructure projects are one point of engagement between Bretton Woods and China (Foster et al., 2008; He, 2010: 153). However, they are also a site of potential missing links in the projects to develop consistent development over the continent. These gaps can be seen to emerge in two areas: the narrowing of the range of activities and places of projects, and the 'after completion' stage of projects.

Gaps in the range and geography of projects

Infrastructure projects can include information and communications (mobile phones and internet access are central here), mining, oil, and gas projects, and development of rail and road connections. Some of these projects are clearly linked—to extract mined products it is necessary to have roads and rail links that connect sites of mining to ports. While China may be doing this to ensure the 'development' of these industries' connections across the countries involved, ensuring that populations can transport goods is also necessary. As noted by PIDA (Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa), gaps in infrastructure development are putting a break on the continent's development (PIDA, 2014). According to this report, 'The road access rate in Africa is only 34%, compared with 50% in other parts of the developing world, while transport costs are 100% higher' (PIDA, 2014). The problem caused by this infrastructure 'gap' is demonstrated in the visual presentation of infrastructure projects' data plotted against per capita income on Gapminder (Gapminder 2020).

One solution to this problem is developing coordinated activities with China in tri-lateral relations between China and traditional donors. However, these activities so far suggest that there is a move towards 'copying China' rather than 'filling in the gaps'. For example, in looking at a map of infrastructure in Africa there is still an absence of a road route across the continent (both East/West and North/South). Whilst it should be recognized that this is at least partially the result of political/security concerns, this too presents an opportunity—the presence of skilled peace-builders should be working to help connect and stabilize parts of the region, rather than treating security problems as a separate issue.

In addition, the need to develop road and rail links is directly concerned with developing internal markets and trading a wider range of products (and extending tourist revenues). However, in order for this commercial project to be viable it is necessary to ensure that there is still concern regarding the 'policy and environmental' aspects of development. That is, the bank (and other BW institutions) need to ensure that whilst they may seek to coordinate with China on infrastructure projects, they still need to develop new ways for enhancing governance projects, to increase the appeal of African states to private investors in new sectors, which in turn would provide other incentives to develop connections continent-wide (PIDA 2014). PIDA already has plans for infrastructure projects that run until 2040; however, these projects are costed at 360 billion USD, and at least part of this money needs to come from private investors. This opens the door to Chinese-style investments and the utilization of Chinese companies to develop projects. However, there is also a need to prevent some of the potential problems in China's development approaches (for example a lack of transfer of training and skills to local workers in order to maintain projects) (PIDA, 2014: 13).

This links to a 'lesson learnt from China' in a sense, as there are many critiques of China's asymmetrical development (particularly concerning the growing economic inequalities, as well as weaknesses in governance of financial organizations. There have also been concerns from private investors regarding the robustness of the rule of law). Thus, there is also a need to prevent these problems arising in Africa—which means that in coordinating with China in Africa there is a need to ensure that the BW institutions find new ways to promote robust governance structures. Indeed, statements by the Chinese leadership concerning the potential export of the Beijing Consensus have been very candid concerning the limitations and problems of China's development and the limitations this presents for its application in other states.[3]

In terms of infrastructure projects China may be seen as a catalyst for new projects to be started, but it is also an entrepreneur in how it approaches infrastructure projects.

Education

In education there is also the potential for a large gap to emerge. As with infrastructure China has adopted a different approach to the BW institutions. China's focus in education related to aid programmes has to focus on university- and tertiary-level aid programmes. However, the focus of many BW partners has been primary education. In looking at data from Gapminder it is evident that education provision at the primary level has been successful; however, levels of education achieved at the secondary level, or even criteria such as eight-grade maths, fall off.[4] As a result there is an obvious gap emerging; China is providing aid to support tertiary provision, but there are a number of students within countries that are being lost in the gap between primary and secondary education and thus the numbers that are eligible to engage with higher-level jobs is greatly reduced.

If we look at Ghana, we can see these problems. According to Aid Data (in 2014), Ghana received approximately 11% of aid flows from China. In education, China has thirteen projects. Of these seven are targeted at tertiary-level education and these include all bar one of the high-ticket items of donations (Aid Data, 2017). Yet in looking at the data from Gapminder, Ghana is still a low performer in maths to the eighth grade, and its literacy rates of people ages 15–24 are at 66% (not the lowest on the continent but still significantly lower than other states (Aid Data, 2017; Dreher et al. 2021; Dreher et al 2022).

What does this approach to aid provision in education demonstrate about China's agency as a challenger or catalyst? In looking at the three potential types of effects that China's approach could be having, China does appear to adopt a different method of education aid assistance, but this doesn't inherently undermine the approach or Western or European investors. In this field it is not even offering an alternative, but instead and addition to funding and

[3] Chinese leadership statements.
[4] Gapminder graphs.

investment available from traditional donors, nor does it appear to be demonstrating a flaw, absence, or central problem with the approaches of traditional donors. In this area, then, China's provision of education assistance actually appears to help to maintain the status quo, whereby Western/European investment can be targeted at primary education and China's aid can support tertiary education. In this way they are mutually supporting each other to achieve a common goal.

Debt management/sustainability

In 2019 it was argued that in addition to different approaches to providing aid (for example, recipient-led, with economic risk rather than political conditionality) and as a consequence of these different approaches China also provides an alternative approach to debt management (Jones, 2019: part 3). This is often associated with arguments about the 'non-conditionality' of China's aid and assistance in contrast to the political conditionality imposed by traditional donors.

In seeking to calculate and make decisions about investments, the World Bank uses a number of indicators, among them the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA). According to the World Bank, 'The CPIA rates countries against a set of 16 criteria grouped in four clusters: (i) economic management; (ii) structural policies; (iii) policies for social inclusion and equity; and (iv) public sector management and institutions' (World Bank, 2020). The CPIA is therefore a reflection of the link between the politics and policies of recipient countries and their eligibility of investment and aid. This index also underpins the assessment by some individual donors—for example the former Department for International Development (DfID) in the UK (Tribe, 2016).

The role of the CPIA in DfID's (now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office), Needs-Effectiveness Index (N-EI) is to inform and assess the potential effectiveness of aid by considering the environment into which aid is provided (Tribe, 2016). The CPIA therefore is a tangible metric that links the philosophy of Western aid provision to the practice of giving—it makes a claim that different forms of governance are better or worse for making aid more effective (Jones, 2019: 226–227). However, CPIA has long been subject to critical reviews (Arndt and Oman, 2008) for its link between good policy environments and the effectiveness of aid. For example, China—as a developing country—would have performed poorly on the CPIA index, but it has demonstrated considerable success in terms of development and poverty reduction. As a result of both continuing critiques and evidence from states including China, the balance in the CPIA has been made (Alexander, 2010). Indeed, since 2011, the CPIA has rebalanced some of the sixteen indicators in the CPIA, and it has been argued that this was as a result of pressure for at least a debate for this index to become more transparent.

The presence of China as an aid contributor has the potential to help countries change their own position in the CPIA and therefore move from not qualifying for IMF or World Bank loans to qualifying. An example of this is Tonga. China's investment in Tonga meant that it could satisfy existing loans despite an absence of changes to economic or political structures (IMF, 2013: 2; Jones, 2019). Similarly, according to Brautigam, the presence of contracts between China and the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2007–2008 helped to persuade the IMF and World Bank to sign off on debt sustainability, even though the state didn't meet the normal conditions to do so (1998: 22–23; Jones, 2019: 227)

This change has been associated with China but not caused by it. Indeed, the agency of China here is as an example of a developing state rather than only as a development provider. Importantly, the underpinning rationale of aid has not been challenged by the change to the CPIA, but only a minor modifying tweak in how the methodology works. As a result, in looking at the framework for analysis China's presence in the aid scene (both as developing state and donor) seems to have amplified the calls that already existed in relation to the CPIA rather than triggering new changes: it has acted as a catalyst for change. Secondly, it has not overturned either the methodology of Western investment or its practice, but modified the assessment of how investment takes place: it hasn't changed the status quo. Perhaps the most important consideration here is not whether China challenges the status quo or not, but rather how China and traditional donors can work more effectively together to achieve development outcomes (Reisen and Ndoye, 2008: 42).

Conclusion

This chapter makes the argument that China's presence as a development actor means that it is a catalyst that allows for the some so-called liberal patterns of aid and investment to continue. It seeks to demonstrate that rather than being a direct cause of changes in the Western aid and investment practices, it pursues actions that correlate with these changes—it is a catalyst for action, not the impetus of action.

Similarly, this chapter makes the argument that by filling in gaps in the development architecture, China actually enables the continuation of patterns and types of investment preferred by Western states. For example, China provides specific education to tertiary students, which fills a gap in the UK approach that supports primary education specifically to girls.

Joining the gaps necessitates a more aware realization of how other actors approach development, but this is not the same as ensuring coordination with them. Moreover, it is not just development actors that need to be brought into this picture; state-building participants also need to be on board. The UNPKO needs to be aware of regional development projects with a security angle, and this is happening in the emerging new department of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in the UK.

Importantly, particularly when looking at infrastructure gaps, private as well as public projects are necessary for filling in gaps. These will involve engagement with and understanding of the many different actors that contribute to these projects (these may be many actors on China's side, but also on the BW side). All of these actors will engage with or contribute to projects in different ways with different incentives. One of the great benefits of China's engagement is that infrastructure projects are happening and are back on the agenda of the BW institutions. However, one significant downside is the potential for fracturing consensus between development partners among the traditional donors who may be required to work even more collaboratively. A further problem might be that as climate change adds to stress on infrastructure provisions, a new 'gap' may emerge that needs to be filled in relation to evaluating whether existing infrastructures are fit for a climate changed world (for example, dams, roads, flood defences), which may involve more coordinated practices among all donors.

Do investment partners need to form a consensus in order to effectively pursue development? One argument here is that traditional donors don't have to formulate a 'new' consensus that includes all new donors, but there does need to be enhanced awareness of projects and gaps that need filling. But one of the dangers of China's presence is that it fractures the development agenda developed since Paris and Accra; China changes the incentives of all of these actors, and this may be a formula for projects without an immediate financial outcome being side-lined (particularly concerning governance). This would present a glass ceiling for development across the continent in terms of internal developments, which raises the risks of the problems China currently faces in Western China.

Gap-filling requires both dialogue and coordination, but it also requires the maintenance of a conviction that policy and institutional form still matter and should be a concern of BW institutions—although there will necessarily be some need for re-evaluation of how this is incentivized in target states as a result of the presence of China as a permissive developer. This paper has therefore argued for: a movement away from the binary approach to looking at China as a development actor; an acceptance that China's agency as well as the agents involved in development may not provide easy causal chains; finally there needs to be awareness of the gaps created not just by China's presence, but also by the reaction of BW institutions to China's presence.

What does this tell us about China's overall agency? I have argued in this chapter that there is evidence that China is a permissive cause of changes in the practice of aid; it has catalysed action by traditional donors that has long been identified as being necessary in order to make aid more effective. However, in acting in this way China is supporting developing states by filling in gaps in the types of investment and nature of projects that recipient states can request, this in turn facilitates the continuation of the approaches adopted by traditional donors. At the same time, China's provision of aid may also create new gaps that need to be filled. But overall, China is a catalyst for statis rather than revolution.

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